



Rescuing One to Heal Another

BLUE STAR SERVICE DOGS

Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2020

Blue Star Reunion Welcomes Returning Veterans

Blue Star hosted an open house/reunion October 22 for veterans who have been a part of the organization's programs over the past nine years. The event was attended by teams and their families (and service dogs) crowding the training center building and new fenced backyard. Past and present clients and Blue Star staff caught up with each other, discussed triumphs and continued progress, had some good food, and most importantly had an opportunity to enjoy a day at the training center that was a little "off duty".

After dinner, many attendees took shelter from the fall rain and continued telling stories, jokes, and experiences with their service dogs. The staff that day were continually reminded of the positive impact that the dogs and training had on these veterans. All at Blue Star are proud that the teams chose to continue the mission of the organization to improve the lives of as many shelter dogs and veterans as possible. Several more events are planned to host veterans and their families over the next year. During these upcoming reunions, Blue Star will be offering all of our teams training updates, recertification for CGC and Public Access testing, and additional support that could benefit veterans and their families.



What it Means to Sponsor a Blue Star Dog and Veteran

Ken and Kathy Dimoff know first-hand, how the presence of a dog enhances every aspect of people's lives. The couple have always had a dog family member in their home and consider the mission of Blue Star, rescuing dogs from shelters, having them trained in a prison and then given to a veteran, to be a trifecta in their book. Having family members who have served in the military and the sacrifices all military persons make, Ken and Kathy generously donated to sponsor a service dog from rescue through training with a veteran. According to Kathy, "this is our very small way to give back to our nation's heroes."

For the Dimoff's, donating to sponsor a service dog for a veteran is especially valuable because of the sacrifices, and potentially the ultimate sacrifice, service men and women make. They know veterans have witnessed more than we will ever know, and as a society, we can never do enough to support our veterans. "The very least we could do," says Kathy, "is to serve them."

Equally committed to the welfare of animals, Ken and Kathy are well aware of the overcrowding of area shelters and rescues. The fact that animals end up in shelters by no fault of their own is wretched and depressing. The couple takes comfort in knowing that dogs are being rescued from shelters and trained to help and heal our veterans.

For more information about donating to sponsor a rescue dog or veteran dog team, send an email to info@bluestarservicedogs.org.



Scenes from Blue Star Service Dog's reunion.



U.S. Rep. Slotkin Visits Blue Star

U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin visited the Blue Star Service Dogs Training Center on Monday, December 9 to learn more about the organization's mission, leadership, veteran dog teams, and to discuss the role Blue Star may play in the the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act (PAWS).

Slotkin and Rep. Steve Stivers of Ohio, introduced PAWS (H.R. 4305) this past September. If enacted, the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act will create a pilot program within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to give veterans access to treatment from service dogs. Over a five-year period, it would assess the effectiveness of service dogs on veterans with PTSD.

While at the training center, Rep. Slotkin met with Blue Star clients, hearing from veterans about the impact their service dogs have on them. Slotkin also learned about Blue Star's processes, how the dogs are rescued, trained in prisons, paired with their veteran, and complete their training at the training center.



Rep. Slotkin visits with a Blue Star veteran and service dog.

Operation Fashionista

Blue Star was the beneficiary of the most fashionable networking event of the year. Hosted by Rehab Pathways Group, the 9th Annual "Operation: Fashionista 2019" took place Thursday November 14 at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Sterling Heights. Rehab Pathways provide an array of services to individuals that have sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury and specialize in residential programming, vocational counseling and job coaching. An afternoon of unique boutique shopping, a fashion show luncheon, and fantastic networking opportunities was enjoyed by attendees, including representatives of Blue Star Service Dogs. Our executive director and veteran dog team, James & Ranger spoke about the program and fielded a Q & A session with the attendees to answer curiosities about service dogs in general and specifics of our programs. It was an amazing day of outstanding support from attendees and the dedicated people at Rehab Pathways!



Scenes from Operation Fashionista.





The Blue Star Academy

Blue Star Service Dogs is introducing the “Blue Star Service Dog Academy”. The Academy is an online classroom component that supplements the hands-on service dog training the veteran dog team receives. Five sections comprise the classroom lessons, covering Basic Dog Care and Training, First Aid for Dogs, Dog Grooming, Training Techniques, and Service Dog Laws. The courses are designed to be completed before the veteran receives his/her dog, thereby providing a solid foundation for the hands-on training that takes place after the veteran is paired with their dog.



Future Events - *SAVE the DATE*

“To Be of Service” Movie Screening February 5, 2020

The screening of the documentary “To Be of Service” will be hosted by Blue Star at the Emagine Theaters in Canton on Wednesday, February 5th at 7pm. Dog teams and respected guests will be in attendance to share their perspectives on the benefits of service dogs and the training program. An announcement will be coming soon on social media and email on how to reserve your place as seating is limited.



Blue Star Service Dogs Annual Awards/Fundraiser Dinner April 4, 2020

The annual Blue Star Service Dogs awards/fundraiser dinner will take place on Saturday, April 4th at Weber’s Inn in Ann Arbor. In addition to an amazing speaker, awards will be given to nominees in both Veteran support and Animal Rescue. If you would like to submit a nomination of a deserving individual for their efforts in either category, please click on the link for the nomination form. We will be looking for sponsors, donation items for auctions, and volunteers for the event. Stay tuned for more information on our website www.bluestarservicedogs.org and over social media posts.



*May your 2020 be filled with love,
laughter, brightness, and hope.*

Happy New Year!