

OPERATIONFREEDOMPAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2022



AN END OF YEAR MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER: The Profound Gift of Everyday Life

As 2022 ends, I am reflecting on all that Operation Freedom Paws (OFP) has accomplished this year. 2022 has had its ups and downs. We have all faced challenges and survived. This fourth quarter newsletter is about believing there is a better tomorrow than today. Believing in the good, caring for one another, smiling at someone when you pass by them, or saying hello even when you may not feel like it, it can all make a difference. You never know how your actions can brighten someone's day, or your own.

We have seen significant progress with our clients this year. You, our supporters, don't always get to see that progress, but we strive to share with you how important your role in that progress is. For our clients, progress is sometimes measured in things you and I take for granted every day like stepping outside of our homes, having a conversation with a stranger, taking our kids to Disneyland, reconnecting with our partner over dinner at a restaurant, starting a job, going to school, or trying something new. These moments may feel like daily events for us, but for our clients, these are huge milestones that we cheer on and congratulate them for achieving. These are moments we have the honor of witnessing. So, every minute volunteered, every tax-deductible dollar donated to OFP makes a difference in our clients' lives and helps give them moments to be celebrated and cherished. Because for some of our clients, a second career, treasured family memories, new adventures, retirement, a new day for the everyday things to happen is a profound gift.

So yes, I count my blessings every day. I am grateful for all of you, our supporters, champion fundraisers and donors, our ambassadors and sponsors, our community partners, the folks that attend our events and the folks that ask us to do presentations. I am grateful for our clients and their families for trusting in OFP. I am grateful for the community we live in and our community that spans across the country. The gratitude I feel for my incredible staff that keep things going and moving forward every day.

May we all count our blessings, be kind and supportive. May we not judge a book by its cover but by its character. May your lives be blessed each and every day and thank you for being a part of our community.

Founder's Message (cont'd)

Every penny counts. Please consider OFP if you are making a tax-deductible end-of-year donation this holiday season. And if you become a monthly donor, you enable us to sustain our mission throughout the year. In doing so you will help us to save two lives, one team at a time. When you do what you can, you never know how far that ripple of good will go and how many lives it will touch.

Four Paws Two Feet One Team. May 2023 be all you hope for and may it be filled with blessings and miracles. Know you have been a part of making blessings and miracles happen here at OFP.

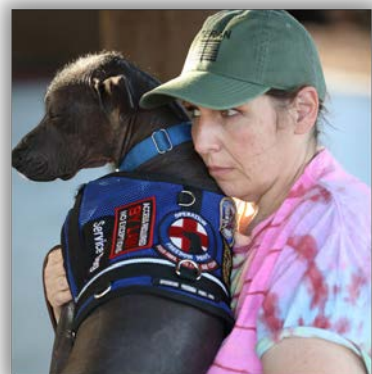
My Sincerest Gratitude,
Mary Cortani, Founder and Executive Director of Operation Freedom Paws



Veteran & Nurse Saunya and Service Dog Shadow "OFP Has Become My Safe Place"

I first arrived at OFP over a year and a half ago. I learned about the training program in 2019 while in rTMS treatment at the VA clinic in Marina, California. The treatment was for the PTSD I developed as a result of my time in the Navy. During this period, my dog passed away and I was devastated. The technician that performed my treatments told me about OFP and encouraged me to discuss the program with my primary physician. I did and my doctor agreed after researching the issue that it would be a great opportunity for me. Unfortunately, about this time, COVID hit. As a registered nurse at my local county hospital, I became very busy and nearly forgot about OFP altogether. Two years later, once COVID's impact on the community lessened, I realized that my PTSD was now heightened. It had been complicated by my experience with the dying and death I witnessed during the pandemic. I was also extremely exhausted from working so many extra hours. So, in summation, I was a wreck.

I managed to push through during that critical period of time when I was needed most. But as things settled a bit and I had time to reflect on what happened, I began to spiral mentally and physically into a deep hole of depression and anger. I became even less trusting of those around me and critical of what I believed was apathy. My daughter reminded me of OFP and encouraged me to apply to participate in the program. Initially I thought that it would be too great of a commitment because the hospital still had a huge need of my time as we had lost several staff members during the pandemic. We now needed to address all the cases that had been delayed during COVID. My daughter was persistent in her encouragement and I finally agreed to apply.



I got a call after I completed the application and submitted it for an interview. To be honest, I went to my interview and left terrified. I am very protective of my personal space and am not comfortable with being touched. The interview team insisted that I hug them and I was so anxious I thought I might vomit. But somehow, I was able to tolerate the hug though it was painful and distressing at the time. I wasn't sure that I would be able to participate and make a huge commitment to a minimum of two classes a week, each lasting about 3 hours. I wasn't only concerned about what I felt was an intimate environment, but I didn't believe my work would be willing to accommodate the hours I needed to participate in OFP's training program.



Veteran & Nurse Saunya and Her Service Dog Shadow "OFP Has Become My Safe Place" (cont'd)

I must admit it was difficult. But with the help of my physician who wrote a note to my work stating that I needed to be allowed the time necessary to attend classes, along with the incredible support of all the staff at OFP, I was able to do it. I also had the support of my daughter who drove me to classes and stayed with me during my classes for the first six weeks.

I discovered that OFP wasn't just a program that helped train me and my dog Shadow, but it also offered additional support with a therapy group called "Yacht Club", which I found incredibly helpful. I was hesitant at first but quickly recognized that it helped me significantly. When I first attended "Yacht Club", I never would have believed that I could participate in such an intimate and open setting with mostly men, let alone grow to feel that it was a safe place to discuss things that I would have never shared before. This is now a group that I feel is so important that I schedule my life around it. Everyone there has been a blessing and made a huge impact on me and my ability to trust people.



Today, despite the fact that Shadow and I are certified by OFP as a service dog team, I choose to continue to attend classes and "Yacht Club." OFP has become my safe place and the staff as well as several other clients have become invaluable to me and my physical, emotional, and mental health. I have discovered that I am able to go places and do things that I would not have even considered before coming to OFP. I believe OFP has helped me see the world in a positive light. Shadow has become such a comfort to me that I have become more independent and satisfied with my life. Having a dog by your side to alert you of your medical needs before you are able to recognize them yourself or assist you in navigating social settings is a huge asset. Shadow even helps me find my car when I forget where I parked it. Despite becoming certified I still see ways that Shadow and I can become an even better team. Fortunately the OFP team allows us to continue to participate in the program. Now I hope that I can help others find the program and those just entering the program recognize the benefits.



The 2023 OFP Calendar is Now Available! Get Your Copy Today!

The Operation Freedom Paws (OFP) 2023 calendar theme is "Saving Two Lives, One Team at a Time". The pages of this calendar are dedicated to the special, therapeutic human-canine relationship at the heart of our mission. Each month celebrates an OFP Certified Service Dog Team who has graduated from our program thanks to their teamwork with our mentor-trainers, commitment to the program and funding from supporters.

All calendar proceeds will go to directly to work for our clients and continue to help save two lives, one team at a time. You can purchase the calendar online at yearbox.com/ofp or if you're local, stop by Operation Freedom Paws where the calendar is also available for purchase for \$20.00.



OFP Service Dog Ivy

Purina's First-Ever "Visible Impact Award" Winner

Roughly 3.5 million military veterans suffer from PTSD. Service dogs are demonstrated to reduce the symptoms of PTSD, yet only 1% of those who seek a service dog receive one each year. For over a decade, Operation Freedom Paws (OFP) has been committed to helping veterans reduce the severity of their PTSD symptoms through that special therapeutic human-canine relationship.

As part of its 5th annual Service Dog Salute program Purina® Dog Chow® launched the brand's first-ever "Visible Impact Award" in partnership with the Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans and actor, producer, Wilmer Valderrama. This award was established to bring awareness to the life-changing impact service dogs provide in the lives of veterans experiencing PTSD and the service dog organizations who train them.

OFP client Todd, an Army veteran and retired firefighter, shared with Purina® his personal journey through the training program with his service dog, Ivy. OFP was thrilled when Todd and Ivy, a rescued Great Pyrenees, were named one of only five national finalists. The winner of the "Visible Impact Award" was then decided by a public vote that took place from September 1 - October 17. Thanks to our amazing community, including Todd's fellow firefighters and first responders, the local media, and supporting organizations, they won the vote!

Todd and Ivy, his wife Michelle, and our founder and executive director Mary Cortani were flown to Philadelphia by Purina® to receive the award. On November 19, in front of a live audience at "The National Dog Show", Todd and Ivy were honored as the "Visible Impact Award" winners with Mary and Michelle proudly looking on. Mary remarked, "We're grateful for the recognition of Todd and Ivy as this year's winners of the Purina® 'Visible Impact Award' because it brings attention to the importance of service dogs helping veterans with disabilities. While attending 'The National Dog Show' and watching Todd receive the award, I was reminded of why we do what we do every day." Todd added, "This award is the culmination of all the work and dedication of incredible people that care and support Vets and first responders. The award should honestly have the names of hundreds of people who had enough love to reach out to a man who had lost his way."



As a result of winning the grand prize, both Operation Freedom Paws and Todd will be awarded a beautiful gift that will benefit both Todd's family and an OFP service dog team. It costs approximately \$20,000 to put a team like Todd and Ivy through OFP's program. Mary expressed her gratitude by saying, "We can't say enough about the amazing treatment and attention that the Purina® folks put into making sure we had a fabulous experience and felt valued. It's a wonderful team of caring humans."

Todd humbly reflected on the journey that led to this moment with Purina®. "Every time I look into Ivy's eyes when I'm having a bad day, I see all the people that God put in my life to help me come back from my Hell. This award that Ivy received should be a beacon of hope for the thousands of other men and women who think they are alone, discarded and not loved. Don't give up. There is a way to get out of your darkness. It may not be my way or someone else's way, but you are worth it."

49ers "Salute to Service"

49ers Honor Mary Cortani & 16 OFP Veteran Service Dog Teams

"The 49ers leave the team's legacy off the field through hands-on projects, outreach to those who serve our communities and creating uplifting experiences for those who need hope the most."
- 49ers Community Relations

Operation Freedom Paws (OFP) was incredibly honored to be a recipient of the San Francisco 49ers amazing community during their "Salute to Service" weekend. On Saturday November 12, sixteen OFP veteran teams and their families were treated to a private "Practice Day Visit" where they received personalized jerseys for themselves and their service dogs and 49ers merchandise. These veterans were personally thanked for their service to our country by the general manager of the 49ers organization, John Lynch. He was presented with a wooden flag custom-made by OFP mentor-trainer, Ramon, with both the 49ers and OFP logos featured together on the flag. Clients enjoyed a beautiful breakfast and then headed out to the field for an exciting "meet and greet" with the team after watching them run plays. Even though the team had an important game the next day, the players were very generous with their time by signing autographs and taking pictures with our veteran clients while thanking them for their service.

On Sunday November 13, Operation Freedom Paws veteran clients and their families attended a sold-out "Salute to Service" game against the L.A. Chargers and watched all the action on the field from a private viewing deck with a catered dinner provided. Our founder and executive director, Mary Cortani, was honored on the field as the "Frontline Hero of the Game" and the 49ers and U.S. Bank surprised her with a \$20,000 check. Mary shared, "it's not often that people can surprise me. But the 49ers and U.S. Bank certainly did when they presented me with that check in front of 70,000 people cheering on our organization." She added, "I was so deeply grateful to receive such an incredible gift and to share in that experience with my veteran clients, staff, and the community." The 49ers and U.S. Bank not only empowered and shared OFP's mission with the 70,000 people in attendance but shared it with a nationwide audience of millions.



We cannot thank the 49ers Community Relations Team enough for leading this amazing act of community support to benefit our veteran clients and their families. Careful consideration was given to every detail to ensure the best experience for our clients and the greatest positive impact on our mission. Mary summed up the events of the weekend, "The 49ers afforded OFP clients and their families a once-in-a-lifetime experience that could have never happened without their efforts and generosity. It was an example of community at its very best and a beautiful way to honor these veterans".

Deepest gratitude to Stacy McCorkle (49ers Community Relations Senior Director), Saya Lindsay and Michelle Beck (49ers Community Relations Senior Managers) and Rena Abu-Gharbiyeh (49ers Community Coordinator and Event Organizer) for championing this experience and handling all the moving parts so seamlessly. And thank you to everyone at the 49ers organization, the team, and U.S. Bank for all the incredible support they showed our veteran teams, their families, and our staff.

OFP Daycare and Boarding–The Gift of Longtime Friendships

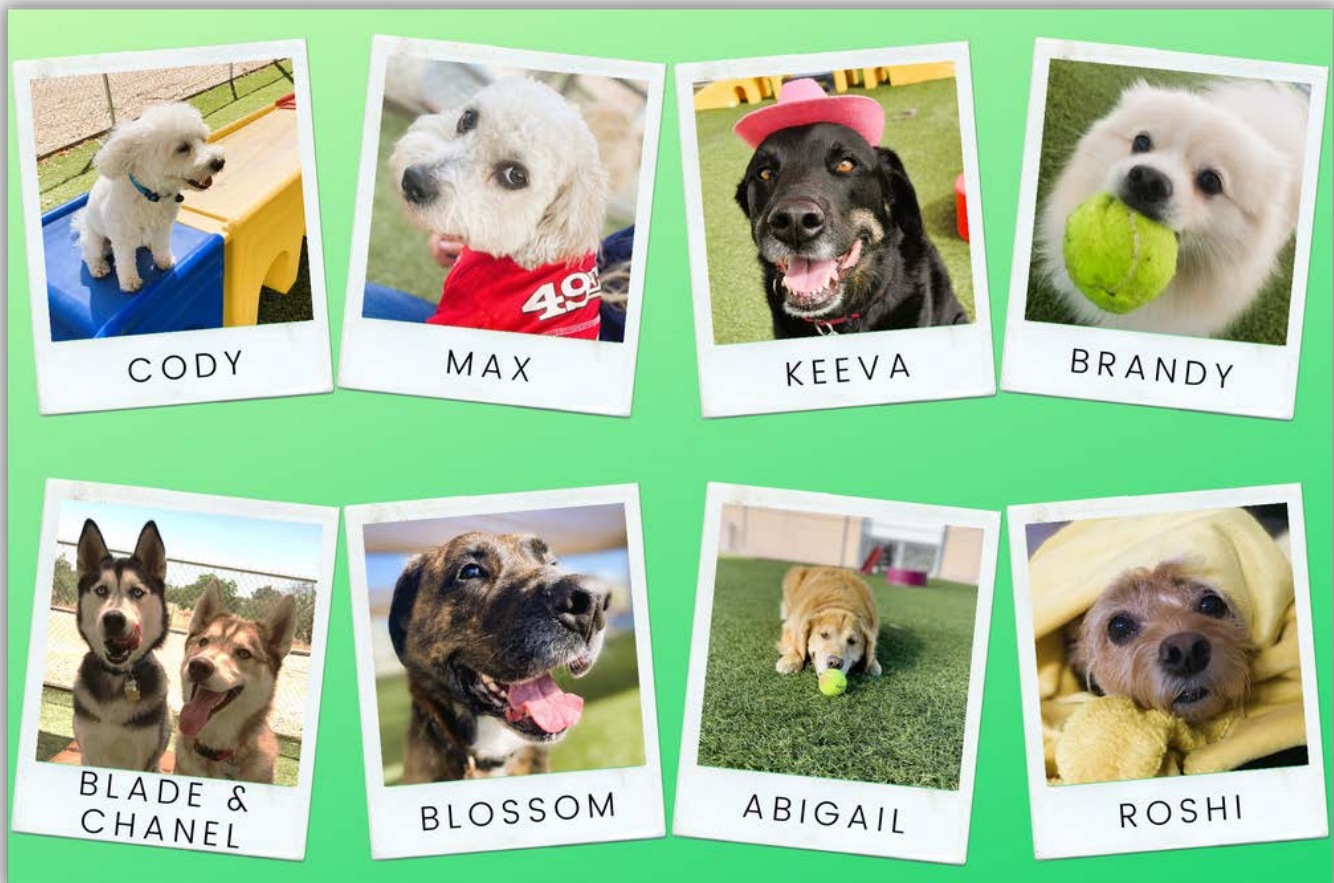
A Holiday Message from Renee, Director of Operations

Wow! What a year 2022 has been! We've had the joy of greeting lots of new furry faces, the elation of welcoming back familiar faces, and the sorrow of saying goodbye to those friends who have touched our hearts and crossed over the rainbow bridge.

In an ever-changing world, our four-pawed companions continued to give us constant love and stability. Our team at Operation Freedom Paws Daycare and Boarding is forever grateful to our customers who share and trust us with their fur babies.

We wanted to take this year-end newsletter to recognize a few of our customers who have been with us from the beginning and have continued to support us in so many ways, especially during the most challenging of years. For some of our longtime furry friends, we are proud to be their home away from home. It's awesome to watch our customers pull into our parking lot and see their pups' faces light up because they're excited to play with their two and four-legged friends here. Some of them have even taken on hosting roles and love to make new pups feel at ease.

We think their faces speak volumes about the love and enjoyment they have blessed us with throughout the years.



**Cody – Pawrents: Michelle and Madeline • Max – Pawrent: Rena • Keeva – Pawrents: Shelly and Sal
Brandy – Pawrents: Carolyn and Floyd • Blade and Chanel – Pawrents: Karen and John
Blossom – Pawrents: Sandra and Dave • Abigail – Pawrent: Bruce • Roshi – Pawrents: Amy and Paula**

And thank you to ALL our customers. We are honored to care for your fur babies and have them be a part of our family. We deeply appreciate your continued business that helps to empower our mission and save lives at both ends of the leash.

You are all a gift in our lives. We are excited for the promise of new friendships growing into longtime friendships and longtime friendships growing even more treasured. From everyone here at OFP Daycare and Boarding, we wish you all a wonderful holiday season and a very Happy New Year!

Thank You to our 11th Annual Wine Gala Sponsors Star One Credit Union and Piedmont Moving Systems

Our deepest thanks to the sponsors of OFP's 11th Annual "Paws with Patriots" Wine Gala for their incredible support of our mission!

STAR ONE CREDIT UNION -DOUBLE MAGNUM SPONSOR-



The employees, volunteers and Board of Star One recognize the importance of contributing to the communities we serve and being a strong corporate citizen.

Star One partners directly and indirectly with many different organizations throughout Santa Clara County and neighboring counties to support and provide resources through direct financial support, in-kind contributions to organizations, and by participating in local public service activities.

PIEDMONT MOVING SYSTEMS -MAGNUM SPONSOR-



Piedmont Moving Systems is a full-service moving team, operating as a family-owned business since 1981. From server transport to corporate logistics, our Silicon Valley based business offers a wide range of comprehensive moving services tailored to the unique needs of local businesses. Our fully trained and certified moving team is well-equipped to handle technology distribution systems, hospitality logistics, trade show and retail transport, data center transfers, and warehousing needs of every magnitude.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU -YEAR LONG SUPPORT-



Operation Freedom Paws would also like to extend a very special thank you to the Local Union I.B.E.W 332, the Joint Electrical Industry Fund and the National Electrical Contractors Association for their continued support throughout 2022. Whether it was sponsoring our golf tournament, holding their own golf and poker tournaments to benefit OFP, or doing electrical work at our Canine Education Center, their support was constant throughout the year.
Thank you!

End of Year Giving

The Gift of Saving Lives

Throughout the year we celebrate the teamwork between our service dog teams and the OFP community. Together, we have welcomed 510 teams and their families into the training program. It's a triumph to see the resources this community enables us to put in our clients' hands and the hard work they do with those resources to transform their lives. Hopefully, the clients' stories we are sharing in this newsletter and on social media continue to show you the profound impact your giving makes in their lives.

In this season of giving, we ask that you please consider a tax-deductible gift of a one-time or a recurring donation that helps to sustain our mission throughout the year. You can donate at ofpendofyear22.givesmart.com. With over 100 people on our waiting list, your gift will help to bring new hope in the new year to veterans, first responders, children and other individuals with disabilities, their families and shelter dogs who are ready to fulfill their purpose. Happy Holidays to you and your family!



OFP 2023 Upcoming Events

When You Participate, You Make a Difference!

Our team loves the opportunity to spend time with our community. We've got some great fundraising events planned for 2023. Remember, your participation makes a profound difference in the lives of our clients, the service dogs by their sides, and their families. Proceeds from our 2023 events will go directly to work for our service dog teams. We hope you'll join us!

Your Attendance Empowers our Mission!

February 4, 2023

OFP Crab Feed
Old City Hall Restaurant
Gilroy, CA

March 25, 2023

OFP Pasta Feed
Old City Hall Restaurant
Gilroy, CA

April 8, 2023

OFP Community
Easter Egg Hunt
OFP Canine Education Center
San Martin, CA

May 12, 2023

12th Annual OFP Golf Tournament
Coyote Creek Golf Course
Morgan Hill, CA



August 5, 2023

The OFP 12th Annual
"Paws with Patriots" Wine Gala
OFP Canine Education Center
San Martin, CA

Fall 2023 (Date TBD)

The OFP 4th Annual
Bowling Tournament
Location TBD

November 12, 2023

Morgan Hill Veterans Day Run
Benefiting Local
Veteran Organizations
Morgan Hill, CA

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