



Operation Freedom Paws

Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team

FEBRUARY 26, 2016

Q'1 2016 ISSUE

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1

Operation Freedom Paws

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"Everything, every day is a training opportunity."

-Mary Cortani

Founder's Message

2015 was a year of amazing growth and success. Clients graduated, new clients were accepted; we improved the property and dealt with permits while keeping the organization operating. As the year progressed, we encountered significant hurdles that needed to be overcome, but it was a reminder of the hurdles our clients encounter in their day-to-day lives, and overcome by using their service dogs. We are very grateful for the support of our donors, our community and our volunteers. Without you we would not be able to do what we do every day!

We are very excited about 2016. Several clients have already successfully completed their OFP certification, the next step in their journey with their service dogs. We already see enormous potential in the new clients we have accepted. Our partnership with DreamPower

Horsemanship's team continues to grow with targeted programs for our clients. You will read more about a new workshop we are offering with DreamPower for therapists who want to incorporate therapy dogs into their practices. And don't forget about the Tiny House competition in October! 2016 is just going to be an amazing year. We promise to continue thinking outside the box so that we can make what we do even more relevant, helping to make the lives of those who have given us our freedom that much better. Your support helps welcome them home!

Mary Cortani
Founder and President



We are Hiring!

Do you LOVE working with dogs and their owners? Or know someone who does? Apply to be a Kennel Technician at [Indeed](#).



A Year of “Growth”: 2015

2015 was a year of growth here at Operation Freedom Paws. Not only were we growing into our new home; completing projects and making some of Mary’s dreams a reality, but we were also growing the kennel side of our operation. In 2015 we had record guest turnouts at our events. Volunteer hours were poured into projects to help with this growth.

Thank you to the many people who helped OFP this year by volunteering. All of

your work has had significant impacts this year from helping us raise money for the program, to helping to make our “fur”-ever home feel like home. Services were also donated by our marketing firm, accountant, legal counsel and printer.

As seen in the previous newsletters, we held our inaugural Easter Egg Hunt and annual golf tournament fundraiser in the spring, a Wine Gala in the summer and a Poker Run in the fall. We continued to partner with DreamPower Horsemanship, which provides veterans and their families access to licensed therapists at class sessions. Our Amazon Wish List continues to generate an amazing and gratifying response. Donors provided much-needed equipment for the facility, as well as gear, food, toys and treats to help us supply everything new clients need to get off to the best possible start with their dogs.

We continued to expand our social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. Social media allows us to educate people about service dogs and obedience issues. It is also a way we assist people in remote locations who don't have access to a trainer, and are therefore training their own service dogs---a practice that is allowed by the ADA and which we wholeheartedly support.



Awards

2015 KSBW Central Coast Jefferson Award

2015 Golden Rule Award

2014 Coretta Scott King Award

2012 CNN Top Ten Hero

2011 Napa County Red Cross Hero

Commendation / Proclamations

2013 Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors

2013 Gilroy Chamber of Commerce Good Egg Award

2012 City of Gilroy



Our kennel is up and running smoothly! Now that we've completed operations for a



full fiscal year, we have a sense of the future benefit of having sustainable revenue to help offset a portion of our non-profit service dog program costs. Word of mouth about daycare, boarding and training services we offer the public is helping the business grow.

Whether it's a rescued OFP dog waiting for a service "match" or a customer's pet, our kennel technicians take a personal interest in developing a relationship with every dog on property---and that care shows in how happy the dogs are when they arrive for repeat visits. We are very excited to see what will come in 2016!

2015 by the numbers:

- 20 six-hour public access tests were conducted to certify new service dog teams
 - 9 veterans (45%)
 - 9 civilian adults (45%)
 - 2 youth (10%)
- 41 new clients were accepted into the service dog program (a record!)
 - 17 of the dogs matched with new clients were rescues; 7 were career change dogs (animals bred by other working-dog organizations, and ultimately deemed unsuitable for their parent programs); 17 are training their own dogs, who have been evaluated and are suitable for the service work their owner/handlers need.
- 13 additional dogs were rescued and put into foster care for future matches.
- 116 new applications were received

Upcoming Events:

Please see the
"Mark Your
Calendars" Section
Below!



A Peek at 2016

As we reported last year, we were selected to receive a tiny house called rEvolve! rEvolve House is an interdisciplinary undergraduate project at Santa Clara University, with a focus on sustainable, renewable technologies, and building practices. The house is designed to provide all the comforts of a regular home in a fraction of the space. The house is built on an 8.5' x 28' trailer to keep the space small and to allow the entire house to be mobile.

Following the competition on October 15th at CSU Sacramento, OFP will be given the house to act as temporary accommodations for out-of-town visitors who need to stay at our facility for several days. Potential types of visitors include new clients being paired with a dog, dog shelter workers receiving training on what to look for in potential service dogs, or a service dog trainer coming in to help lead classes. Our training program also has clients who travel significant distances and need to stay for a few days every month to receive the training they need; this house will help fulfill their needs and reduce overall costs to the organization.

Our Canine Education Center has had many face-lifts over the course of 2015, with many more to go. County use permits require us to re-pave the driveway, and we will continue building decomposed granite paths around our agility yard for full handicapped access. We hope to start on our raised-bed victory garden this year, and much, much more.

As we continue to develop relationships with other organizations in 2016, keep an eye out for new joint efforts! For example our partnership with DreamPower Horsemanship has allowed us to develop a new, one of a kind therapy workshop for pre- and post-licensed therapists who wish to learn about the use of therapy dogs within a practice.

This [course](#) meets the requirements for 24 CEU's from the CA Board of Behavioral

Sciences (PCE #4267). There is no course like this in the nation and we have





received overwhelmingly positive feedback about this new education opportunity! Our mutually-beneficial affiliation with Camp Tuolumne Trails will continue during two more family dog camp weekends planned for this year.

We are kicking off our fundraising event season with our Easter Egg Hunt; we also will have our annual golf tournament, wine event, and holiday photos. A change to this year's event calendar will be replacing our poker run with a 5k Fun Run at Harvey Bear Ranch County Park. This is a joint fundraiser for both OFP and DreamPower. Keep informed about our events and more by checking our website, Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Meet Bernardo & Teddy

Bernardo and Teddy were matched a little over a year ago; this Marine and his



Great Pyrenees are inseparable!

“Before OFP I was depressed every day. Since I have been partnered with Teddy, I am more relaxed and more communicative with my wife.

Teddy senses my anxiety and comes to me. He looks at me

which reminds me to breathe and relax. And with a fuzz-ball like Teddy it is easy.”

Santa Clara University Students Join the Tiny House Movement *(by Kaileen Cruden)*

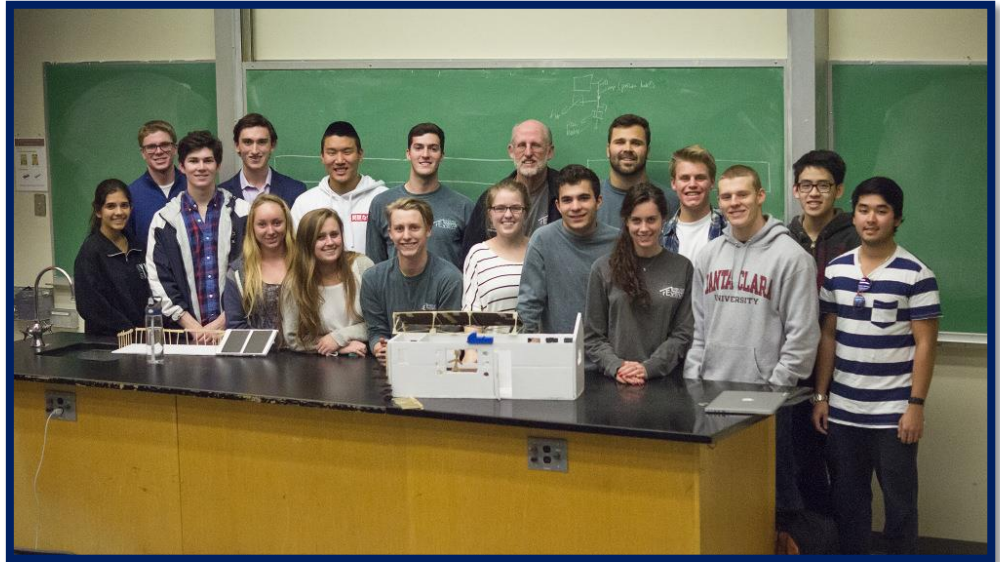
In a dorm room, there's a place for everything and, on a good day, everything's in its place.

Going to college at Santa Clara University has opened my mind to a lot of new concepts and one of the first lessons I had to learn from the get go was how to live small(er) by fusing my new college life essentials with my other “stuff” and trying to fit it all into an allotted 10 by 8 foot dorm room.



I was living a lot tinier, or so I thought.

Everyone should try to experience living smaller, I guarantee it'll give you a greater respect for the space you have and how to utilize it. For me, dorm life has been inspirational.



Santa Clara University's tiny house crew. (Photo: Jocelyn Hung/Santa Clara University)

So much so that a group of SCU students and I have gotten together — after learning the implications of restricted living — and decided to get in on the tiny house movement.

This year a group of SCU students from all majors and minors have been working hard on designing and building a fully functional, off-grid, tiny house as part of the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD) Tiny House Competition that'll take place in October of this year.

Our goal is to create a sustainable and comfortable living space containing all the amenities of typical housing with a footprint a fraction of the “traditional” size.

In addition to being a part of the competition, our house is going to serve a greater purpose and will make a local impact. After the competition, our team's tiny house called “rEvolve House” will be used in the real-world by *Operation Freedom Paws (OFP)*, a non-profit organization that empowers disabled veterans and others with disabilities to re-establish independence by teaching them to train their own service dogs obtained from shelters and rescue groups.





Kaileen Cruden (left) and members of the tiny house crew work on a design prototype. (Photo: Jocelyn Hung/Santa Clara University)

OFP will use the tiny house to provide free accommodations to veterans who live outside of the Bay area to come and receive instruction on how to train and maneuver with their animals. The potential benefits of tiny houses in areas where resources are limited, where housing is expensive and where locations are remote are vast and growing.

As this journey begins, I am in awe of how much thought and planning goes into carving out the space in a tiny house. In a “normal” sized home, there is so much more space to use and drawing up blueprints is a breeze. Not in a tiny house.

Through trial and error, we have to think about each element of design that goes into our home. Where do we put the toilet while making sure there’s enough space for the sink and shower? How do we design the kitchen cabinets to maximize wall space? Where should we put the bed and how much headroom can we get away with allotting?

We have to think of everything that could go wrong — and it might. Upcoming days in the field will be filled with successes and failures, building, testing and sometimes rebuilding.

In true Silicon Valley fashion, our team is ready for the inevitable snafu and prepared to adopt alterations as needed. Things are just getting more and more exciting as we’ve only just begun to incorporate a vast number of resources and ideas available to us into the imaginative construction of a unique tiny house.





How you can help

- Traveling? Working? Our daycare and boarding services for the public also benefit OFP's nonprofit program. We have dedicated staff on hand 24/7 to make sure the dogs in our care have a great experience with us!
- We offer obedience training too! Proceeds from our public training activities help support our work with veterans and other individuals with disabilities. All proceeds will benefit OFP's nonprofit program.
- Have time to volunteer? There are youth and adult volunteer opportunities. Contact us at Volunteer@operationfreedompaws.org
- Make a secure credit card donation by using the "Donate" button at <http://operationfreedompaws.org> or send a check to Operation Freedom Paws at our mailing address listed above.
- Shop on Amazon? Use Amazon Smile and a percentage of your total is given to your favorite charity; which we hope is OFP.



- Click the "wish list" button to purchase an item from the Operation Freedom Paws Wish List. This purchase will go directly to a dog and human team!
- Call or email [Able Auto Charity Donation Corporation](#) to donate a vehicle. Tell them you'd like a percentage of the proceeds to go to Operation Freedom Paws. These 5-star folks are friendly, helpful, and have contacts nationwide.
- Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and share our posts with your friends!



An AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB Program

