

*Something to Howl About**JANUARY 2023*

PATRIOT PUPPY PRESS

This Issue

- Reflections from Chair Mike Kitchens
- Celebrate 3 new Veteran/SMSD teams
- Volunteer News and Notes
- Kennel News
- New Board Member



Reflections - Mike Kitchens, Chair

2022 was another year that highlighted the Volunteer and Giving spirit of our community. Just amazing what this wonderful organization is accomplishing by working together towards the continuing success of our mission to serve those who have sacrificed so much in service to our nation.

Sadly, during the year, we lost two of our family, Colonel Ray Joinson in August and Sergeant Daniel Belcher in October. Ray's SMSDog Hondo is now serving a deserving First Responder. Daniel's SMSDog Stryker continues to serve the Belcher family as a wonderful companion dog. We also lost two incredible SMSDogs, Summit in April and Bearden in July. May these four heroes RIP.

Out with the old and in with the new. Through the leadership of our volunteer Facilities Coordinator Jim Goyert, we were able to replace the 30-year-old manufactured home with a new Clayton home. In 2023, we plan to have a SMSD Canine Memorial to commemorate our canines that have passed. Since we began, we have lost six wonderful dogs, all to canine cancer: Lucy, Jet, Bella, Bearden, Copper, and Summit.

Board of Directors – after serving for nine years each, Steve Reith, Treasurer, and Pat Chappell, Secretary, are rotating off the board but both will be having lots of fun handling our wonderful canines. John Fearn will be serving as Secretary and a new board member, Adri Blignault, will be serving as Treasurer. In addition to John and Adri, yours truly is honored to serve as Chair, and Steve Bartolone will serve as Vice-Chair. Board members at large are Laurie Birt, Romano Sims, Suzy Kitchens, Tom Bradley, Carla Navas, and Joe Tedesco.

In closing, I would like to send kudos to our wonderful staff. What a great team they are! Darrell Wilkerson, Facilities Manager and my go to guy; Heather Wilkerson, Canine Program Manager; Susan Randall, Lead Trainer; Cassie Krause and Laura Porter, Staff Trainers. SMSD is Blessed to have such capable, professional, and passionate employees.

Wishing everyone an abundance of Blessings in 2023. Thanks for all you do.

Three New Veteran Teams to Celebrate!



December 2, 2022



December 16, 2022



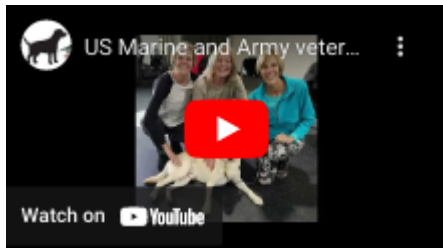
December 2, 2022



Training Camp Video of Marine Veteran Ballard and SMSD Glory. Double click to enjoy.

To watch the Double Passing of the Leash Ceremony, please copy the link below into your internet browser.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sgd-pZnKzIA&t=5>



Training camp video of US Army/Marine Veteran Dax and SMSD Blair. Double click to enjoy.

To watch the Passing of the Leash Ceremony for Dawnie and Hondo, copy and paste the address into your internet browser.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0mIm5e86gE>



Training camp video of First Responder Dawnie and SMSD Hondo.

Smoky Mountain Service Dogs has a lot of wonderful content on YouTube. If you haven't visited lately, or at all, please take a look. You can find training tips, past Passing of the Leash Ceremonies, Training Camp videos, puppy introductions and so much more. Go to YouTube.com and type in Smoky Mountain Service Dogs and then hit the "subscribe" button. Or you can click this link to go our page directly: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=smoky+mountain+service+dogs

KENNEL NEWS

FROM THE OFFICE OF OUR CANINE PROGRAM MANAGER

Happy New Year Everyone!

2022 came to a close like a whirlwind. Like every year, 2022 brought us many highs and lows. I'm sure all can relate. We lost a couple of great clients to illness and accidents. These individuals will always have a special place in my heart. We were also blessed with some new and exciting opportunities!

The last quarter of the year is always a busy time for our organization as we host and are recipients of multiple fundraising activities. However, this past fall we were blessed with the opportunity to conduct multiple team training camps for veterans receiving mobility assistance service dogs from our program. Something that is always near to my own heart, we also completed a placement of a service dog to a deserving First Responder to close out the year. The new housing project was completed in the fall. Darrell and I were able to move into the home ahead of schedule. Much thanks to Jim Goyert, our Board of Directors, and Clayton Homes. We have continued to receive tremendous support from our amazing volunteers, sustaining partners, and donors who all help to fulfill our mission.

As we move into 2023, I am excited about training our newest volunteers, applicants, and dog recruits. I plan to spend the first quarter of this year reviewing the new standards just published by our accrediting organization and ensuring that our organization continues to remain in compliance with these standards. I will be looking for new and improved educational opportunities to share with our staff and volunteers and I will continue to focus on enhancing our breeder relationships to ensure a steady supply of dogs remains available to us to train.

I could not be more proud of Smoky Mountain Service Dogs and what this organization is doing to enhance the quality of life for our recipients. Each dog and each person who volunteers their time and those who put so much effort into meeting our organizational needs is nothing short of amazing. Each of you inspires me daily to continue enhancing the quality of this program. From the bottom of my heart, Thank You! I welcome 2023. I welcome the challenges and I look forward to what wonderful things might await us. I know that we will accomplish great things as an organization this coming year because we have each of you supporting us.

Heather Wilkerson

Enjoy these original fun videos featuring our very own pups in training. Created by our multi-talented training staff.

A Year in Review
and
Starting 2023 on the Right Foot

NEWS FROM YOUR VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR TEAM



All puppy and advanced foster classes are open to every dog handler no matter your role. It's a great opportunity to learn from observation, possible hands on with a dog and certainly from having the opportunity to ask questions of the trainers.

Please email the trainers directly at SMSDtrainers@smokymountain servicedogs.org to attend. I strongly encourage every dog handler to attend at least once per month. You will always learn something as I know I always do!

Last but not least, I'd like to say a big thank you to all our volunteers. Without you all, there could be no SMSD!

Carla Navas, Volunteer Director

Our volunteers are at the core the business model at SMSD. We couldn't do what we do without your dedication to our mission. Our heartfelt thanks to each of you. We appreciate you and are honored by your service.

WELCOME TO NEW 3Q AND 4Q 2022 VOLUNTEERS

DeWitt, Abby – Respite, Socializer
Lester, Mallery – UT Socializer & Dogs on Campus
Dilling, Petra – Transport
Francis, Jerry & Janiece – Transport
Ferguson, Christine – Community Events
Ingram, Pam – Respite
Parr, Kathy – Respite

Santarchangelo, Pam – Community Events
Schoenherr, Steve – Respite
Kaplan, Gary – Puppy Raiser
Lofti, Sahar – Respite
Luttell, George – Respite
Monaghan, Kathleen – Respite
Rhode, Margie – Event Coordinator

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

TEN years of Volunteer Service

Chappell, Pat
Foss, Barb
Reith, Steve
Werner, Carla

Five years of Volunteer Service

Cook, Danette	Gallaway, Nancy & Dave
Drake, Peter & Terry	Hillard, Marilyn & Stan
Edwards, Gail	Marshall, Walt
Exline, Jessica	Peltzer, Gary
Fearn, John	Smigiel, Stefan
	Twohig, Kathy & Bill

One year of Volunteer Service

Bradley, Tom & Diana	Jazayeri, Patty & Tony
Caldwell, Don	Korinek, Kathy & Richard
Cowley, Sharyn & Neil	Kukral, Mari
Dougherty, Dennis	Marti, David & Melissa
Emmerson, Becky & Bert	Martin, Robert
Fox, Larry	Morales, Sheryl
Garrett, Cathy	Porter, Karen
Ghani, Marina	Tursi, Joe & Sally
Halihan, Tim & Vanessa	Young, Mary Ellen & Whitney

NEWS FROM YOUR VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR TEAM

Spotlight on Dick Shusha, Photographer

SMSD has a diverse group of volunteers, many of them are “dog handlers” who fulfill the roles of puppy raiser, respite, foster home and socializers. However, there are numerous other volunteers who are not involved in dog handling and they contribute their unique talents. Dick Shusha’s unique talent is his gift for graphic arts & photography.

Prior to getting involved in SMSD, Dick worked for an advertising agency and as a young man he enlisted during the Vietnam War and attended Officer Candidate School. Throughout his life, he has been surrounded by photographers and always had an interest in graphic arts. Prior to living in Tellico Village, he lived in the Chicago area where he volunteered at his church in a group called "Diving Dogs" which took therapy dogs to visit military families and nursing homes.

In June 2018, he began volunteering for SMSD, raising a puppy and providing respite care. He chose to focus his volunteer efforts contributing his photography skills. If you have attended a Passing of the leash ceremony, you will have enjoyed seeing his work. Many shed a tear while watching the closing videos which features many touching photos of recipients, their families and of course their trusted service dogs.

Dick works closely with Mike Kitchens; this is what Mike says about Dick:

Dick has an incredible talent to know just when to take a picture. His work at designing the closing video for our Passing of the Leash is wonderful. Dick is always ready to assist in anything we ask of him, such as coming to the kennel to take pictures for donors and recipients. Dick is truly a great asset for SMSD, we are blessed to have him as a part of our organization.



**Dick Shusha, SMSD
Volunteer Photographer**

Spotlight on Gail Edwards, Apparel Coordinator

“It takes a village” to sustain the SMSD mission. Many of our unsung heroes come from Tellico Village. Gail Edwards, our Apparel Coordinator is one of those heroes. Gail became interested in SMSD when volunteers and SMSDs in training came in her store. Her first SMSD role was being a part of the puppy raising process for SMSDit Whiskey. With Gail’s professional background owning her own local Ladies Clothing Boutique, it was a natural fit to move to the Apparel Coordinator role.

Gail immediately felt connected to the mission because of her love for her country and veterans and she wants to be a part of honoring them. One of the projects Gail is most proud of is her involvement in designing the Logo for the T-Shirt “Raise a Puppy Campaign.”



Gail has worked closely with Suzy Kitchens for over seven years. This is what Suzy has to say about Gail: "Gail’s skill set of developing relationships, ordering, tracking, and delivering clothing items is exactly what we needed. Gail is super efficient and a delight to work with. She strives hard to accommodate every volunteer when they order clothing items and loves the SMSD mission of serving wounded veterans. We are lucky to have her."

Welcome New Board Member

Adri Blignault

Adri has extensive involvement in and exposure to multinational manufacturing and business operations in North America, Western Europe, Asia, and Africa. She currently holds the position of Controller at Strategic Acquisitions Group in Knoxville and brings a wealth of experience in finance. She will serve as the Treasurer for SMSD.

Please visit our website to learn more about our newest board member. Welcome Adri!

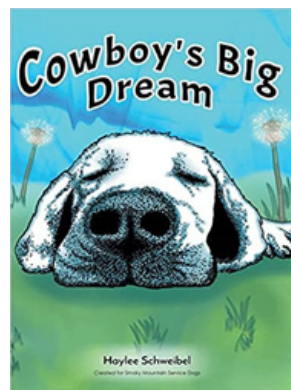


HOW YOU CAN HELP



Our Specialty License Plate program is going strong! Tennessee residents - You can take your current plate to your County Clerk's office and request the SMSD plate any time during the year.

Written and illustrated by our very own Haylee S. about our very own SMSD Cowboy.
Available at Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble.com.



Don't forget to connect your Kroger Rewards card to SMSD!

It makes us SMILE when Amazon sends us a small portion of your purchases each quarter. No cost to you!

amazon

smile

You shop. Amazon gives.



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