



# Operation Freedom Paws

*Four Paws, Two feet, One team*

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## Operation Freedom Paws

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*\*K9 Coach Plus has now been folded into Operation Freedom Paws, therefore, all proceeds will benefit OFP.*



## A Year in Review

Welcome to the inaugural issue of The Operation Freedom Paws Quarterly Newsletter! This first one may be a little longer than those to come so we can catch you up on all that has been happening here at OFP. The whirlwind began last year when founder, Mary Cortani was named one of CNN's Top Ten Heroes. Because of this outstanding recognition, the public's awareness of Operation Freedom Paws has grown exponentially. We have grown from a locally-known organization to one that is recognized nationally and even world-wide. With this recognition comes the challenge of not being able to help all those who apply. Unfortunately, we are not yet in a position financially to expand to other parts of the country but that is part of the plan and we will get there! We have, however, grown here in California! So far this year we have added 37 clients and pulled 44 dogs from shelters and rescue groups. The number of clients has grown from 88 last December to 125 in June 2013. 85% of those clients are veterans and the remaining 15% are civilians and children. As part of the OFP program, we have identified clients who are now leading training sessions as mentor trainers. 95% of all dogs serving our clients have come out of shelters or rescue groups. For the first time, we have a fostering program with 10 to 14 dogs readily available to be matched with a new client. The entire OFP staff continues to strive to fulfill the mission of empowering veterans and others with disabilities to restore their own independence.



## Upcoming Events:

### 🔄 Operation Freedom Paws Dinner Dance Fundraiser

September 6, 2013

5:30 to 9:30

Fortino Winery in Gilroy

Tickets can be purchased online at [operationfreedompaws.org](http://operationfreedompaws.org). For more information, contact Colleen at 408-832-6712.

### 🔄 TCP Summerlin Golf Tournament

September 9, 2013

1700 Village Center Drive  
Las Vegas, NV

8:00 a.m. Shotgun Start (Registration at 7:00 a.m.)

After golf, please join us for our silent auction.

Lunch will be available for \$25.00

Register for events online at:

[operationfreedompaws.org](http://operationfreedompaws.org)

### 🔄 Halloween Photo Opportunity

Coming soon

Details will be available at: [operationfreedompaws.org](http://operationfreedompaws.org)



## Meet George And Macy

By: Karah Silacci

PTSD is a cruel and disabling disorder that all too often accompanies our servicemen and women home from deployment. George is a Marine Corps veteran who was injured in Somalia. When I spoke to George, what I heard was a sweet, funny, gentle man who loves his family deeply. But my conversation with George occurred 2 years after he had been matched with his service dog Macy.

Before Macy, George describes his life as being unbearable. He had frightening nightmares and couldn't even go to the store without feeling overwhelming fear, anxiety and anger. Although he loved his family dearly, he didn't know how to talk to

them about what he was experiencing. His wife and children didn't understand why he would become so quiet and distant, so they assumed George was angry with them. For George, this life was pure torture.

In June, 2011, OFP matched George with Macy. On that day, life began again for him. George calls Macy, "the missing link between me and my family." Now if George gets quiet and lost in himself, Macy will lick his hand to get his attention. If that doesn't work, Macy will go, "be a tattler" and get George's wife. The family looks to Macy to help them better understand George.

George still has nightmares, which he describes as violent flashbacks. He often awakens, still experiencing the dream, not knowing where he is. In the past, he was terrified he would unintentionally hurt his wife or family during a nightmare because he has no conscious control. He doesn't want to harm anybody but says he had no control over his actions. Now Macy sleeps on George's feet. If George is having a nightmare, she will get up and lie on his chest and "hold him down," awakening him. George calls Macy his "safety net".

George enjoys doing things with his family now. They even take Macy to the movies. If the movie becomes too intense, Macy will nudge George's hand with her wet nose and remind him she's there. He no longer needs his "shield" (hat and sunglasses) to walk through the grocery store. He can have conversations with people when they ask questions about Macy. She is a popular girl, and George is always being complimented on how well she behaves. His anxiety in public has been replaced with his pride in her.

George's concern for other veterans came up frequently during our conversation. He goes out of his way to talk to them at the store or at other events. He is determined to help as many as he can, and always tries to encourage others by sharing his story. One of the people he met eventually reached out to OFP, was recently matched with a shelter dog, and is currently in training. I could hear the relief in George's voice while he was telling me this. He feels that veterans have no reason to suffer in silence because help is available. "But who would have thought a dog would be that difference?" But it was. Macy saved George's life.

"Life is better now," he says.



## Founder's Message

"Mary here: I want to send a great big thank you to all of our Board Members, Volunteers, Donors, fans, clients, and client's families for their inspiring journeys and unwavering support of Operation Freedom Paws. What once was a dream of mine, has now become reality. Without you, we could not be what we are today. A simple thank you doesn't seem adequate to express what your generous support has meant to the dogs that we rescue or the clients that bless our lives each day.



Each day, 22 veterans will commit suicide and over 900,000 will need some type of help. The VA system cannot handle this alone. In our small way, we hope to ease the pain and assist those who so desperately need our support. We help; one veteran at a time. Their dog is one tool they can pull from their tool belt in creating a new normal and begin to enjoy life again."

***"Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team."***

Mary Cortani  
Founder and President

## Paws For Honor

Join us September 6th for the first annual "Paws for Honor" Dinner Dance and Wine Event held at the beautiful Fortino Winery nestled in the Gilroy foothills.

A \$50 ticket includes: 2 drinks, appetizers, dinner, desserts and more. For a group of 10, a table can be purchased for \$450. Come out to experience an evening of live music, dancing, door prizes, silent and live auctions in support of Operation Freedom Paws.



Tickets can be purchased online at [operationfreedompaws.org](http://operationfreedompaws.org). For more information, contact Colleen at 408-832-6712.

## Awards

2012 CNN Top Ten Hero

2011 Napa County Red Cross Hero

## Commendation / Proclamations

2012 City of Gilroy

2013 Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors

2013 Gilroy Chamber of Commerce Good Egg Award

## A Fun Day Had By All



This past May, 64 Golfers gathered at Gilroy Golf Course to attend the 3rd annual Operation Freedom Paws Golf Tournament and Fundraiser along with 50 additional dinner attendees. Thanks to the generous support of the attendees and our sponsors we raised \$20,511. The Macquarie Foundation will match our efforts to bring the grand total up to \$41,023! Very special thanks to: The

Macquarie Foundation, Station 55, Bassian Farms, Gilroy Golf Course, the many donors and our wonderful volunteers and OFP board members who coordinated this event.



## Master This! The Wait Command

Prior to feeding your dog, place him in a sit or down, whichever he will do most consistently.

Place his food dish down and tell him, "Wait"



If he breaks the sit or down, pick the food dish up and correct him, placing him back in the sit or down.

After 10 seconds of waiting patiently immediately tell him, "take"

Gradually increase the hold time from 10 seconds up to 5 plus minutes.

The Wait Command will translate to other areas of training as well. Wait can be used prior to passing through a doorway or gate; etc.

## OFP Needs a New Home

We are in desperate need of a new facility! We have outgrown our current facility and are looking for a permanent home. We want to create an Animal Assisted Therapy Education Center and Training Facility. This will allow us to meet the overwhelming need facing the veterans, clients and families who are reaching out to us.





## How You Can Help

- Look us up! We offer civilian training too! The proceeds from our public training activities help to support our work with veterans and other individuals with disabilities. K9 Coach Plus has now been folded into Operation Freedom Paws; therefore, all proceeds will benefit OFP.
- Have time to volunteer? There are youth and adult volunteer opportunities. Contact Volunteer Coordinator Colleen at [colleenofp@yahoo.com](mailto:colleenofp@yahoo.com)
- Make a secure credit card donation by using the “Donate” button at <http://operationfreedompaws.org> or send a check to Operation Freedom Paws at our mailing address listed above.
- Click the “wish list” button to purchase an item from the Operation Freedom Paws Wish List. This purchase will go directly to a dog and human team!
- Come support us at our next event!
- Like us on Facebook!



An AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB Program



## Thank you

OFP would not be able to exist without the support we have received. We want to send a special thank you to all of you who have helped. The donations of time, money, and Amazon items coming from individuals or businesses, locally and beyond warm our hearts and we are all eternally grateful.

Thank you.