

CANINES ASSISTING SERVICE HEROES

Highlights:

In 2017 Chapter 850 Vietnam Veterans of America attended a fundraiser in Dover DE in support of Rebuilding Warriors. They provide highly trained and socialized Service/Companion Dogs to Veterans diagnosed as Amputees as well as those with



PTSD, (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). Chapter 850 saw a definite need for this type of program in Delaware so they donated \$10500 to Rebuilding Warriors for a service dog specifically for a Delaware veteran. (Pictured Joe Startt presenting check to Jeff Mullin of Rebuilding Warriors)

Because of the donation from Chapter 850, in December 2017 Brittany Shortall, a Delaware U.S. Air Force veteran received her service dog, Rebel.

Brittany Shortall served in the Air Force from January 2015 to January 2017 as a Security Forces member. Her first station was Minot AFB, North Dakota where she was a missile cop and a member of the Vehicle Control Center. She was then stationed at Dover AFB, Delaware and worked at the Commercial Vehicle Inspection Gate searching for weapons, bombs, and drugs. She is now working at a veterinarian hospital doing what she loves most, helping animals. (Picture Jeff Mullins, Rebuilding Warriors with Brittany Shortall and Service Dog Rebel)



From this brief encounter with this unique program, **C.A.S.H., Canines Assisting Service Heroes** was born. In early 2018, Chapter officers reached out to Nelson Miller of Riedel K9, a local trainer who specializes in training services dogs to see the possibility of starting a local pilot program. Riedel K9 provides highly trained and socialized Service/Companion Dogs that will help veterans diagnosed as amputees, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress



Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). These dogs are specially trained for this mission and have a highly sought after demeanor. After the dog completes training he/she will have a good foundation of obedience and manners to easily bond with the new owner and family. They become great confidence builders aiding veterans as they return to society. The unconditional love given and received by these dogs helps



change the lives of Delaware’s veterans. Nelson Miller is the Delaware State Coordinator for the Eastern States Working Dog Association. After much discussion it was decided to go ahead with the program and a committee was formed.



God looked down on C.A.S.H. and almost immediately a black Labrador retriever was donated to the program. Named CASH, this wonderful dog began training with Nelson with the hopes of presenting him to a Delaware Veteran in September 2018. As expected CASH completed his training and at the annual “*Four Paws Got Your Six*”, a Grass Roots Rescue fundraiser, Cash was presented to Elizabeth Short. (Picture (l-r) Grass Roots



Rescue’s Karli Crenshaw, veteran and K9 recipient Elizabeth Short, Riedel K9’s Nelson Miller, VVA Chapter 850 President Joe Startt and Bryan Clarke. In front are Cash and Bob)

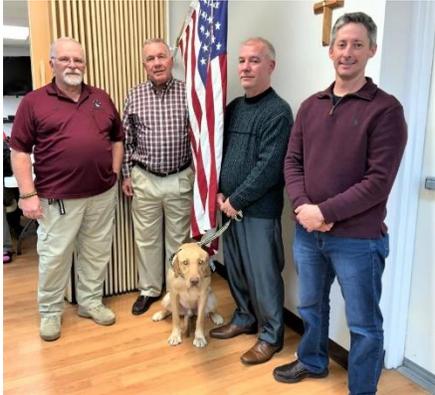
Once again the program was blessed with the donation of a yellow Labrador retriever, Bob. Bob was named in honor and memory of a volunteer firefighter and 911 dispatcher who recently passed away. Still just a puppy, Bob begun the long

road to being a service dog. Unfortunately, about 6-months into his training Sergeant Bob developed traits inconsistent with a service dog. Bob was removed from the program but began a new life with a loving family in the Dover area. (Picture Cash and Bob at “*Four Paws Got Your Six 2018*”)

In early CASH has acquired a chocolate Labrador retriever and a yellow English Labrador from private sources. Named “Chief” and “Gunny”, they have been placed him in training with Riedel K-9. It is hoped that Chief and



Gunny will complete their training in late 2019 or early 2020 and presented to their Delaware Veteran and new family. Also in 2019 CASH had a chocolate Labrador named Major donated by a young military couple that could not keep him. Major has also begun the long process of becoming a service dog. The community support also resulted in the donation of Maggie, a 2 year old Labradoodle,



In 2019 a unique opportunity came along that the CASH program couldn't pass on. A young military couple, both diagnosed with PTSD, applied for the program. The unique thing was they had a yellow Labrador that they would donate to the program. The executive committee met and decided to accept both their application and the donation of "Duke". Duke was already well ahead in his training since he had received training from Nelson at Riedel K-9.

After nearly a year of training and working both with Patty and Richard Carrar, Duke was presented at Chapter 850's annual Christmas party on December 19th 2019. (Pictured left to right Ray Harris, Joe Startt, Service Dog Duke, Richard Carrar (recipient), Nelson Miller (Trainer). Duke's training took on another aspect so he could serve his veterans better, he could pick up items off the ground on command. Due to a physical disability it was difficult for Patty to retrieve things that she dropped, now with Duke's help it is no longer a problem.

As of 1 January 2020, CASH has two dogs scheduled to complete their training this year. With veterans already lined up, the CASH team is in the selection process. Unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in numerous delays in presenting our service dogs to their veterans. The selection process has been slowed due the CASH program leadership being high risk individuals (all over 65 and most with service connected disabilities) and the limited access to dog interviews and training. But, we will be presenting two dogs (Chief and Gunny) in December 2020.



Latest Update: On December 5, 2020 we presented Gunny and Chief to their new veteran families. What a wonderful Christmas present this is for us to give to them.

It is just a small token of our appreciation for all their sacrifice. Pictured below is Ed Heddinger with Gunny and David White with Chief.



We are set to present two service dogs in 2021(Major and Maggie). We are in the process of recruiting two to three more candidates for presentation in 2022. 2021 should see the start of a puppy fostering program. This first year of training consist of puppies from 8 weeks to 14 months learning basic obedience, socialization and the beginnings of advaced service dog training.

Basic Obedience is learning the commands such as sit, stay, heel, down, off etc. This would also include housebreaking (basic potty training for the dog). Socialization lets the dog learn how to properly ride in cars and public transportation and basic manners at home and in public places. The advance training are specialized skills they will need to be learned in service dog training. The foster family would attend regularly scheduled courses with Riedel K-9 to learn the skills necessary and to keep the service dog candidate on track.