

OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2018



WHEN “I” IS REPLACED WITH “WE”,

EVEN ILLNESS BECOMES WELLNESS-MALCOM X

Tragedies often cause the human mind to search for a cause or reason in order to comprehend why someone would choose to cause such harm to themselves or others. While the answer is often complex, we try to assign simple reasoning because the complexity of the situation can be as overwhelming as our emotions. Similarly, it is often hard to understand the changes we see in an individual who we have known and loved for years. Often these individuals don't even recognize themselves when they look in the mirror. For those who acknowledge this change and seek help, they are met with limited services to give them renewed hope.

Operation Freedom Paws continues with our steadfast commitment to empowering veterans and individuals with disabilities to regain control of their lives, re-engage with their families and communities, and to believe in themselves again. You will read about our veteran client Ramon, who is a testament to what can be achieved by the services Operation Freedom Paws provides. While OFP cannot eliminate the disability, we can provide the dog, training, and services to help our clients navigate life.

We are so grateful for our supporters who have donated thus far. Your dollars have helped Ramon and others like him restore their freedom to live life. Unfortunately, there are so many more struggling, wanting desperately to recognize themselves again; our waiting list is growing. [Cont. pg.2]

WHEN 'I' IS REPLACED WITH 'WE'

EVEN ILLNESS BECOMES WELLNESS-MALCOM X: FOUNDER'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

It is the individual donations that allow us to continue providing our services, impacting the lives of those in need. We ask that you help; help spread the word, consider making a recurring donation, volunteer, create an endowment fund in our name, and/or attend one of our events. Every dollar contributed to this program helps to change not one life, but many; together let's be the "WE".

-Mary Cortani
Veteran, Founder, and Executive Director

2017 IN REVIEW

OFF NOTABLE MENTIONS AND MILESTONES

Operation Freedom Paws operates by our motto "Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team". Last year we called upon the community to put all paws and feet to work as one team helping us finalize our application for a conditional use permit with the County. We are under a year of review and have several conditions to meet (projects to complete to bring the property up to code) to finalize in entirety, but it was a huge hurdle to overcome. This was a long journey and with your support we were able to make it through.

We hosted numerous fundraising events, one of which actor Jane Lynch attended, as well as being honored as the beneficiary of many third-party events. The combination of fundraising events and private donors is what allowed us to accept 57 new clients last year----a record!

EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

2018 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 31st our Easter Egg Hunt hops back into the community! We will be hosting ages 10 and under with 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 18th we will host our 8th annual charity golf tournament at Eagle Ridge Golf Course! Bring three of your friends and participate in our 4-person scramble. Registration opens at 9am and event includes round of golf, goodie bags and a Tri-tip BBQ.



June 2nd is a third-party fundraiser put on by the El Camino Club, the third Annual Chili Cook Off at the Gilroy VFW. All proceeds to benefit OFP. Come enjoy some chili, drawings and music!

August 11th we will host our 6th 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!

Learn More Online!

Our website is www.OperationFreedomPaws.org
or follow us on Twitter: @opfreedompaws & Facebook: /OperationFreedomPaws

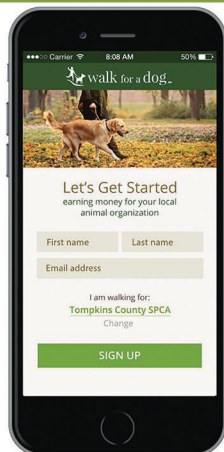
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MEET RAMON AND HUEY

A GRADUATED VETERAN CLIENT AND HIS SERVICE DOG

How has Operation Freedom Paws impacted my life? Well, in order for me to answer that question I would have to brief you a little about my past.

My name is Ramon Reyes and I am a veteran of 17 years. Military life was all I knew. I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury and due to significant events that occurred overseas in Iraq my career was cut short. It took me many years to accept the fact that I have a disability. I still believe that like myself, there are many casualties of war that go unnoticed, unappreciated, or unacknowledged and I really felt like one of them. Then comes broken families, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, anger and so many other mental issues, too many to list. It's the unseen scars and wounds that have yet to heal. A lot of times these wounds go unnoticed by the average citizen, so by the time they are realized it's too late for the veteran to regain what was lost; his or her mind, family, self-esteem, friends, motivation and quite often the will to live.

I speak from my own experience on these matters when I say, "The unseen wounds that so many of us carry can be, and are, just as deadly as an IED, mortar round, RPG, or small arms fire." The difference is that I was trained to defend myself from these man made weapons, but when it came to the aftermath of what went on in my mind I stood defenseless. You can say I was blindsided or ambushed by an enemy that I had no idea how to fight. So while I might have been out of harm's way the war within still raged, or so I thought. Then came Huey. [cont. pg.4]





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

MEET RAMON AND HUEY

A GRADUATED VETERAN CLIENT AND HIS SERVICE DOG



Huey is the name of my dog that was given to me by Operation Freedom Paws. He is not just a dog; he is my friend. People have told me that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that eventually I'll get there. Let's just say that Huey is the light that is guiding me through the tunnel. He has awakened a part of me that has been dormant since my return from Iraq. A part that I thought had died over there. Because of him I laugh more, I go out in public not just with my family, but by myself as well. He helps me be aware of my surroundings and if need be, he pulls me away from areas when I start to feel uncomfortable.

Operation Freedom Paws has given me the opportunity to live life all over again. Every day is a struggle and I know life will never be the same but with Huey I could make the impossible possible. I thank Operation Freedom Paws because now I can stand up tall, head held high and be able to say with pride, "I am a disabled veteran."