



Something to Howl About

MAY 2025

PATRIOT PUPPY PRESS

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**SMSD in training
WILSON
enjoying springtime
outings.**

Message from Volunteer Chair Mike Kitchens

SMOKY MOUNTAIN SERVICE DOGS EXPANDS ITS SERVICES TO INCLUDE SERVICE DOGS FOR VETERANS AND FIRST RESPONDERS WITH POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

Because of the generosity of our donors and the hard work of our staff and volunteers, SMSD is proud to announce that in addition to providing mobility assistance service dogs to Veterans and First Responders, we will now begin to provide our custom trained, highly skilled service dogs to clients with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD.)

Since 2013, Smoky Mountain Service Dogs has been honored to place over 70 mobility assistance service dogs with Veterans and First Responders at no cost to the client. Our decision to provide service dogs to clients with PTSD is based on several factors.

We receive many requests for Psychiatric Service Dogs and, in the past, we have had to decline them, often referring them to other organizations, many of which have extensive waiting lists.

The Armed Forces Benefits Association estimates that approximately 30% of Vietnam, Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans suffer from PTSD.

Per the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs December 2024 Suicide Prevention Report, there were 17.6 Veteran suicides every day in 2022.

Studies from the Institute of Health estimates that more than 80% of First Responders have experienced traumatic events on the job and that approximately 1 in 3 will develop PTSD.

Smoky Mountain Service Dogs meets or exceeds standards of Assistance Dogs International for Psychiatric Service Dogs.

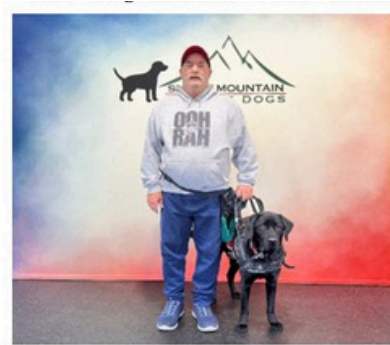
For more information on Smoky Mountain Service Dogs, please go to www.smokymountainservicedogs.org

RECIPIENT NEWS

US MARINE VETERAN MICHAEL
AND SILAS
PASSING OF THE LEASH
FEB 7, 2025



Visit [YouTube.com/SmokyMountainService Dogs](https://www.youtube.com/SmokyMountainServiceDogs) to see this video and many others



SMSD Jumper
says
“throw that
ball!”



CanDoo was one of our first “career change” dogs. He was placed with Western Kentucky University where he thrived in his second career, as you can see from the loving tribute written by WKU.

It is with heavy hearts that we share the passing of WKU’s first therapy dog, CanDoo, at the age of 13. He was truly the spirit of a Hilltopper, always ready with a warm welcome to anyone who stepped onto the Hill. The following is written by Scott Fox, a WKU staff member who CanDoo lived with for the past 10 years.

Throughout his many years of service to WKU students, staff, and visitors, CanDoo consistently put his best paw forward. He had an extraordinary gift for helping people release their emotions and find a path forward. His name wasn’t just a name: it was a reflection of his life and attitude.

As a young pup, CanDoo underwent ACL surgery and faced a long road of rehabilitation. At just five years old, he suffered a stroke, but through resilience and determination, he returned to his work on campus. He began his service by supporting Military Student Services, offering comfort to those dealing with PTSD, as well as students in the Kelly Autism Program. Even after his stroke, he expanded his impact to include students in the American Sign Language Studies program.

What made CanDoo so special was his ability to connect with people from all walks of life. He never judged anyone: whether it was their physical appearance, the struggles they were facing, or their way of communicating. He simply showed up, listened, and loved. There’s a lesson in that for all of us.

Beyond campus, CanDoo extended his support to the wider community. When tornadoes struck Bowling Green, he was there to bring comfort to those affected and to the first responders working tirelessly in the aftermath.

Despite the physical and neurological challenges he faced, CanDoo’s spirit never wavered. He lived up to his name in every sense: a true embodiment of the “Can Do” spirit.

As we approach the final stretch of the semester, let CanDoo’s legacy be a reminder: You CanDoo it. You can finish strong. You can offer encouragement to someone having a tough day. You can look beyond appearances and connect with someone who needs a friend. These simple acts of kindness are the reason CanDoo is remembered so fondly by students, alumni, and WKU employees alike. Rest well, CanDoo. You’ve earned it.

Hello Everyone! It has been a very busy and productive first quarter here at SMSD. We kicked off the new year by conducting a team training camp for our most recent graduates Mike & Silas. This was quickly followed by our 3rd ADI accreditation site visit in February and beginning to schedule service dog teams for their annual interviews and public access testing. Most of March was spent conducting interviews to hire additional staff, hosting the Certified Canine Fitness Trainer Course for UT and continuing to implement best practices for the Wounded Warrior Service Dog Project. April was another whirlwind month as we continued to interview and hire new staff, conducted multiple kennel tours and hosted employees from a few other service dog programs. May is already proving to be another busy month as we are preparing another deserving veteran to begin team training camp.

I would like to give a huge thank you to Carla Navas for her time serving as our Volunteer Director. I would like to welcome Renee King with open arms as she begins to serve in this position. In an effort to best serve our previous and future recipients, it is necessary for us to expand our resources in the Client Services portion of our program. Carla has started to transition into this area and Melissa Marti will also begin to make a gradual transition into this area of the program by agreeing to serve as a Client Services Coordinator. Our training staff has also grown. During the month of June we will be welcoming two new trainers into our family. Please help to give Emily Hodges and Maylee Demling a warm welcome when they arrive! I have included a little bit of information about each of them below.

In closing, I hope that all of you who were not able to attend our recent volunteer appreciation event know how much we appreciate you! I am looking forward to what the rest of 2025 has to offer!

With many blessings and much gratitude,
Heather Wilkerson, Program Manager



Maylee Demling

Maylee Demling's journey in service dog training began long before joining Smoky Mountain Service Dogs. Thanks to her father's long career in the United States Marine Corps, she was able to experience many different types of communities and people, starting her passion for serving veterans and people with disabilities. After moving numerous times across the United States, her family eventually settled in Ewa Beach, Hawaii. Maylee graduated from Illinois State University in 2025 with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Studies. While at ISU, she stumbled upon one of the most amazing opportunities, a student organization called Indy-pendence Service Dogs that trains and fosters service dogs for Paws Giving Independence. Through these organizations, Maylee was able to successfully foster, train, and raise numerous service dogs, preparing them to change the lives of the most inspiring people. In her free time, Maylee enjoys traveling, baking, trying new coffee shops, and going on nature walks.



Emily Hodges

From an early age, Emily knew she was meant to work with animals. She began her career in veterinary medicine, but it didn't take long for her to realize that her true calling was in training and building lasting partnerships with animals.

Her journey started with raising guide dog puppies and quickly expanded into the world of competitive dog sports, including agility, obedience, field trials, hunt tests, dock diving, and weight pull. Over the years, Emily's passion led her to serve alongside first responders—working as an Animal Control Officer for the San Diego Humane Society, a 911 Dispatcher for the Oceanside Police Department, and later, a Canine Trainer for the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation, where she specialized in training search and rescue dogs and mentoring first responders: developing strong, capable canine teams.

Emily's expertise extends beyond canines—she has also trained and competed at a national level with horses and worked professionally with birds of prey. Her diverse background reflects a lifelong commitment to understanding and strengthening the bond between humans and animals.

In her free time, Emily enjoys sharing her passions with her family. She spends her days training her Australian Koolies in herding with her flock of sheep, competing in dog frisbee competitions, and riding her horses in cattle events.

NEWS FROM YOUR VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR TEAM

"THE VOLUNTEER CONNECTION"

SMSD DOGS IN TRAINING - WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



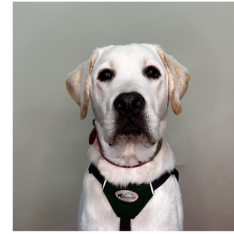
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KENNEL



LARRY -
KENNEL



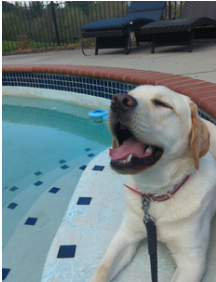
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OAK II -
KENNEL



MAJOR -
KENNEL



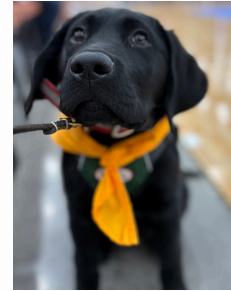
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CHECKERS -
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FISHER -
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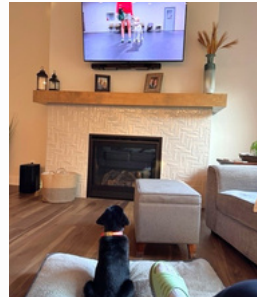
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COUGAR -
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DODGE -
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HUGO -
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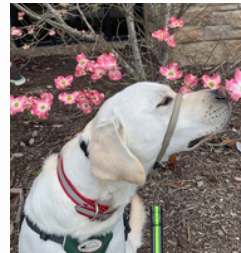
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BAILEY II -
PUPPY RAISER



CLANCY -
ADVANCED FOSTER



NOBLE -
ADVANCED FOSTER



WRIGLEY -
ADVANCED FOSTER



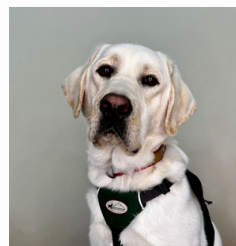
JOJO II -
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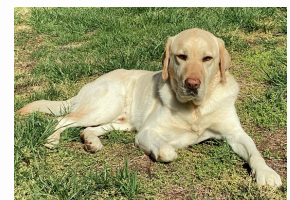
KIP -
ADVANCED FOSTER



WYLIE -
ADVANCED FOSTER



HANK -
ADVANCED FOSTER



DUNCAN -
ADVANCED FOSTER



In Memory of Kathy Twohig

Kathy and Bill Twohig have been part of the Smoky Mountain Service Dog family since the organization started. While surrounded by her loved ones, Kathy went home to be with her Lord and Savior on April, 13, 2025.

Kathy contributed countless volunteer hours in support of our mission by providing short and long term care for dogs in training. She always rose up to the challenge even with some of our more difficult dogs in training.

Our thanks to you for your love and commitment to serving veterans and for your passion, love and years of friendship. We will miss you and we know that you made a difference in our lives and the lives of those we serve during your time on earth. Rest in peace.



In Memory of Ken McKay

Ken McKay was a Navy Veteran and proudly served our country during the Viet Nam War. He and his wife Kathy moved to East Tennessee from Naperville, IL in 1998. Ken joined Smoky Mountain Service Dogs in 2015 and was very passionate about our Mission. He loved our dogs with all his heart and looked forward to his weekly outings providing great socializing experiences for them. Ken and his wife Kathy celebrated our Passing of the Leash Ceremonies whenever possible. Ken was a truly dedicated volunteer committed to serving his fellow veterans and took great pride in being a part of the SMSD Family. His contributions will be remembered, and his absence will be deeply felt.



NEW VOLUNTEERS FOR Q1 2025

MARY ADOMAITIS

GENE ALLEN

SHEILA BORGES

SCOTT & DONNA BYERS

BRENT GIERLOFF

DAVID LILLEMOM

TAMMY LYNN

KENT WAGONER



SMSD would like to recognize and express appreciation to Gayle Booth for her 13 years of service as our Volunteer Bookkeeper. Gayle will be relocating to the Atlanta area in order to be closer to her family, especially her Grandchildren.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Linda Wicklund, who has offered her highly capable services as our new Volunteer Bookkeeper. Linda has extensive financial accounting experience and before moving to our area she did the bookkeeping for Can Do Canines in New Hope, MN. Linda has also been actively involved with SMSD on our Transport Coordinator Team and has assisted in the publication of our Volunteer Newsletter.

Three cheers for both Gayle and Linda.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Chips was named in honor of WWII War Dog Chips, one of the most decorated war dogs in history. Chips was a privately owned dog that was donated to the war effort in 1942. He retired back to his family in 1945. War dog Chips is credited with saving his unit from machine gun fire on numerous occasions.



Jim Goyert, Puppy Transporter
Extraordinaire

Reggie was named in honor of Reginald Cleve. He was a CWO helicopter pilot assigned to the 176th assault helicopter company during the Vietnam War. Reginald was to be part of a four-ship mission into Laos. While en route, he and his crew were shot down in Savannakhet Province, Laos on March 22, 1971. The helicopter was located on the return back. No survivors or bodies were found. Reginald was carried as MIA for many years before eventually being declared KIA.



Copies still available
Contact Deb Sciarretta
deb.s@smokymountains
servicedogs.org

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at your county clerk's
office.



<http://smokymountainservicedogs.org/>

Send comments, suggestions and critiques to
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