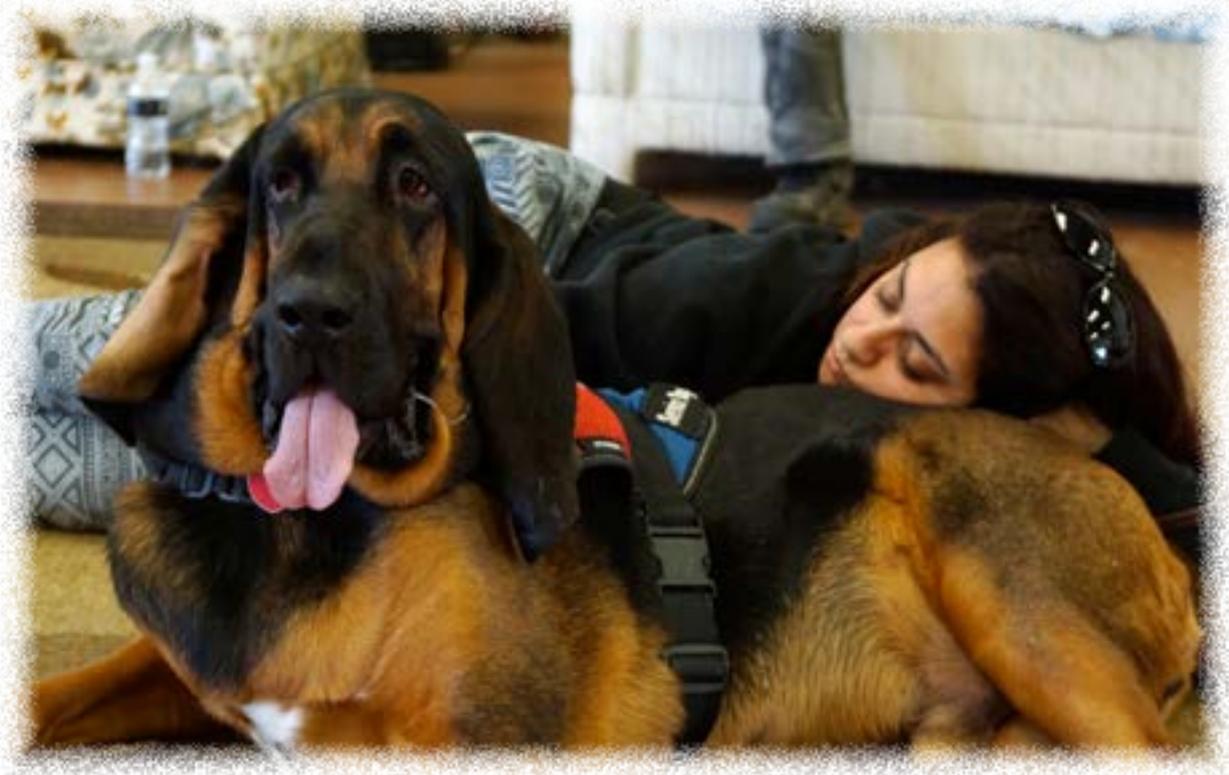


OPERATION **FREEDOM** PAWS



S U P P O R T I N G O F P I N 2 0 1 7



TEACHING CLIENTS TO FISH

FEEDING THEIR SOULS FOR A LIFETIME

As we come to the close of 2017, I find myself reflecting on the challenges we have faced and overcome, as well as strategizing for the hurdles ahead. 2017 has been a year of joy, sadness, challenges, growth and triumphs. With everything that is going on with the world today, I am constantly reminded of why I started Operation Freedom Paws (OFP) and why our mission is even more important today than it was yesterday.

'Service before self', that is what every veteran signs up for when they take the oath to defend the constitution and our country. They write that blank check of service to protect and defend. Today my and OFP's 'service of self' is a call to improve the world of our clients. Today and every day I am re-dedicating myself to the ideals, values and mission of OFP. It is a charge that I accept. I love being a part of an agile and smart organization that has the support of an amazing group of talented people who are like minded, but we cannot do it without your help.

OFP impacts and changes lives every day; not just the lives of our clients but their family, their friends, their communities. It is amazing how a simple act of kindness and caring can bring someone back from the brink. OFP operates under the ideals of 'service before self' every day to help those that need a kind hand re-engage in life.

[Cont. pg.2]

TEACHING OUR CLIENTS TO FISH

FEEDING THEIR SOULS FOR A LIFETIME: FOUNDER'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

September 21, 2017 began our sixth year as a non-profit. When OFP began in 2010 I had no idea the impact OFP would have, I knew I just wanted to help. Helping that one marine has now evolved into 320 clients served. Of those clients served, 80% are veterans who felt that nobody cared, most wanting to give up on life, isolated, having no hope for a better tomorrow. With your help, we have shown them they have a future, that they can change, they can have purpose and meaning in their lives and they are worth it. We encourage them to reconnect with their families, their friends, and their communities. We also show them that they can get out and do the things that you and I take for granted every day with their service dog by their side. The journey isn't perfect, but nothing is.



Each and every day I count my blessings and ask how OFP can better serve its clients, their families and our community. What we do best is help our clients cultivate the core skills needed for them to be the best that they can be with the unique challenges that they face. Dealing with these challenges and utilizing their dog to stay in the present is part of what makes them great service dog teams.

While I often wish for infinite funding and/or winning the lottery, I know OFP needs each and every one of you, our donors, in order to keep going and making a difference in the lives of our clients and their families. We have some major hurdles facing us in 2018. It will be the last year of our amazing \$1/year lease from Recology, which means that we need to raise \$2.2 million to purchase the property, ensuring a permanent home for our organization and clients. During

the time that we are raising funds to purchase the property, we will continue to serve those who are in need requiring us to also raise funds to continue adding clients and rescue dogs to our program. Each team costs an average of \$15k and this year alone we were able to add 52 clients. We hope to maintain those numbers and increase year over year, decreasing those waiting on our applicant list. Sometimes I wonder how we will achieve these goals, but then I think of how much support we receive from donors like you. With your help, I believe deep down that we will achieve our goals and that tomorrow will be better than today. As 2017 comes to a close and you think about your year-end donations looking for how you can make a difference in someone's life, please consider helping Operation Freedom Paws. You can help us change lives for the better; four paws, two feet, one team at a time. May the year 2018 be a blessed year for us all.

-Mary Cortani
Veteran, Founder, and Executive Director



OFF JOINS NEWMAN'S OWN FOUNDATION \$500K HOLIDAY CHALLENGE

HELP OFF WIN \$150,000 BY DONATING TO ITS CROWDRISE CAMPAIGN

Operation Freedom Paws has joined the Newman's Own Foundation \$500k Holiday Challenge, a fundraising competition on CrowdRise, a crowdfunding platform for non-profits. Newman's Own Foundation \$500k Holiday Challenge is a friendly fundraising campaign for eligible US-based 501(c)3 charities. Participating organizations will compete for half of one million dollars in prize money. Operation Freedom Paws has joined the challenge on CrowdRise in hopes of raising money to support our mission; empowering veterans and individuals with disabilities to restore their freedom to live life.



POWERED BY crowdrise

The Newman's Own Foundation \$500k Holiday Challenge is launching on CrowdRise on November 21, 2017 at 12pm ET and runs through January 3, 2018 at 1:59:59pm ET. There are 10 grand prizes up for grabs with the team that raises the most online winning \$150,000 and 10th place winning \$2,500. On #GivingTuesday an additional \$85,000 will be awarded to the top 3 charities. Plus, weekly Bonus Challenges enable charities to win up to another \$115,000.

Help OFP win the Newman's Own Foundation \$500k Holiday Challenge head to <https://www.crowdrise.com/ofpholidaychallenge> this Giving Tuesday, November 21!

FUNDRAISING FOR OUR HEROES

SUPPORT OFF AT ONE OF OUR UPCOMING EVENTS!

We have our calendar set for next year and hope to see you at all of our fantastic events!



- OFP Annual Crab Feed: February 24th & March 17th
- OFP Easter Egg Hunt: March 31st
- OFP Golf Tournament: May 18th
- OFP Wine Gala: August 11th



With many third-party events in-between! Keep up to date on our website and register for any of these events on [Eventbrite!](https://www.eventbrite.com)

THE PERFECT MATCH

MEET SOME OF OUR 2018 CALENDAR TEAMS

The perfect gift for any dog lover or veteran supporter in the area. This year's calendar features twelve of our perfectly matched service dog teams who graduated in the 2016/17 year. In this calendar you will meet various clients and their service dogs who have restored their freedom to live life. Buy your calendar [online](https://www.operationfreedompaws.org) or at the OFP Canine Education Center today!



The following are a few stories from service dog teams who are featured in our calendar. Read their stories and see how OFP has impacted their lives.

THE PERFECT MATCH: DANIEL & PRINCESS

VETERAN TEAM

"My experience [with Operation Freedom Paws] has allowed me to understand and appreciate patience and the love and thoughtfulness of my family, friends, and my dog. At times I felt, and pushed myself to remain, in a mind frame of isolation, always feeling alone. I know now that [this] is untrue. That there are people; my wife, friends and my service dog, Princess, that love me unconditionally and will always be there for me regardless. It allows me to perceive the goodness of others as well as an appreciation for myself and the journey I am continuing to complete to this day."



THE PERFECT MATCH: BONNIE & SMOOCHIE

CIVILIAN TEAM

"Throughout my life I've had multiple traumatic events that included physical domestic violence. The accumulated years of domestic violence and other multiple trauma eventually lead me to develop Post Traumatic Stress. Where once I was a thriving, productive adult with a career as an ICU registered nurse and also as a professional artist:

I was plummeted into a life of massive panic attacks.

Years went by and I was either unable to leave my home or had to have assistance to leave my home to accomplish simple things like shopping. I was unable to attend my children's school activities, I lost most of my friends and we were living in poverty on Social Security Disability.

My life seemed pretty hopeless and meaningless.

Six years ago I received a Service Dog named Smoochie. Although the federal law allows for individuals to train their own service dog, and I had experience with training our own animals, I was so broken that training my own dog proved to be an impossible task.

Then I found Operation Freedom Paws. Operation Freedom Paws is just so far beyond, 'dog trainers'. OFP trains the service dog and the disabled individual as a TEAM and that is what truly made the difference for me.

They not only explained the law, and how to properly handle ourselves in public; they also supported us emotionally as we went through this process. They taught me to trust my dog when he cues to me. [Cont. Pg. 5]



THE PERFECT MATCH: BONNIE & SMOOCHIE (CONT.)

CIVILIAN TEAM

[OFP] taught me to focus outside of myself through the use of the dog and watching him. They taught us specific tasks to train my service dog that help me navigate my way through each day whether it be here, at home, or in public.

Most importantly they taught me that I was not alone. I believe that saved my life.

Directly because of the training, support and guidance that we received through Operation Freedom Paws, I was able to discontinue the Xanax and the anti-depression medication. OFP doesn't just 'train a dog' and turn you loose, OFP INVESTS in you over the long haul because they understand that this is not a fast and easy fix.

As a direct result of this; I have improved so much and am leading such a healthy life that this February I returned to school and am renewing my RN license. I'm on target to return to work as an RN in July, 2017. All of this is possible because of Operation Freedom Paws."

NOTE: Bonnie has now been able to return to work as a licensed RN!

THE PERFECT MATCH: JULIE & MAL

VETERAN TEAM

"My name is Julie and I am a Vietnam Era Veteran.

Before coming to OFP I did not trust humans. I would go out to the store at night so I would not be around people. I would not look at people in fear they may try to make conversation with me. I felt I had no purpose and stopped doing things I once enjoyed (ie gardening, painting and crafts). My life was centered around home, family, and a few friends. [Cont. Pg. 6]



THE PERFECT MATCH: JULIE & MAL (CONT.)

VETERAN TEAM

I could not go out in crowded places because I would go into panic mode. I would also have high anxiety when traveling in a car. Because of this I would not go to doctors appointments in Palo Alto or even Livermore. My world was very closed off due to fear, anxiety and panic.

I started the program with OFP in September of 2016. I had no confidence and stayed away from others. As I worked with Mal, my spirits and confidence started coming back. I started trusting people around me. I will go to the store during the day now. I will let strangers walk up to me now and enjoy talking about Mal and OFP's program for veterans. I have been able to educate people on the difference between a true service animal and the extensive training that the [OFP] program offers.



Mal is able to alert me to medical conditions (ie elevated blood sugar, pain, anxiety, etc.) He stands in a "block" or "watch my back" to make sure people stay out of my personal space. When we are in the car, he will put his head in between the seats if he senses I am getting anxious. He will wake me up from a nightmare by putting his head on my chest.

With the training of OFP I am able to feel comfortable, confident and have purpose again. I have started gardening, painting and get in a car going long distances without the feeling of anxiety or panic.

The motto of OFP is "four paws, two feet, one team" has given me back my dignity, self-worth and confidence. I have also gained an extended family that I trust. The love and caring that is given to all who go through this program builds self esteem, confidence and a feeling of belonging.

Without this program i would have remained depressed, anxious, reclusive, fearful and a forgotten veteran."

THE PERFECT MATCH: MONTE & DC

VETERAN TEAM

"Before OFP I never believed my quality of life would ever improve, that it would just get worse. The new found love (unconditional) and companionship I have with DC is undescrivable.

None of this would have been possible if it wasn't for Operation Freedom Paws.

Semper Fidelis."



THE PERFECT MATCH: ELLIE & BRAVO

CHILD-FAMILY TEAM



"Our daughter has had epilepsy for almost a decade since she was 4 years old. It is not controlled by medication and every few years the seizures can change, become more severe or more frequent. In the last 3 or so years her seizures have turned into silent, nocturnal events putting her at extremely high risk for SUDEP: Sudden and Unexpected Death from Epilepsy.

My husband and I were at our wits end trying to figure out what to do next to help our daughter exist peacefully and safely...there is an unimaginably deep sense of fear and foreboding when you go to bed every night, wondering if you'll be able to catch a seizure before it kills your child. As a parent, that feeling of helplessness is truly terrifying. We have a monitor focused on her at all times however the

monitor could not pick up all silent seizures no matter how hi-tech it was, so we slept in her room when we thought there might be an episode. There was never any real rest for us. The potential for the worst to happen was too overwhelming.

Then we came across Operation Freedom Paws. It was kind of a last straw for us. We knew that they trained service dogs for veterans with PTSD but didn't know if they would be open to helping us and our daughter.

I contacted them through the website, got a very quick and kind response and was told to come and observe class, they would meet us and we would see what could be done, if anything.

In short, Mary Cortani and her exceptional staff spent weeks getting to know us and our daughter, trying to figure out how on earth they could help. It turned out our daughter was terrified of dogs approaching her and at one point I thought, this is never going to happen. Then Mary brought out Bravo to meet us. Our daughter did not turn away in fear for the first time, and that is where our training really began. Mary matched our whole family with Bravo and after a lot of hard work, lots of training and practice we were finally worthy of Bravo. He has been with our family for almost 2 years and we can't imagine life without him.

He sleeps in our daughter's bed and a few minutes before she goes into a seizure he jumps off her bed, runs to our room and shakes to wake us up. If we don't wake up right away he jumps on our bed. He makes sure we know every time she has a seizure. I can't count how many times he has saved her life because of this. [Cont. Pg. 8]





Operation Freedom Paws
777 First St. PMB 515 | Gilroy, CA 95020
"Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team"

THE PERFECT MATCH: ELLIE & BRAVO (CONT.)

CHILD-FAMILY TEAM



Operation Freedom Paws took a chance on us, worked with us and supported us when we had run out of options. We didn't just get a seizure alert dog from OFP, we got our daughter's safety back, we got peace of mind back and we got an incredible support team who are always ready to encourage and help when ever we need it. We have such a sense of relief now that we never could have imagined before, it took some getting used to, that's for sure. Bravo is our daughter's lifeline and for that, we can never thank OFP enough.

There really is no other way to put it, Operation Freedom Paws literally saves lives."

-Vicki (Mother of Ellie)

Learn More about Operation Freedom Paws and how you can help online!

Our website is www.OperationFreedomPaws.org

or follow us on Twitter: @opfreedompaws & Facebook: /OperationFreedomPaws