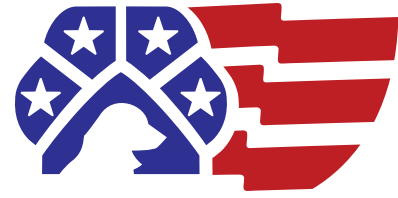


# PATRIOTPAWS

## SERVICE DOGS



## VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

**WITH THE CURRENT WAIT TIME OF 3-5 YEARS,** Veteran Coordinator Jay Springstead sensed a need among the veterans on our wait list. After the initial excitement of having their application approved, there is nothing for them to do but wait for what can seem like an eternity. Many, if not most, of these veterans have been diagnosed with PTS (post-traumatic stress), something that Jay understands all too well. Not only is Jay a Vietnam combat veteran, but his son Tyler, who served in Iraq, was deemed by the VA to be 100% disabled by PTS and took his own life in 2013. Jay didn't want the veterans on our wait list to feel forgotten and knew that somehow, we needed to enhance communication.

Aaron Mixell, also a combat veteran who served in Iraq and in numerous other deployments around the world, received service dog Chief from Patriot PAWS in 2014. Before receiving his dog, Aaron became a volunteer and started helping Jay by making and receiving calls. Aaron quickly developed a passion for helping other veterans and, like Jay, recognized their need for contact, observing that, "Sometimes, what they need most is a friend." Aaron joined the PAWS staff in late 2016 and now shares the title of Veteran Coordinator with Jay.

Either Jay or Aaron is in the office every weekday to be available to speak with both our wait list veterans and veterans contacting us for the first time. Beginning this Spring, they will also start making visits to our wait list veterans who live in Texas and plan to eventually train veterans living in other states who have received a PAWS dog to become ambassadors and visit veterans on the wait list who live near them. The goal is to make all our veterans feel that they have not been forgotten while they are waiting for a dog.

Staff trainer  
Rachel Bess, also

a veteran, and veteran Alice Crosby, a PAWS dog recipient and Veteran Coordinator Office volunteer, often speak with female veterans. Because the experiences of female veterans are sometimes significantly different from those of male veterans, some prefer to speak to another woman instead of to a man. Every effort is made to ensure that they receive the same level of respect and understanding that a male veteran would receive.

While it is important to our veterans to have another veteran to talk to, someone who not only listens but can understand firsthand the problems of physical disabilities and/or PTS, it can be "a double-edged sword" according to Jay. "Aaron and I are both combat vets,

and we have gone through many of the emotions and physical pain that our veterans experience. With each veteran, there

is a compelling life story that often is very close to home for us. It is very difficult to tell the veterans there is still a long way to go in getting a dog.

'Patience' is not something our veterans want to hear from us, but I do think they take advice better from a

combat veteran. It is a heavy burden to have, but caring for our vets is our way of staying sane."

In 2015, Patriot PAWS established the VFP (Veterans For PAWS) Corps, a volunteer group exclusively for veterans.

VFP members are given the opportunity to meet and socialize with other veterans and their families, spend time with the dogs-in-training and take part in special projects as needed. The VFP Corps is open to all local veterans, not just those waiting for a dog. Aaron currently serves as mentor for the group.

For more information about the VFP Corps, or to find out what you can do to help us help those who have served and sacrificed for us all, please visit our website at [www.patriotpaws.org](http://www.patriotpaws.org).

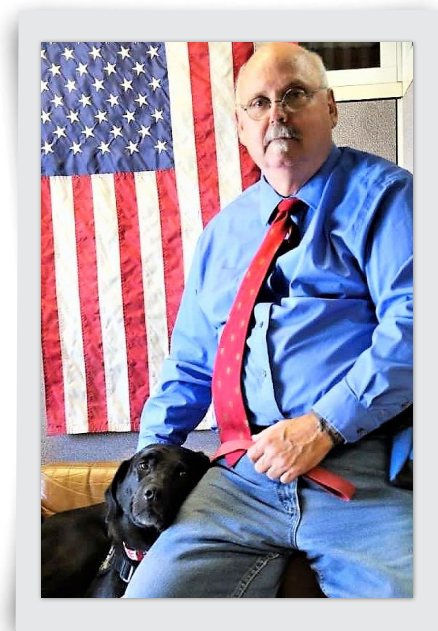




## VETERAN JAY SPRINGSTEAD AND TEX

US Army 1LT **Jay Springstead** of Texas served in Vietnam and was a part of the Tet Offensive and Counteroffensive. He has problems with his back and knees and has also been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress. Jay began volunteering at Patriot PAWS in 2013, joined the staff later that year and currently serves as Veteran Coordinator.

Jay received service dog **Tex**, a male black Lab, at a graduation held at the Patriot PAWS training center on Veterans Day 2016. According to Jay, "Tex was not going to be placed because of health issues and his age. I took to Tex and he took to me while he was undergoing treatment for heart worms. He slept under my desk and went home with me every night. Like me, Tex is one of a kind!"



## LETTER FROM LORI

**O**ne of the many things I've learned in life is that patience truly is a virtue, and boy, have we had to be virtuous around here! Construction of our new kennels is well underway, but with all the heavy rains last year coupled with numerous and varied construction problems along the way, progress has been slow at best. But the blueprints that have been in my office for so long are slowly becoming reality, and the building should finally be completed sometime this Spring. Having a state-of-the-art kennel facility is key to enabling us to expand the number of dogs in our program to reduce the amount of time that our veterans have to wait to receive a dog, and it is you, our supporters, who have made this possible. **On behalf of our veterans and everyone at Patriot PAWS, thank you!**

## ELI'S CORNER

Watching my apprentice, Leo, grow from a tiny abandoned kitten into a fine young cat and promising dog trainer makes me proud to have a paw in his training. And I feel the same way about our dogs. We bring young puppies into our program who are boisterous and chew on everything and leave puddles everywhere, but over the next 2 years, those little bundles of chaos are carefully molded into some of the finest service dogs anywhere. They have a long line of folks working with them and caring for them, training them to perform tasks that change, and sometimes even save, lives. Leo and I are proud of our part in their training, and I'm sure that the other staff trainers, inmate trainers and puppy raisers are all proud of their part, too. We miss our dogs when they graduate, but knowing what a difference they make in the life of their veteran makes it all worthwhile.

So to all of our supporters, thank you, because we couldn't do it without you! Being a cat in a dog's world isn't easy, but I love my job and can't imagine doing anything else, and neither can Leo. I'd say our life here is just about purr-fect.

Until next time, dear friends.





**VETERAN JUSTIN ROSS AND FUZZY**

Army SPC **Justin Ross** of Texas served in several countries including Iraq where he was injured by a mortar round in Ramadi on Thanksgiving Day 2005. Justin now suffers from back pain, and his right leg is partially paralyzed causing balance issues. He has also been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress and is 100% disabled.

Justin received service dog Fuzzy, a male yellow Lab, at a graduation held at the Patriot PAWS training center on Veterans Day 2016. According to Justin, "Fuzzy has made my life easier, keeps me calm and collected with my kids and gives me a reason to get outside."



**VETERAN ALICE CROSBY AND LOGAN**

US Army Spec 5 SGT **Alice Crosby** of Texas was a Chaplain's Assistant. Alice served in Germany and was the Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge of the post chapel at Fort Myer in Arlington, VA. Before receiving her dog, she began volunteering in the PAWS Veteran Coordinator's office making calls to other veterans on the wait list. Alice has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress stemming from service-related events and has more recently battled breast cancer.

Alice received service dog Logan, a male white Lab, at a graduation held at the Patriot PAWS training center on Veterans Day 2016. According to Alice, "Having Logan has made life worth living. For 30 days of radiation treatment, I would come home, and Logan would totally love on me. He senses my moods and sleeps by my head. Logan is a priceless asset to my life!"



**VETERAN JEREMY WEBB & RECKLESS**

USAF A1C **Jeremy Webb** of Texas served for 2 ½ years and was stationed at Peterson AFB. He was badly injured in a single motor vehicle rollover accident and was initially told that he would never walk again. Jeremy had a basal skull fracture, traumatic brain injury and 3 broken vertebrae resulting in mobility issues and "baby mal" seizures. He has also been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress.

Jeremy received service dog Reckless, a male yellow Lab, at a graduation held at the Patriot PAWS training center on Veterans Day 2016. According to Jeremy, "Since Reckless has come to live with me, I have been able to get out and live a semi-normal life. I don't have to constantly keep my head on a swivel because I know my wingman has my six."

**VETERAN RICKY SMIDDY AND WILSON**

US Navy PO2 **Ricky Smiddy** of Texas served for 4 years. During the Cold War in the Vietnam era, Ricky was stationed on Guam. He has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress stemming from service-related events and is 100% disabled. Ricky suffers from anxiety, panic attacks and night terrors.

Ricky received service dog Wilson, a male black Lab, at a graduation held at the Patriot PAWS training center on Veterans

Day 2016. According to Ricky, "Already, I have quit fighting in my sleep. I am happy now. He is what I needed, and Patriot PAWS worked miracles for me. I can never thank Patriot PAWS enough for being there for me when I desperately needed them."



# SPOTLIGHT

## ON PATRIOT PAWS AT:



Patriot PAWS has partnered with the University of North Texas Department of Behavior Analysis, chaired by Dr. Jesus Rosales-Ruiz, to grow our puppy raiser program in a rather unique way. Graduate students in the student organization ORCA (Organization for Reinforcement Contingencies with Animals) work with PAWS dogs with behavioral issues by developing a training plan specific to the dog's needs.


Dr. Rosales-Ruiz is one of the few scientists in the world studying animal training from both the theoretical and

applied perspectives, and his ORCA students get hands-on experience while helping to train and socialize our dogs. Currently, there are only 3–5 dogs on campus, but we hope to expand the program to give all UNT students the opportunity to become puppy raisers. Service dog Logan, placed with veteran Alice Crosby in our November 2016 graduation, was a UNT success story. **Keep up the great work UNT!**



**Our new kennel facility** will feature indoor-outdoor runs to allow our dogs freedom of movement and the ability to go outside for some fresh air and sunshine.



**WWII Army veteran Sgt. Nick Nichols**, featured on the cover of our Summer 2016 newsletter, has chosen to celebrate his **100th birthday** by turning his party into a fundraiser for Patriot PAWS. In lieu of gifts for himself, Sgt. Nick is asking for donations to Patriot PAWS. If you would like to help Sgt. Nick celebrate his 100th by making a donation, please go to [www.gofundme.com/sgtnick100](http://www.gofundme.com/sgtnick100) or notate your other form of donation with "Sgt. Nick". Stay tuned for details of Sgt. Nick's big party in our Summer 2017 newsletter. 

## IN MEMORIAM

### Service Dog Ben

The Patriot PAWS family has lost another wonderful service dog. Our hearts go out to veteran Aaron Frankum for the loss of his service dog, Ben.

*Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.*  
— Author Unknown

• 972-772-3282 •

**Consider today what you can do to help us help them...**



*"The atmosphere here is unreal and reinforces the fact of how great it is to be an American veteran! What is really amazing is how the commitment of Patriot PAWS never ends. They are here forever for each veteran who receives one of their great animals..."* — Arlie Matthews, 2016 Graduate

### PLEASE DONATE TODAY

- We accept all major credit cards on our website at [www.patriotpaws.org](http://www.patriotpaws.org)
- Cash, checks and money orders by mail or in person. **Address:**  
**254 Ranch Trail**  
**Rockwall, TX 75032**

### ALSO CONSIDER:

- Setting up a recurring donation
- Honoring or memorializing someone
- 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](http://www.smile.amazon.com), Amazon will donate .5% of the purchase price to Patriot PAWS at no cost to you.