

Something to Howl About

APRIL 2022

PATRIOT PUPPY PRESS



What's Inside

- More about our three new teams
- Volunteer News and Notes
- A Brief History of SMSD
- Puppy Press News
- Program Manager News
- Specialty License Plate News!

Volunteer Spotlight

Has moved to page 4
Volunteer News and Notes



Dennis
and
SMSD
Halo
1-7-22



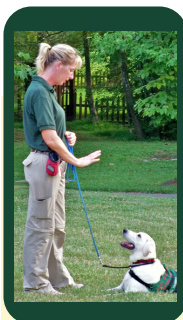
Bob
and
SMSD
Jazz
2-4-22



Bradley
and
SMSD
Jumper
3-18-22

See page 4 to learn more about our latest teams.

A LOOK BACK IN TIME **A BRIEF HISTORY OF SMSD**



A small number of people came together in August and September 2010 to discuss starting a nonprofit that utilizes service dogs to help others. This early discussion took place at Gail Alexander's home. Attendees included Gail, Rhoni Standefer, Elaine Lintner and others. They discussed the feasibility of starting a nonprofit, who they might call on to help, who they were going to serve and the type of training the dogs would receive. A short time later, Elaine reached out to Suzy Kitchens to ask her to join the group that would later become Smoky Mountain Service Dogs. Suzy agreed and became the first chairperson for SMSD.

(Continued on page 5)

FROM THE OFFICE OF OUR CANINE PROGRAM MANAGER

2022 has started with a boom! We were able to walk out of 2021 with veterans in training and carry on through February graduating a couple of new teams. Unfortunately we also felt the brunt of loss when SMSD Bella lost her battle with cancer.

We are pleased to announce that Brad has now completed team training with his new SMSD Jumper. My focus during the first quarter of 2022 has been to update all of our recipient and volunteer handbooks and online training curriculum. ADI issued new standards for Service Dog Trainers so our Canine Training Guidelines have also been updated.

I plan to host an in-service training soon for all of our dog handler volunteers. A date for that training will be announced soon.



Project2Heal is a non-profit organization located in North Carolina that provides service dogs to people who need them the most. Today, more than 20 service dog organizations across the country call on Project2Heal to donate the pups they need for their service dog training. These partner organizations suggest that approximately 75% of the puppies donated by Project2Heal are successfully partnered with a person in need. The success of Project2Heal pups in service dog training reduces both the wait and the cost of a service dog for many individuals from different walks of life, from children with special needs to adults with disabilities and Veterans with PTSD.

To help us fulfill our mission of providing mobility assistance service dogs to qualified US veterans with physical disabilities, Project2Heal has provided 3 dogs to SMSD (Bentley, Jax & Cisco.) All of these dogs are currently in training.

To learn more about Project2Heal and how they prepare and provide dogs to programs such as ours, please visit their website www.project2heal.org

Heather Wilkerson

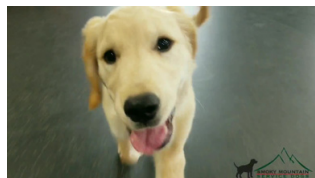
Tip From The Trainers:



Shorten your leash!

Watch this video for a demonstration of "Left" by our Lead Trainer Susan Randall https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-pHs91frBs&list=PLM037T9U6JehI87CKf_DVPxalQnFRSsBS&index=8

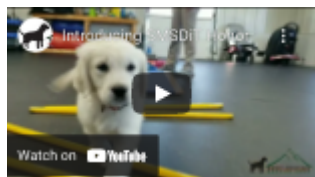
Puppy Press News



Please welcome our newest recruit, Triscuit! Triscuit is a darling 4 month old female golden retriever donated by Joe and Tiffany Markulike. Click the link to watch him in action



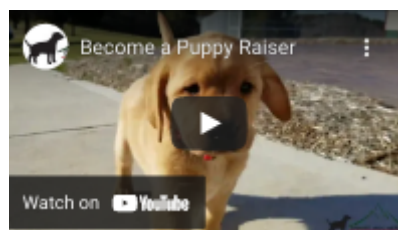
<https://www.facebook.com/smoky.mountain.service.dogs/videos/1176407706462847>



Introducing SMSDiT Honor, a new member of our SMSD family. Honor was donated by Dale Hollow Golden and is sponsored by Ali Swofford from Prosperity Partners.

Dogs of all ages continue to work on new skills and handle new environments throughout their training.

You must see this excellent video produced by our very own Robin Richards! Yes, we have the BEST volunteers ever! Come join our team.



Please share our joy in graduating three new teams in this quarter!

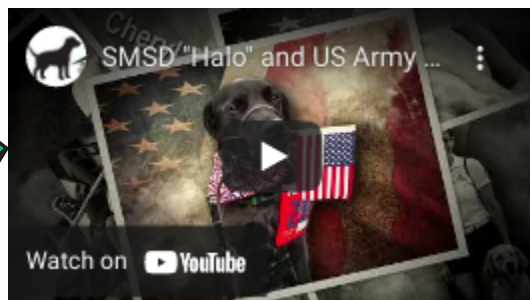


Dennis and Halo completed their team training in January. Bob served his country for 17 years, is a combat Veteran of Desert Storm and is a Bronze Star recipient for Valor.

Bob and Jazz - our 50th placement!! Dennis is a Vietnam Veteran and also a Bronze Star recipient. He and Jazz completed their team training in February.

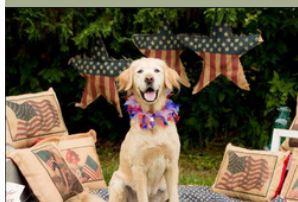


DOUBLE
Passing of
the Leash
ceremony
for these
two
wonderful
teams



We are very happy to introduce our latest team - US Marine Veteran Bradley and SMUSD Jumper. We will be scheduling a Passing of the Leash ceremony in the near future.

The entire SMUSD community mourns the loss of SMUSD Bella. She served her veteran well and faithfully and will be missed by all who knew her.



We HONOR the memory of all SMSDogs who have crossed the Rainbow Bridge. Bella, Lucy, Jet, and Copper. RIP dear heroes



NEWS FROM YOUR VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR TEAM



Message from Carla Navas, Volunteer Director

Greetings Fellow Volunteers! I hope everyone is doing well and staying healthy! As you may know I have assumed the role of Volunteer Director from Deb Sciarretta. Deb is still very active with SMSD, overseeing our Puppy Raiser efforts and providing guidance to myself and our team of Volunteer Coordinators. As a new addition to the volunteer leadership, it is my intention to work with Heather and team to create more opportunities for us to gather as COVID numbers wane. We are presently a group of 190+ volunteers but in the past two years we've had very little opportunity to convene. I'm hopeful that this will change as we move into spring. We recently added a new member to our team, Patty Jazayeri, to focus on Volunteer Engagement and you will hear from her in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, Dog Handlers should be sure to take advantage of the trainers' offer to allow us to attend both the Puppy and Advanced Foster classes. Email them at: smsdtrainers@smokymountainservicedogs.org. I would also like to ask everyone that may have friends, family or acquaintances that have shown an interest in SMSD about becoming weekend respites and/or canine transporters and encourage them to check it out and see if it might be for them. As summer approaches we often become short of respites with vacations and family visits so we would love to avoid having any dogs left in the kennel if at all possible. Thank you all with your help on this! I look forward to meeting everyone over the coming months. In the meantime, please feel free to share your thoughts and suggestions with me at Carla.n@smokymountainservicedogs.org.

Carla Navas



Spotlight on Volunteer Coordinator Team Member, Barb Spate

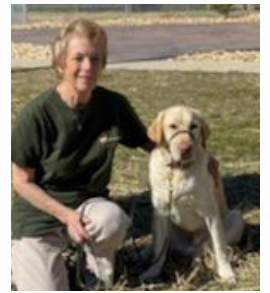
Have you ever been curious about the process for "on-boarding" SMSD volunteers?

The Volunteer Coordinator (VC) team is led by Carla Navas, a new board member as of January 2022. Carla has a group of 5 volunteers who monitor the website for volunteer applications.

Barb has been a volunteer at SMSD for 6 years and a member of the VC team for over 3 years. Barb and her late husband Bill have taken on the roles of respite & advanced foster home, socializer and canine transport. Barb has fostered about 20 dogs, with the longest dog (Spirit) staying with her for 11 months. When asked how she can give up a dog she said "you go into advanced fostering with the focus on the dog's future mission to be matched with a deserving veteran."

At the Passing of Leash ceremony for Spirit, Barb saw the connection Spirit had with his veteran and her heart was full knowing what the future held for Spirit with his veteran. She also advanced fostered Tango and she described the connection Tango had with his veteran as "magical."

Barb's commitment to SMSD is inspiring and we thank you for your dedication to the mission.



Barb Spate with SMSD Blair



Elisabeth Crisp, Puppy Raiser and her "Blaze" blanket



Field Trip to Knoxville Zoo with Advanced Foster Volunteers & SMSD Trainers Susan Randall & Laura Porter



Laurie Birt & Whiskey, Barb Foss & Glory, Renee King & Grizzly



Claire Luttrell & Wiggles, Pat Chappell & Blair, Betsy Liebenow & Slate



The next meeting took place August 26, 2010, at Mike and Suzy Kitchens' home where the discussion continued and SMSD started to take shape, roles defined and priorities identified. On September 13, 2010, a second organizational meeting was held at Mike and Suzy's

home. Present were Suzy, Rhoni, Elaine, Tami Wyatt, Gail, Mike, and others.

On October 5, 2010, the first SMSD board meeting was held at Green Meadow Country Club in Maryville. Officers approved were: Suzy Kitchens/Chair, Elaine Lintner/Vice Chair, Gary Wade/Treasurer, Lisa Baxter/Secretary and Deanna Hall, member at large. Founding Friends designated were Tami Wyatt, Gail Alexander, Rhoni Standefer, and Mike Kitchens.

There was a lot of planning and organizing to do and everyone pitched in to offer their expertise and/or their willingness to learn. The roles were starting to be assigned as the mission was getting defined. Heather and Darrell were operating Savannah K-9 Center and volunteered their training services. Heather took the lead in writing policies for the new group, now named Smoky Mountain Service Dogs. Suzy focused on veterans, Elaine worked closely with Brian from the UT MBA class to develop a business plan. Heather, Gail, and Rhoni went in search of puppies to bring into the program. Mike offered his organizational skills and business and planning experience. Tami and Suzy both had training in the medical field so their focus on veterans and their needs was a good fit.

Somehow it all came together with this core group plus many others. Rhoni called on a friend who was a graphic artist to design the logo, another friend wrote a song, and SMSD colors were selected. The business plan was being developed with the assistance of the MBA program at UT which was led by an Army Major. Elaine and Suzy worked together on the TN State Business Charter and the 501(c)3 filing.

Our nonprofit status, 501(c)3, was awarded in April of 2011 and our State Charter was approved. The decision was made to operate using volunteers and with no paid administrative staff. To this day, the only employees we have are the professional trainers plus our program manager and facility manager. We are very proud of this business model which has served us well for over 10 years, during which time the administrative costs have been kept under 3% . The number varies but as of today we have over 190 volunteers. Thank you to each and every one!

The initial thought was that SMSD would be able to provide service dogs for children with autism as well as mobility assistance dogs to veterans. We were advised early on that it would be best to narrow our focus and the decision was made to work solely with veterans in need of mobility assistance.

The first dog brought into the program was Lucy, who was donated by Heather and Darrell. Rhoni and Gail fostered Lucy for over two years and, with Heather's oversight, provided training and exposures. Like the humans involved, Lucy had many roles and also acted as our first canine representative, appearing at public events and demonstrations and helping to increase visibility while she was being trained to be a mobility assistance service dog. Lucy was the second dog we placed once she was matched with Air Force Veteran Billy. She served him well for many years until succumbing to canine cancer in January of 2020.

We had our very first "Passing of the Leash" ceremony February 2, 2013. Copper was the first dog placed with a veteran, a US Army Airborne Ranger that had suffered a grievous injury while on a combat mission in Iraq. They were a wonderful team and we miss them both. RIP Richard and SMSD Copper.

We have continued to graduate more dogs every year, and as of April 2022, we have placed 51 dogs!

The work went on. Elaine, Rhoni, Gail and others searched area animal shelters; Heather and Darrell located suitable dogs from other programs, relationships formed with breeders, and more puppies were brought in. Elaine, Rhoni, Gail, board members and other volunteers kept the puppies in their homes until a puppy raiser could be found or until that dog was matched to a veteran. Again, everybody doing what they could and learning as they went along. Things are much different now with both hands-on and computer training provided for all dog handlers and a schedule for when new puppies will arrive so we can prepare our volunteers ahead of time for when their bundle of joy will be joining their family. Lessons for both puppies and advanced dogs and their foster providers take place each week. Regular assessments are made to track the progress and lessons are planned to work on any areas needing extra attention.



Lucy



Copper

Heather and Darrell provided the training to the dogs and volunteers in between their assignments with FEMA and their teaching and training commitments to Auburn University. Suzy worked closely with the Warrior Transition Units, and later local VA medical facilities, to develop contacts and get the word out that SMSD was there to assist wounded veterans. Mike started reaching out to area businesses to ask for their support and acted as spokesperson for SMSD. There was a real can-do spirit as so many people all worked together and separately to tackle issues as they arose and get the job done.

One of the early blessings came from two wonderful gentlemen from Kentucky, Terry Scariot and John Kelly of Remington Partners. Terry arranged a meeting at Western Kentucky University. Mike, Suzy, Tami, Heather and SMSDog in training Copper attended that meeting and discussed the need to hire the first full time canine trainer. A few days after the meeting, Terry contacted Mike to say he and John would pay the salary for the first year. Thank you, Terry and John!!

Many others stepped up to assist. A pickleball playing friend of Mike's volunteered his company, NYLI, to assist in design and hosting of the SMSD website. Nancy McDaniel planned and coordinated fundraisers and other events. More and more volunteers were coming on board to help.

Barbara Schmitt was one of the early volunteers and came to volunteer with us after a chance meeting with Suzy in a parking lot and hearing about SMSD through a yoga teacher. Barbara remembers an early fundraiser at the Community Church at Tellico Village which was a chili supper prepared by church members and where guests were asked to bring a dessert to share. Barbara served as a socializer to Willie, another of our early dogs. She later became a weekend respite provider and took on many other roles, including public relations events and volunteer coordinator.

Another early volunteer was Shirley Bierkamp. Shirley was the second board secretary and also served as the volunteer coordinator. She remembers having a tough time with SMSD Willie because he was terrible about pulling on the leash so she had to work extra hard to cure him of that. As luck would have it, he was matched to a veteran who appreciated Willie's desire to pull.

Mike and Heather started the task of filling out the necessary paperwork to become an accredited member of Assistance Dogs International (ADI) and assuring we were meeting all standards that ADI required. It was a long and arduous process but SMSD was accredited in 2015 and reaccredited in 2021. We were thrilled to receive this comment on our report from the examiner:



"SMSD is comprised of an outstanding group of people who are dedicated and passionate about meeting their mission to 'Enhance the Physical and Psychological Quality of Life for Veterans with Disabilities by Providing Custom Trained Mobility Assistance Service Dogs' and I highly recommend them for ADI accreditation."

In 2015, we acquired the property we had been leasing and paid it off a year later. In 2017, we started our More Wags for Warriors campaign to fund the building of a new Veteran/Canine Training Center. A donation of \$225,000 from the American Valor Foundation, operated by the family of Navy Seal Chris Kyle, provided the seed money to kick off this campaign. Alter'd State donated \$175,000 towards the kennel. There was a tremendous amount of community support as well - donations from individuals, civic groups, clubs - all helped us reach our goal. Approximately two years later we were very excited to move into the new facility. The training center has indoor/outdoor kennels for 18 dogs, a large training room, administrative area, a grooming room, medical examination room and exercise yards.

Through one of our Veteran recipients, SMSD was introduced to the family of Don and Hayden Quattlebaum of Pawley's Island, South Carolina. Don and Hayden had formed the Andy Quattlebaum Foundation in memory of their son Andy, who lost his life at the age of 22. Both of Andy's grandfathers were World War II veterans. In memory of their son and in honor of their WWII veteran fathers, a significant sustaining endowment was made from the Andy Quattlebaum and Blackwell Family Foundations to SMSD. The SMSD Veteran/Canine Training Center and the Alter'd State Kennel are part of the Andy Quattlebaum Complex. Take a video tour here <https://youtu.be/TDy9BRpx9D4>

Along the way, we continued to grow and learn and serve veterans with the best trained mobility assistance service dogs possible.

We are so grateful for the support of our community, our sponsors, our volunteers, our sustaining partners and so many others. We continue on with the can-do spirit and our mission to serve these very deserving wounded Veterans to the highest degree possible. All of us who came aboard later owe a debt of gratitude to those early pioneers who believed enough to share their vision, their time, their money and experience to create what we can all be so proud of today.



We recently updated our website a bit to give it a fresh look. We have added some new photos and video. Please take a look:
www.smokymountain servicedogs.org



Contact your local county clerk to arrange pickup!
These plates will be available soon to those who did not pre-order.
Thank you to everyone for your patience during this lengthy project!

Keep up with all the latest news.
Follow us on all the social media platforms. Click on any of the icons below to go directly to our page.

Send newsletter comments and suggestions to laurie.b@smokymountain servicedogs.org



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