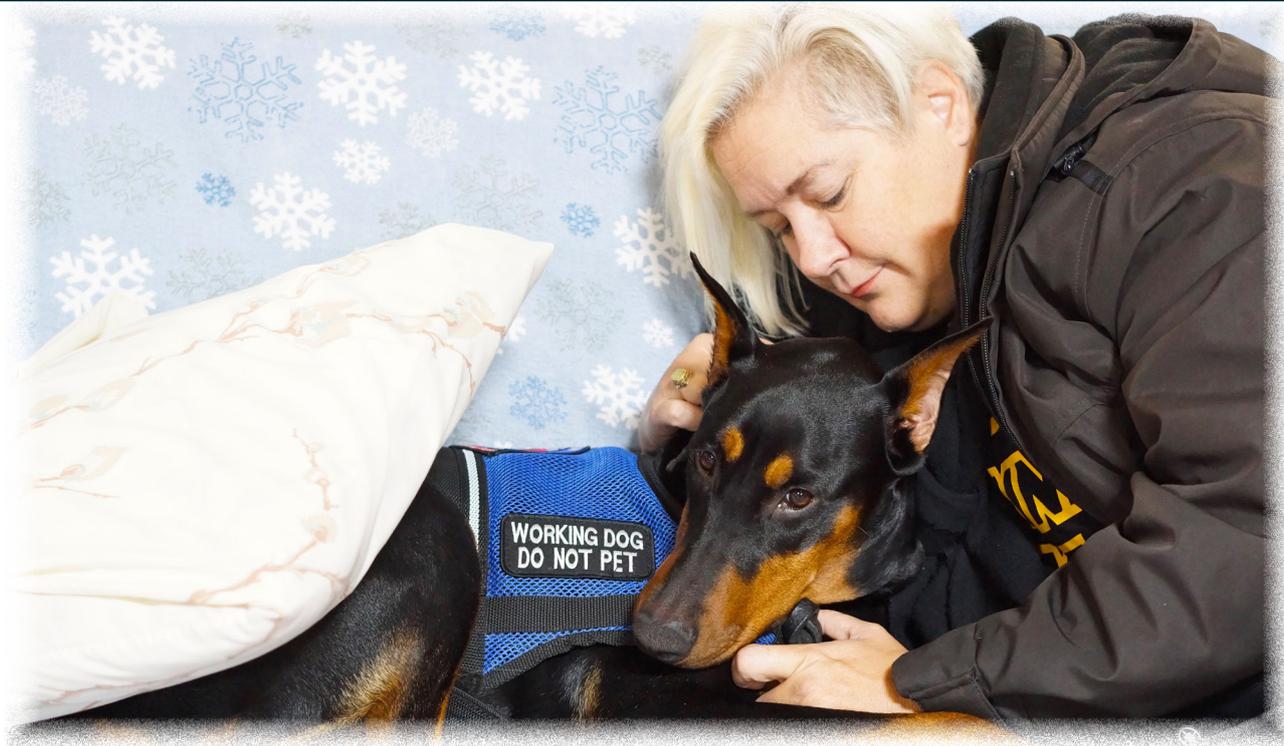


# OPERATIONFREEDOMPAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2019



## KINDNESS IS LIKE A BOOMERANG IT ALWAYS RETURNS

Dear Readers,

Thank you for subscribing to and reading our newsletter. With 2018 behind us, we look to the future and want to begin the new year letting you know how much your support means to us. 2018 was a rollercoaster of a year with lots of emotional ups and downs.

We knew the day would come when our first clients would have end of service or end of life with their service dogs, we just didn't realize it would be now. Because of this we matched four new service dogs with clients from 2010, and I am happy to report they are doing amazing things together. Those clients returning reminds us that our job is never done and the number of people in need of our services is ever growing.

We have seen families reconnect, embrace loving relationships, clients go to grad school, return to work, concerts, ball games, amusement parks. Things they never thought possible before they were matched with their service dogs.

You, too, can make a difference right now! We invite you to join us, helping change lives regaining a renewed sense of freedom and independence with a service dog leading the way. There are over 145 applicants on the waiting list for a service dog, not something we ever wanted to have. It is all about funds and with your support you can help deliver just what these applicants need - freedom, confidence, and independence!

Make a difference today, help us help them.

-Mary Cortani  
Founder and Executive Director

# 2018 IN REVIEW

## IMPACTING THE FUTURE

We were able to accomplish a lot in 2018 especially on property for our clients! We achieved success with the county completing our conditional use requirements by fixing the driveway and erecting our long desired flag pole. We received community support to help supplement the cost for the driveway (required by the county) and a client of ours helped to fundraise for the flag pole covering the cost of the pole and installation. We were able to have a private Flag Dedication Ceremony in which clients, donors, volunteers and staff were able to come together to celebrate our freedoms afforded every day by our men and women who serve.



without costing a fortune.

We were also grateful to have Home Depot come out and help us complete a dream project of ours, building a victory garden on our property to help our clients in many ways. Not only is it proven that working with your hands (especially in dirt) is therapeutic, the fruits and vegetables grown in the raised beds offer greenery on the property. With many of our veterans serving overseas in desert climates, the greenery offers a sense of calm and healing. In addition to the mental benefits, we are also able to help clients and their families who may not be able to afford food. This garden allows them to get wholesome, healthy food in their diet

All of these projects could not have been completed without the support of our community and donors. These items have direct impact on our clients making their lives whole.

In the year 2018, we have added 34 new clients. As of the end of 2018, OFP has been able to change the lives of 353 clients and their service dogs.

## EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

### FRIENDRAISE WITH US IN 2019!

March 30th OFP will have its first ever Pasta Feed at Old City Hall Restaurant in Gilroy at 6 pm. A fun night for all ages, enjoy all-you-can-eat pasta, salad and garlic bread. Choose from Spaghetti w/meat sauce, Pesto Penne Pasta, and Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo, Gluten-free options too.

April 20th our Easter Egg Hunt hops back into the community! We will be hosting ages 10 and under and their families for egg hunting, fun and games. Hunters are \$5/child. And as always we will have our special guest, The Easter Bunny!

May 17th we will host our 9th annual charity golf tournament at Eagle Ridge Golf Course. Bring 3 of your friends and participate in our 4-person scramble. Registration opens at 9:00 am and event includes round of golf, goodie bags and a Tri-tip BBQ.

August 10th we will host our 7th annual Wine Gala held at the OFP Canine Education Center. Enjoy a delicious dinner, wine, and music at this sell-out event. Tickets will be on sale soon so keep your eyes peeled for our announcement.



# 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!](#)



## HEALING OF THE WOUND

### VETERANS' COMRADE

My family often asked me why my stare seemed so cloudy! But they would never understand. These eyes were just a scar of the pain that was left in my heart after the war. Many honorable, great, courageous men lost their lives and here I stood with my life. Every day I would wonder what it would be of me tomorrow. I would dread for the nights to approach knowing that the memory would be brought back to life. I would often pray for the Lord to heal my wound and ask of him to give me a second shot at feeling normal again. I had lost trust in everyone as I felt betrayed by many. I decided to seek help, and Doc listened and said I have a very special person that will help you with the healing of these wounds. She gave me a pamphlet and it read Operation Freedom Paws. I had the privilege and honor to meet with what I call the "Soldier's Guardian Angel": Mary Cortani, Founder and Executive Director of Operation Freedom Paws. The first thing she told me was that she and her fine organization had my six which in military terms means they got my back. I knew then that I had the right person in my path. She already had my comrade, my partner, my battle buddy lined up for me and what my wife calls the perfect match.



First thing I told her was that I did not like pitbulls because of their reputation and all I asked for was for her not to match me with one. The day came, and Mary introduced

me to Chappy, a Pitbull. We immediately locked eyes and I knew that this was going to be the start of a selfless journey.

Operation Freedom Paws helped me regain the trust I had lost. I can trust in Chappy as I know he is always by my side. He has my back at night when my mind starts playing tricks on me. He was the tool I needed. He is my cane; I can look up to him when I feel I am falling. Who would ever think that a man's best friend could feel my pain, nurture to it, and carry the burden of an entire family. Their team introduced me to a variety of tools that I could use daily with my comrade Chappy. It is amazing to see the power of fine tuning of all Canines in the program. {Continued page 4}.





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

## HEALING THE WOUND

### VETERANS' COMRADE



It was amazing to see the response that my partner had to the chemistry in my body. It was like if the pain, discomfort, feelings, and emotions traveled from my body through his leash into his heart and he knew just what he had to do. Through their training they instilled a sense of a personal mission that would meet certain required traits and skills focused on their master's own necessities with total and complete submission. It has been amazing to see what it entails to have an organization like this fully operational. The fine staff at OFP offer selfless service and commitment daily. They continue to provide a service to all veterans, from scouting for the perfect service dog with their check point system making sure each client has a perfect match, to sheltering, training and providing these amazing canines with their daily living necessities.

During my training I often wondered how it was that the instructors were so compassionate and understanding, and at times firm, and it all came to me that they had all gone through the program as well and they were also veterans and wanted the best not only for the veteran but for the wellbeing of man's best friend. For many veterans their wounds are invisible, but I have learned through this program that we don't have to go through this journey alone. To my left, my right, my six and to my twelve by brother is by my side no matter how dark it may seem outside. On the other end of the leash stands a four-pawed amazing warrior that will walk with me in this journey with complete submission. I will forever be grateful to this fine organization and its staff for never leaving a fallen comrade behind.

-Rey and Chappy