

OPERATION **FREEDOM** PAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2018



I CAN THINK OF NO OTHER AS ALTRUISTIC AS A LIGHTHOUSE **THEY WERE BUILT ONLY TO SERVE. -GEORGE BERNARD SHAW**

Since winning the CNN Heroes award in 2011 I am regularly approached by people in-town, out of town and even out of state saying, "You're the dog lady!" At first it would frustrate me because what Operation Freedom Paws does is more than the dog, we truly focus on the individual and the dog is the tool to empower them. Instead, now I smile, say, "Yes" and take the opportunity to explain our mission. I have come to realize that the best way to get the word out is to build the connection with the person and then educate so they understand the passion and drive I feel every day.

We recently celebrated 7 years as a non-profit and are approaching 9 years since the founding of Operation Freedom Paws. This year has brought both joy and sadness. 2018 was the first year we had to face end of service or end of life with multiple clients' battle buddies. We make a promise to every client that we will always be there for them and we continue to follow through on this promise.

Those clients whose dogs can no longer work or had to cross the rainbow-bridge have been matched with new dogs, allowing them to continue moving forward in their journeys. The new service dog is not a replacement but another reason to keep going.

As many of you know, I could talk about OFP all day telling you why it is so important. The one thing I have a hard time with, like many of our clients, is asking for help. 2018 has been a year of growth but with a lot of struggle; donations are down by 50% and yet the applications continue to come in. We have always needed your help, but now we need it more than ever so we can continue to be here, the lighthouse in the storm offering safe harbor.

So whether you believe in us because we rescue dogs, help kids and civilians with disabilities or stand ready to serve our veterans, please donate and share our organization with your family and friends. We cannot do it without you and every donation made to OFP is doubled because you are helping to save at least two lives!

-Mary Cortani
Founder and Executive Director

DEMYSTIFYING THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

RIGHTS AFFORDED TO INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

Recently in our local community we have had a serial ADA lawsuit filer, going from business to business and suing them for not being ADA compliant. While we realize some circumstances can warrant a lawsuit, we prefer to take the approach of teaching our clients to advocate and educate, giving the business an opportunity to learn and fix any issue. If that doesn't work, then we as an organization try to advocate and educate.



Lawsuits make anyone nervous and often businesses become hesitant to take action because they may not know all of their rights. And when it comes to circumstances with disability law the waters can be really muddy. So what are the rights afforded to the individual and businesses?

A disabled person has the right to train their own service dog so long as there is a medical need and the dog performs medical tasks for that individual. The individual and their service dog has the right to enter any establishment and be in any area the public is allowed to go. It is not a health violation for

them to be where other individuals without special attire or regulations are allowed to go. These teams do not have to have a card certifying the dog or medical letter stating they need a service dog. They also technically do not need a vest; however, we strongly encourage one as it alleviates a lot of headaches for everyone involved.

Businesses are allowed to ask two questions per the ADA that will not get them into muddy water with the law:

1. Is that a service dog?
2. What two tasks does the dog perform for you?

The first one is straightforward and doesn't truly weed out many, but some may reply with "Yes, they are my emotional support dog." This is a red-flag, as an emotional support dog gets only housing protection. It does not have the right to enter a public business that does not allow pets. The second question gives you a better sense of how true the service dog team is. We prepare all of our clients for these conversations and they have their answers down. The person does not have to give you information about their disability, although some may choose to, but simply describe two tasks that the dog performs for them. Those who are impersonating service dog teams will not typically be able to answer this question. Now, you may not be able to determine every fake "service dog team", but if the dog is being disruptive (ie eating off the floor, roaming around, etc.), whether it is a true team or not, you have the right to ask them to leave. As we mentioned in the last quarter's [newsletter](#), a true service dog team's handler would leave on their own should the dog become disruptive, as we expect more from our service dog's performance. So in those instances you should never have to ask a true service dog team to leave.

OFP JOINS GLOBAL GIVING THIS GIVING TUESDAY

HELP US RECEIVE UP TO \$150,000 MATCH DOLLARS BY DONATING ON 11/27

The Global Giving 2018 Giving Tuesday Campaign is launching on November 27, 2017 at 12:00am ET and runs through December 31, 2018 at 11:59pm ET. There are 10 bonus prizes up for grabs within 2 categories: Most Funds Raised and Most Unique Donors. On #GivingTuesday an additional \$1,000 will be awarded to the top 2 record breaking charities. Double your donation, head to <https://globalgiving.org/projects/ofp>.



THE PERFECT MATCH

OUR 2019 CALENDAR IS ON SALE!

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 2017/18 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 or at the OFP Canine Education Center today or online [here!](#)



MEET JAMES AND TYRREN

ARMY VETERAN AND HER SERVICE DOG

My sister had a milestone birthday for which my mother made beautiful plans. Several of us were to go to a downtown museum with a restaurant to enjoy the visiting exhibit and have lunch. For those with little military experience, it was a gorgeous set up: a round table in the middle of the room, surrounded by art and glass walls. For someone with deployment experience, I saw a room with no cover, no wall to put to my back, no way to protect all of the people there and no way to realistically check for snipers, as it was an ideal design for them.



This may seem like overkill for downtown Denver, but after my experiences in Afghanistan, this is my mindset. Consequently, I had a horrific panic attack and had to go home. I missed my only siblings' 50th birthday. A horrible memory and a moment in time I can never get back.

Now imagine five years of that. Essentially, five years of slow suicide, cowering in a corner, unable to perform simple functions outside of the house. PTSD with agoraphobia means life comes

to a very painful and abrupt stop. Hope dies when all dreams require my participation out of my pajamas and my kitchen. Basic necessities become a burden and panic inducing. I was the child born independent, now begging people to do my shopping.

After years of trying to get into any and every program available, the call finally came. Mary and Janet were scheduling my interview. I made a promise to leave my kitchen (though not always my pajamas) and come to class. Some of the toughest fifteen months I have put in to date. Yet, here I am, on the other side. I've been camping, I've flown to Colorado, I've been to bowling alleys and movie theaters, I've been to the opera, a concert and to Europe. I have even gone grocery shopping. [Cont. pg. 4]





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

MEET JAMES & TYRREN

ARMY VETERAN AND HER SERVICE DOG



The time has come for me to leave the nest and go to Florida for graduate school in creative writing. A lifelong dream, and for those who don't know, a deathbed promise to my father. I know I can do this, OFP has given me all the tools I need and a bonus lifeline in times of distress. Even across the country, I do not question that OFP will always be there. The program teaches you how to train your dog; the people teach you how to retrain your brain. We don't have disabilities, we just have different abilities and ways of doing things. Each one of us has it inside to find what works and OFP helps to guide that journey.

My service dog, Tyrren, is everything to me: from the care she has learned to give through our training, to the care she has instinctually decided I need. OFP, and all that it encompasses, have given us back our hope and Tyrren has given me the most important thing I could ask for: independence on six feet.

James Ryan
Class of Oct. 2018

Learn How You Can Make A Lasting Impact At www.operationfreedompaws.org