

OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2021



A Letter From Our Founder

For 11 1/2 years, Operation Freedom Paws has rescued hundreds of dogs from an uncertain fate and helped 460 clients. You have played a vital role in furthering our mission of service, and for that and so much more, we can't say this enough-

Thank you for being a part of our clients' success stories!

Operation Freedom Paws (OFP) began its journey in 2010 and became a non-profit in September 2011. Year over year, we have continued to build our program and expand our organizational reach to serve more clients and their families. As we get ready to enter our second decade of non-profit work, we remain committed to empowering veterans, first responders, children and other individuals with disabilities to transform their lives.

We continue to work hard to provide our clients with the comprehensive and effective healing modalities and services they deserve. While service dogs are a crucial part of our program, our work isn't just about these amazing four-legged healers. There are many tools and services we offer our clients along their healing journeys. To make that happen, we need to raise an average of \$20,000 to fund each service dog team.

During our 48-week service dog training program, mental health therapists are available at every class, and outside of class, for one-on-one sessions. Through our partnership with the Stella Center and its world-renowned doctors, we can offer clients who medically qualify, the Stellate Ganglion Block to treat the biological wounds of trauma and post-traumatic stress. OFP further supports clients with access to physical therapy equipment, outings, gas cards and veterinarian care for service dogs in training. OFP mentor-trainers are there to assist in filing Veterans Administration ratings through Veteran Service Offices (VSO), advocate for housing rights, and connect on a call 365 days a year, because sometimes help can't wait. We believe in family support and inclusion in the training and therapy process, because healing does not happen in isolation. And when we say, "we've got your 6," those are not empty words. We are in this together!

OFP remains committed to providing exceptional client services and living the core values of this organization with a dedication to enhancing the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of our clients and their families.

Operation Freedom Paws

Founders Letter (cont'd)

OFPP stands for leadership, integrity, full transparency, and a spirit of community collaboration. For us, it is important to serve not only our clients but the communities where we work and live. It's been my greatest privilege as OFPP's founder and executive director to witness the lives changed and the families healed in this program over the years. I'm excited for this next chapter in our journey. The best is yet to come!

We send our congratulations to all our teams, who have done the hard work, and experienced the challenges and triumphs to become OFPP Certified Service Dog Teams. You will always be our source of motivation and inspiration.

And we extend our deepest appreciation to our donors who have helped to make our mission possible. We speak to the accomplishments and benefits of the program, so you know the resources you've enabled us to put into motion for our clients to regain their independence and restore their lives.

Together, let's continue to help veterans, first responders, children and other individuals with disabilities, and the dogs we rescue, to transform into service dog teams and live their fullest lives.

Each and every client and so-called "ordinary" dog is an extraordinary story of hope and resilience waiting to be lived.

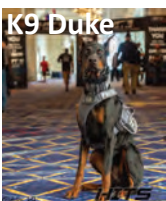
As we countdown to our decade anniversary of non-profit work, we are happy to share this special time in OFPP's history with you. On Saturday, September 25th, we'll be holding our 10th Annual "Paws with Patriots Wine Gala and Auction" to celebrate. Please save the date and come join us to honor all our lifesaving service dog teams and the future teams we will empower together.

Mary Cortani
Founder and Executive Director



OFPP 10th Annual Golf Tournament Sponsors - Thank You!

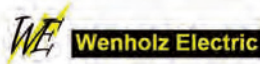
Thank you to all our sponsors! We want to give special recognition to our Ace, Condor, Albatross and long time golf sponsors for sponsoring the "OFPP 10th Annual Charity Golf Tournament & Awards Luncheon" we held on Monday, August 9 at Coyote Creek Golf Club. Your sponsorships champion our fundraising efforts and empower our program. Every dollar raised at the golf tournament will go towards the program and help cover the costs of training for clients and their service dogs. We are truly grateful and look forward to sharing the fundraising results in our next newsletter.



@duke_k9



RAYENOX



Jeri and Curly

Everything I Need to Thrive

Our client Jeri, is an Army veteran who experiences post-traumatic stress related to her military service. Here she shares in her own words her healing journey with us.

Prior to Operation Freedom Paws, I had tried various therapeutic modalities with some success; however, I was merely surviving and desperately wanted to thrive. Resistant at first, I lent myself to the process. I'd grown weary of the suicidal thoughts and self-imposed limitations.

I applied in November 2019 and was matched with Curly in March 2020. When introduced to this German Shepherd/Great Pyrenees mix, I was taken aback by not only his size but the fact that German Shepherds had terrified me. I momentarily felt as if a mistake had been made. Certainly, I would have been matched with a dog no more than 15 pounds. So glad that they knew better than me. Mary often reminded us, "You don't get the dog you want. You get the dog you need."

COVID-19 restrictions had become a new reality, but I found I was more social than ever with training opportunities and the attention Curly was getting. Curly went to work with me each day and our relationship developed. I learned to become less shy and embrace that people were generally nice, trustworthy, and curious.

During those initial weeks and months of self-doubt, I was frequently reminded by the support



team to trust myself and to not give up. My therapist at OFP would often say, "Giving up is not an option." I carry those words with me each day.

Looking back, I can't believe I kept pushing through and am exceptionally proud of myself for not yielding to the familiar limiting fear and uncertainty. Even more significant and rewarding than any of my past accomplishments was the day Curly and I graduated, April 8, 2021. Without question, it was my happiest moment. We did it! And, he was officially mine.

Curly is a wonderful dog as is this organization who rescued him. He is the love of my life and I am still learning from him every day. He is so smart, gentle, funny, and affectionate. He makes my life full with his unyielding love, acceptance, protection and joy. He keeps me on track with alerts when I "check out" or when my body chemistry is off.

On March 30, 2021, at no cost to me, Mary afforded me an additional source of recovery, the Stellate Ganglion Block. This is a procedure that has evidence to support an improved quality of life and reduction of symptoms for people with post-traumatic stress. On our drive home from the procedure (yes, Mary was with me the entire time!) I have a vivid memory of the colors of the trees, the sky, and a feeling of comfort. It was and is still the case today, as if the sunglasses had come off and the world was brighter and more inviting. I'm blown away by the reduction in anxiety, increased attention to detail, and heightened ability to learn and problem solve.

Currently, I'm nearly completely present and engaged in life. I started working full-time and I'm pursuing an exciting new medical skill set. What a journey this has been! During those inevitable moments of self-doubt, I look at Curly and am reminded that pushing past fear has tremendously rewarding results.

Jeri and Curly

Everything I Need to Thrive (cont'd)

It goes without saying that I'm beyond grateful for the team who made this lifetime milestone a reality. Dyan, Mary, Martha, Janet, Dave, Steve, Nancy, the mentor-trainers, and the sponsors and donors who make this process possible, thank you. A special thank you also to Mary for your constant love and support. Thank you for providing everything I needed in order to thrive.

With love and light,
Jeri



OFP Upcoming Fundraising Events: When You Participate, You Make a Difference!

Saturday, September 25th (5P-10P):

Raise a glass and raise a paddle to help raise funds for lifesaving service dog teams! Join us for the "OFP 10th Annual Paws with Patriots Wine Gala and Auction" at our Canine Education Center in San Martin. This year will be very special as we celebrate a decade of non-profit work.

The evening will be hosted by 94.5 Bay FM's Jona Denz-Hamilton and Gilroy Chamber of Commerce President, Mark Turner. You'll enjoy a beautiful dinner, auctions, and live music by WheelHouse and the OFP ALLSTARS featuring SJ Sharks, Mikey Day. This is your chance to hear from our founder and clients about the profound impact supporters, like you, have made and will make on our mission.



Saturday, October 16th (12P-4P):

The El Camino Club presents the "2021 Chili Champions" Cook-Off to benefit OFP at Atelier des Savant Fous in Gilroy, sponsored by Sarah's Vineyard and La Vie Desante Wineries. The competition will heat up as local first responders battle it out for chili bragging rights. Come enjoy chili tastings, BBQ, wine, beer and live music by Steel Horse.



Saturday, October 24th (10A-12P):

If you love bowling, this event is right up your alley. The California Bowling Writers presents their "3rd Annual Bowling Event" to benefit OFP. Enjoy a great time on the lanes, tasty treats, and a silent auction.



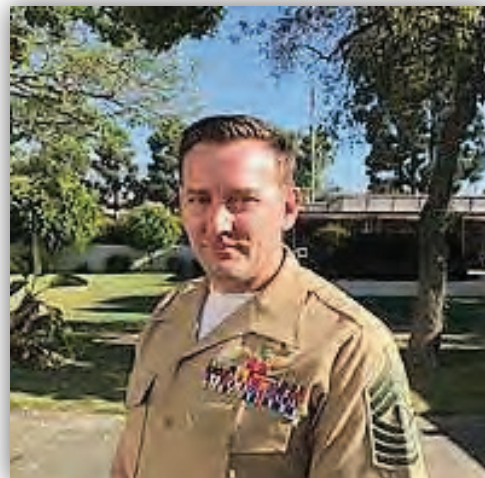
We are incredibly grateful to all the organizations and individuals who champion our fundraising efforts to empower our clients. Look for emails and social media posts with more details about our upcoming events. If you're interested in either volunteering or making an in-kind donation to one of our events, please contact marketing@operationfreedompaws.org. Thank You!

Operation Freedom Paws - Honorary Ambassador

Sean Brownlee

Master Gunnery Sergeant and Future Operations Chief for the U.S. Marine Corps, Sean Brownlee, has shown a steadfast advocacy for Operation Freedom Paws (OFP) and our mission. Sean is a highly respected member of both the military and civilian communities. In addition to his distinguished military service, Sean is the CEO of Ravenox, a top-rated Amazon retailer that manufactures and sells high-quality rope and cordage made in America.

Needless to say, Sean wears many hats well. That's why our founder and executive director, Mary Cortani, and the board members of Operation Freedom Paws were thrilled to hear he was ready to wear one more. On a visit to OFP in May, Sean was officially asked to be an Honorary Ambassador of Operation Freedom Paws and accepted! He shares our mission values, commitment to those we serve, and a genuine desire to give back where his actions match his intent. Sean shared, "I'm proud to support the Operation Freedom Paws essential mission and advocate on behalf of those who cannot. I hope this outreach will create a positive impact on those who need it most."



When Sean became an OFP Ambassador, he was presented with a hand-crafted American

flag created by our veteran client Ramon. Sean was incredibly touched by the gift and its message resonated with him on the deepest level. The flag is hung in a place of honor.



In his role, Sean will help drive awareness to our mission among decision makers in the veteran community to broaden our resources and ability to reach more veterans in need. He will also continue to help us open doors with businesses and corporations where their giving goals and our mission goals are passionately aligned, among other roles.

Sean has also generously shared the Operation Freedom Paws mission with his own customers, encouraging donations and giving 10% of the proceeds of Ravenox dog leash sales to our mission. If you have yet to discover Ravenox products, they carry everything from paracords and bracelets to bird houses and dog products. Speaking of dogs, Sean has a deep love for them. The Ravenox mascot is his German Shepherd, Blitz.

We're honored to welcome Sean as an Honorary Ambassador of Operation Freedom Paws. Thank you for your integrity, business acumen, and heart, Sean. Our OFP team is excited to collaborate with you and amplify the ability for more veterans, first responders, children and other individuals with disabilities to transform their lives. Please join us in congratulating Sean Brownlee!



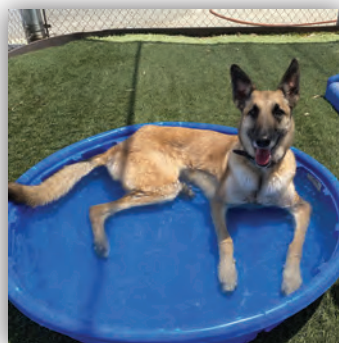
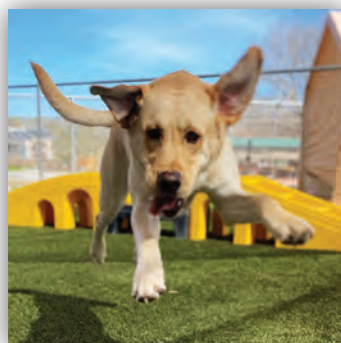
OFP Daycare and Boarding - The Dog Days of Summer

An Update from Renee, Director of Operations

While summer may be coming to a close and kids are back to school, that doesn't mean the hottest days of the year are behind us. August has some of the biggest scorchers on record throughout the United States. The dog days of summer and early fall can really bring the heat! So it's important to be mindful of the higher temperatures and your dog's safety, long after the summer vacations are over.

We all know that hotter days present unique challenges and health concerns for your dogs, first and foremost, overheating. That's why it's important to provide cool, clean, drinking water for them at all times. Going out for a walk or hike? Take a portable water bowl and bottle. If at all possible, allow your dog to stay inside during the hottest times of the day. Try to plan your walks for early mornings or late afternoons. Like your dogs, you reap the health benefits from staying out of the prime heat of the day. On your outings, look for shady spots where you and your dog can rest and recharge.

During your daily travels, never leave your dog alone in your vehicle, even if the windows are down. The inside of your vehicle gets exponentially hotter than the outside temperature very quickly. While unintentional, we can pose a serious health risk to our dogs that can sadly be life-threatening. If you see an animal in an unattended car, contact the police immediately for assistance. The owner probably doesn't realize the danger their dog is in, and time is critical.



It's important to know the signs of heatstroke. Excessive panting, drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, and uncoordinated movements can all be indicators. Dogs at high risk are puppies, seniors, overweight dogs, short snout dogs (Pugs, Bulldogs, Frenchies, Boxers), and heavy coated dogs (Goldens, Huskies, Great Pyrenees). If you think your dog is experiencing heatstroke, move them to a cool area and call your veterinarian immediately. Your vet may advise you to pour cool not cold water on their belly to avoid shock and help them gradually cool down. It's generally recommended to let them drink small amounts of cool, and again, not cold water. At OFP Daycare and Boarding, we provide kiddie pools, plenty of cool drinking water, a shaded play area, and misters to help keep our furry guests comfortable and hydrated.

Another thing to consider when the sun has been beating down all day is the temperature of the pavement, sand, and grass. Dog paw pads are not adaptable to heat, so it's best to apply the 5-second rule here. Place the back of your hand on the ground and if you can't hold it there for five seconds, then it's too hot for your dog to walk on. You can also look at buying booties to protect your dog's feet. It will take some training and adjustment on your dog's part, but booties can really make a difference.

Then there's your dog's coat. Some dogs benefit from a clipping (your vet will know) and other dogs need their coats to help keep them cool (believe it or not!). Maybe you have a thin coated light-colored dog that needs doggie sunscreen. Be mindful not to use human sunscreen, that can be toxic for your dog. You'll want to use a highly trusted sunscreen made specifically for dogs. We recommend you check to make sure your dog is free of fleas, ticks, and foxtails. A tick and flea protocol prescribed by your vet can help to protect against life-threatening bacteria carried by their hosts. And finally, a good ear check is crucial. Humidity, heat, and water activities can increase your dog's risk for ear infections.

We hope these tips help you and your favorite furry companion to beat the heat and continue to some great memories in the great outdoors.

Fundraising Highlights

Together We Amplify The Good!

We want to thank everyone who participated in our “Rock & Claws for a Cause” event. The day kicked off with a delicious crab feed to-go compliments of Old City Hall Restaurant followed by a great virtual livestream concert with the JJ Hawg Band! We were grateful to have this talented trio who has taken to the stage for Aerosmith, Heart and The Fabulous Thunderbirds, take to OFP’s stage in support of our fundraising efforts. James and John Jr. are veterans, and John Michael is the child of a veteran, so OFP’s mission is close to their hearts.

Our founder and executive director, Mary, spoke to OFP’s continued commitment to the veterans, first responders, children, and other individuals with disabilities we serve, despite the challenges of COVID-19. Our veteran clients, Chau, Jeri, and Adonis, shared their powerful personal stories and the impact of the training program and their service dogs in empowering their lives.

Because this OFP community bid, watched, and donated their talents and resources to the event, we reached our \$20,000 goal! That is what it costs us to fully fund and welcome a new service dog team into our program.



A big thank you to Marine veteran Bobby and his wife, Fran, the owners of Old City Hall Restaurant, for the delicious food, James, John Jr., and John Michael of the J.J. Hawg Band for donating their musical talents, and our valued sponsors, The Ford Store Morgan Hill, Family Pet Care Center, and Ravenox, for their continued and incredible support. We’re equally grateful to our awesome hosts-94.5 BAY FM's Jona Denz-Hamilton and 104.3's The Hippo and J.J. Hawg drummer, John Michael, Motivational Misfits, Full Force Sound & Light Production, LLC , and Shadow Operations for the great video, audio, and tech support for production. Special thanks to our wonderful volunteers Diane, Nicole, Katie, Nicola, Dom and Carmen!

Our deepest thanks to our veteran clients Adonis, Chau, and Jeri, for sharing their voices to inspire others to seek and find help, and to Mary, for living our mission with a passion every day.

Fundraising Highlights

Together We Amplify The Good! (cont'd)

Our "OFP Grill & Chill" campaign gave our supporters the chance to start the summer off in style! Participants could win either a Next Grill 4-burner BBQ generously donated by the Home Depot Morgan Hill team along with a chef quality BBQ kit created by our client, Bear, or a BMX 52 Qt. Igloo cooler. A very big congratulations to our winners, Phyllis Pierce and Frances Ellis (pictured here).

Supporters helped us raise \$7,152, which has contributed to paying veterinarian bills, supplying gas cards, food, and providing mental health services to our clients. Every donation, every dollar, added up to making a difference.

Thank you to Angel (Store Manager), Yesinia (Community Captain), Jeff, Sefora and the entire The Home Depot Morgan Hill Team for their commitment to our community and veterans.



And thank you to our client, Bear, for giving whole-heartedly of his time and talents to put together and donate a custom BBQ kit, including a beautiful knife set provided by Williams Cutlery and Gifts. Special thanks to documentary filmmaker Vicki Topaz for letting us share her powerful short film, "Veterans Speak about PTSD" and to our clients for bravely sharing their healing journeys after experiencing service-related trauma.

And our gratitude to the OFP community who participated, donated and shared! We cannot begin to express what it means when you continue to spread the word and share our mission with friends, family members and colleagues. It is the power of community on every level that makes it possible for our clients to transform their lives. We will continue to share the impact you all are making.