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COULD YOU FOSTER A DOG FOR A VETERAN IN NEED?

BROOKSVILLE, FL (April 30) -- If you have a soft spot in your heart for disabled veterans and the dogs that could help them, K9 Partners for Patriots wants to hear from you. The nonprofit organization that gives veterans with PTSD a positive path forward needs local help to provide temporary care for dogs before they can be matched with a veteran.

“For our veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or Military Sexual Trauma (MST), we want to partner each veteran with the dog that’s right for them so they can begin their training program together as soon as possible,” said Mary Peter, CEO, founder and Certified Master Dog Trainer (CMDT).

The dogs that qualify to work as service dogs must be able to alert positively to the scent of adrenaline because that innate ability is what makes them ideal partners for veterans with PTSD, TBI, and MST. The dog’s responsiveness to adrenaline help reduce the severity and frequency of adverse episodes like nightmares and flashbacks which are among the debilitating characteristics of PTSD.

“Because so many of our dogs are rescued from shelters, once they pass our tests and we know they qualify to become a service dog, we want to make sure we can place that dog with a foster who will help it socialize and get it ready to be matched with a veteran. If we have nobody who can take care of that dog it would have to return to the rescue.

To foster a dog, an individual must be willing to include the dog in family activities and allow the dog to live indoors as a member of the household. It’s recommended that they spend daily one-on-one time with the dog such as cuddles, play and walks on a leash.

While K9 Partners for Patriots is grateful for the small group of Tampa Bay area dog lovers who are a vital link in the chain, the need grows rapidly. The Tampa metro region has the largest veteran population in Florida (320,000+) and at least 10% are estimated to have PTSD.

What motivates people to foster a dog they can’t keep?



Deborah Foley of Brooksville has fostered six dogs since last October, each of which stayed with her and her husband for about 2 to 3 weeks.

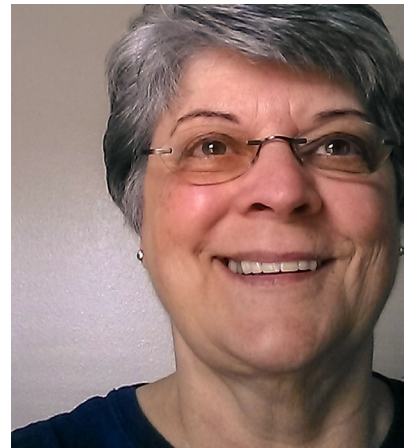
“The first dog we fostered was ‘Duke’ and he was a German Shepherd. I had him three weeks and when I did hand him over to his veteran I started crying; not because I was going to miss the dog, but because I was happy for the veteran! I have two sons who are Army veterans with the same difficulties as the veterans at K9 Partners for Patriots.

“Not everybody has somebody; not everybody has a family to support them. I just don’t want to see other people suffering like my boys did. This is right for us and I know that every day when I see the veterans happy with their dogs.

“It’s fulfilling,” says Foley. “I do get attached to the dogs, but I know that I’m not doing it for me; I’m doing it for somebody that needs the dog more than I do!”

The same sentiment is shared by **Debi Lomas**, a foster care provider from Tampa. She says: “It matters to me because I’m helping human beings that have lost their will to live after all they’ve endured and sacrificed.

“We save the dogs from being euthanized and the dogs are just thrilled to death when you bring them in and then you see the love that they give the veteran... What a great feeling that is. You get to watch the dog save a life and you’re saving his life. Such a great feeling to know you helped a veteran. I’m speechless every time.”



Ruth Ann Smith, a foster volunteer from Hudson says, “In all honesty, fostering has worked out better for me than



getting a dog of my own Because I am able to still travel without worrying about kenneling or getting someone to watch the pet and it fulfills that desire to have a canine around.”

“The other fun part of this is that I have a cat, a big male Manx that’s about 16 or 17 pounds... It takes the cat about 2 minutes to train each dog! If it’s a large dog the cat retreats under the bed until he has sorted things out. I’m fostering a medium size dog now, a terrier mix, and the cat will playfully still try to slap her in the head like Garfield and Odie.

“Turning a dog over to a veteran is bittersweet,” she added. “But much more sweet than bitter. That’s because I know that the dog will be such a good addition for that veteran and help the veteran in so many ways... I can’t be jealous; I can only be happy for them!”

Santina Prisco of Spring Hill says she got involved last summer and has fostered three dogs for veterans. She recalls that the very first time she took a foster, friends kept telling her that it’s going to be too hard to give it up; ‘you’ll get too attached!’



But it was Beth Bilodeau, a volunteer in K9P4P’s Foster Care program, who inspired her. She said, ‘When you take a dog and you turn it over to a veteran you’re saving two lives!’ That stuck in my head! You couple that with the rewarding feeling you get from doing this and it’s a powerful thing.”

She remembers the day one veteran received the dog she fostered. “He asked if he could give me a hug! Oh my goodness! Let me give him a hug!! It’s just such a great feeling.” Santina says her neighbors see what she does and they’re very supportive.

“I’m trying to recruit them so we’ll see what happens!”

To learn more and apply for the K9 Partners for Patriots’ Foster Care Program, please click here: <https://k9partnersforpatriots.com/foster-care-program/>