

PATRIOTPAWS

SERVICE DOGS



INVISIBLE WOUNDS—CANINE HEALER

Live Oak Professional Center in Commerce, Texas is much like any other family medicine practice with doctors, physician assistants and nurses, but this clinic has something that most people don't expect to see when they go to their doctor's office...a dog.

Brian Weber, whose story appeared in our Spring 2015 newsletter, is a physician assistant there and takes his service dog Bell to work with him. Brian, whose father is a Vietnam veteran and whose family has a long tradition of service, spent 31 years in the Army. Besides assisting Brian with his PTS issues, Bell has taken it upon herself to help him care for his patients. Receptionist Lora Starkes calls Bell "Mama Bear" because every time Bell hears a baby or young child crying, she immediately seeks them out knowing that having a friendly dog to pet will take their mind off whatever is upsetting them. Brian's nurse, Tee McFtridge, shared that one day an elderly patient who had recently lost her husband came in for an appointment, and Bell stayed by her side, sensing her grief and wanting to comfort her. "She's everybody's dog." And that includes the staff. Receptionist Kelly Patterson was suffering from a migraine one day, and Bell sat with her while she waited for her husband to come pick her up. "Bell knows when people are hurting."

The staff has noticed a profound change in Brian since he received Bell. Brian's PTS often made him impatient and short-tempered with



“ Bell knows when people are hurting ”

both them and his patients, but Bell has had a calming effect on him. Everyone says that Brian smiles more now. Brian acknowledges this and says that he also no longer has insomnia and has even been able to discontinue all of his previous PTS medications because he no longer needs them.

Patients have also noticed the change in Brian. Anita Helge, who brings her young son Leland to Brian, says that Brian "seems happier and more positive" and made the observation that "Bell lights him up." When calling for an appointment, some patients ask if Bell will be there and are disappointed if they don't get to see her. Others actually ask for an appointment with Bell!

Tom Selvaggi, MD, clinic co-owner and Air Force veteran, has known Brian since the 1990s and understands his struggle with PTS. "Brian seems calm, peaceful and happy now." Larry Young, physician assistant and Coast Guard veteran, has also known Brian for many years and covered Brian's practice for 18 months during one of Brian's deployments. "Bell stabilized a need in Brian's life."

Brian is a healer, and apparently, so is Bell. Science may not be able to explain it, but the effect that a trained PTS dog can have is undeniable. Patriot PAWS is proud to have brought Brian and Bell together and hopes to have many more happy ending stories like theirs to come.



LETTER FROM LORI

Current space constraints make it impossible to increase the number of dogs in our program to correspond with the size of our ever-growing list of applicants, so Patriot PAWS kicked off a Capital Campaign earlier this year to fund our upcoming expansion project. We have purchased the building next to the training center which, when renovated, will double our current space. Additional plans include building a state-of-the-art indoor/outdoor kennel facility to include a 7-kennel isolation section, fire sprinkler system and a special space to house our two cats with feline-friendly nooks, cranies and cat trees.

Patriot PAWS receives no government funding and relies completely upon the generosity of donors. We are currently only about halfway to raising the funds needed to turn our expansion project from dream into reality, so anyone wishing to help us reach our goal should designate "Capital Campaign Fund" on their donation. We need to create even more happy endings like Brian and Bell, and with help, we can do just that.

**SPOTLIGHT
ON PAWS AGGIELAND**

Texas A&M University and Patriot PAWS have partnered to create a student organization called PAWS Aggieland. PAWS trainer Sharon Terrovona is the program supervisor, and student Brianna Snider serves as program trainer. There are currently more than 100 students involved as puppy raisers, dog sitters and ambassadors. Students who are trained as puppy raisers take the dogs with them everywhere they go, including to their classes.

In February, a much-needed training center was procured just off campus in which to base the program. PAWS Aggieland members painted the facility and transformed it into the program's new home. Future plans are to expand the program to include non-student volunteers as well.

These hard-working students go above and beyond in all that they do, and Patriot PAWS would like to thank each and every member of PAWS Aggieland for their dedication and invaluable contribution to the PAWS mission.



ELI'S CORNER

As Patriot PAWS continues to grow, so does the workload. My apprentice Leo and I are up to our whiskers in dogs! I like to look at them as blank slates on which we leave our feline paw print. Give me a dog who chases a cat out of predatory instinct, and I'll return to you a dog who runs with a cat in play, licks him with affection and even sleeps beside him in friendship. That's my job.

Puppies are particularly interesting because everything is new to them. They often look at us as if wondering, "What kind of funny-looking dog is THAT?" But puppies

can be challenging, too. I had to reassure Leo the first time a puppy tried to get Leo's whole head in his mouth that no, he's not trying to eat you, that's just his way of playing. Leo wasn't totally convinced, so I wonder what he'll say when I tell him that our next incoming class of puppies has TWELVE!

We're not complaining, though. It's a privilege to have a paw in training these dogs. Leo is learning that each of our dogs that gets placed has learned to respect and even like cats because of us. It's our legacy, and we're proud of it.

Until next time, dear friends.

Eli





FRANK DEFRONZO AND ROSS

US Army CPL Francesco (Frank) DeFronzo of Revere, MA served 9 years stateside and in Germany. He has been diagnosed with PTS and deals with high anxiety, depression, hyper-vigilance and an aversion to crowds. Frank also has balance issues and wears a brace on one leg.

In an April 2015 graduation held at the prison in Gatesville, Frank received service dog Ross, a male yellow Lab. Ross helps Frank to walk steadily, get up and down and picks up dropped items for him. He also calms Frank's anxiety and has enabled him to decrease the amount of PTS medication that he takes. According to Frank: "Patriot PAWS gave me new hope. Ross was well worth the wait, and I can't thank them enough."



DAVID CALLAWAY AND FOSSIL

US Army SSG David Callaway of Rockwall, TX served 15 years and was deployed to both Afghanistan and Iraq. He was involved in a number of attacks and has been diagnosed with PTS including anxiety, depression and night terrors. David also has nerve damage in his feet which causes balance issues and problems walking.

In March 2015, at a special luncheon held at the training center in Rockwall, David received service dog Fossil, a male black Lab. David says that Fossil understands his needs. Fossil wakes him up from his night terrors and distracts him when he senses that David's thoughts are turning dark. David now takes fewer medications, calling them a "Band-Aid" and saying that, "Fossil is an amazing prescription. These puppies are saving lives."



MIKE KARLSON AND SPARKY

US Navy PO3 Michael (Mike) Karlson of North Richland Hills, TX served in the Persian Gulf War aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Midway. Having flown since the age of 7 with his pilot father, Mike is a certified pilot of both fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, but his MS diagnosis in 2006 has left him grounded. Now requiring the use of a cane and scooter for mobility, Mike has turned his passion for flying to small unmanned aerial systems (drones).

In an April 2015 graduation held at the prison in Gatesville, Mike received service dog Sparky, a male yellow Lab. Sparky will help Mike with mobility issues such as picking up dropped items, bringing things to him and helping him get up and down. Mike has some advice for his fellow disabled veterans: "Don't focus on what you can't do, focus on what you can do, and do it well."



PRESTON SMITH AND MURPHY

US Army SFC Preston Smith of Baytown, TX served 24 years, including in Iraq. He has been diagnosed with PTS and deals with anger and anxiety issues. Preston also has difficulty gripping with his right hand and has mobility problems with one knee.

In an April 2015 graduation held at the prison in Gatesville, Preston received service dog Murphy, a male black Lab mix. Murphy helps Preston with getting up and down and picking up dropped items. He also calms Preston's anger and anxiety by redirecting his attention and making him feel more secure. According to Preston: "Murphy is someone to trust. I know he has my back. He's looking out for me."

Congratulations Graduates!

DID YOU KNOW?



The Dallas Assembly of the Brotherhood of St Andrew held their annual Charity Golf Tournament at Buffalo Creek Golf Club in Rockwall this year. It was a great success with 140 golfers! Thank you to our sponsors for 2015: Fritz Industries, Petco Foundation, Standardized Controls, Riddell Plumbing, Truly Nobel Services, DFW Telecom and IN-N-OUT BURGERS.



PetSmart made a very generous donation of dog food from their Distribution Center in Ennis to the service dogs of Patriot PAWS. Volunteers from the police and fire departments of Rockwall, Heath and Fate showed up with a Band of Brothers and a skid loader to help unload and put away 390 bags of dog food in one hour! That's great teamwork. Thanks to ALL!



Disabled Veterans National Foundation (DVNF) and their nationwide supporters reached their goal for the "service dog initiative" undertaken earlier this year and therefore were able to donate \$50,000 to Patriot PAWS. A grand THANK YOU goes out to everyone who participated. Pictured standing (left to right) Mike Kovar, Benny Bachand, Joe VanFonda, Lori Stevens, Mike Yates and Randy Chambers.

PLEASE DONATE TODAY

- We accept all major credit cards on our website
- Cash, checks and money orders by mail or in person
- Smartphone App—Download it from your phone's Internet browser at www.patriotpaws.givemodo.com

ALSO CONSIDER:

- Setting up a recurring donation
- Honoring or memorializing someone with a donation
- Matching your employee's donation
- Pledging for a 3-year period
- Becoming a PAWS ambassador
- Conducting a fundraiser
- Volunteering or becoming a puppy raiser
- If you are a Federal employee, you may make donations using our CFC# 35710
- Every time you shop at www.smile.amazon.com, Amazon will donate .5% of the purchase price to Patriot PAWS at no cost to you.

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