



# Operation Freedom Paws

*Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team*

SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

Q'3 2015 ISSUE

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3

## Operation Freedom Paws

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[operationfreedompaws.org](http://operationfreedompaws.org)



*"Everything, every day is a training opportunity." Mary Cortani*

## Founder's Message

On September 21<sup>st</sup> we will be celebrating our fourth year as a non-profit and our one year anniversary of classes in the Canine Education Center. All I can say is, WOW! It has been an amazing and transformative year. We have captured many testimonials from our clients and their loved ones, and as you will see from this issue's featured client, we here at Operation Freedom Paws don't just talk the talk, we walk the walk. We tell our clients all the time, 'Do not fear change. Dare to dream and always dream big.' This last year we as an organization have done just that, and it is all because of you, our supporters----and we are not done dreaming! So as we approach the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, I want to thank you all for your continued support. We cannot do it without you.

Mary Cortani  
Founder and President



Before (September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014)



After (September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015)

## Upcoming Events:

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Hoofs and  
Woofs Poker Run

October 17, 2015



## Meet Rey & Button

### How has Operation Freedom Paws impacted your life?

“With the exception of  
close family and friends I  
kept my Vietnam Service  
a secret for 44 years.  
Now, with my service  
dog, it’s out in the open. People that I’ve known for years are surprised, even



shocked, that I am a  
combat veteran. When  
people ask me why I have  
a service dog, I talk to  
them openly about my  
Vietnam Service and how I  
quietly endured the effects  
of PTSD. The stigma of  
being a 'Nam Vet has  
waned; the public no

longer blames the soldier for this unfortunate war. With the help of Operation  
Freedom Paws and my service dog, I will keep my secret no more: I AM PROUD  
TO HAVE SERVED MY COUNTRY; I AM A VIETNAM VETERAN.”

—Rey & Button (Army, Vietnam)

## “Paws with Patriots” Wine Gala 2015

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 we held our annual “Paws with Patriots Wine Gala” at the  
OFP Canine Education Center. This was our third year of holding the event, and  
the first year we had a property large enough that we could host it ourselves.  
Through the tremendous efforts of volunteers, staff and generous donations from  
the Silva Family, we were able to transform the pole barn and BBQ area into a  
wonderful hang-out spot.





## 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



We had a sell-out crowd, with wonderful food from Old City Hall. Wine was donated by local wineries such as Rapazzini and Guglielmo, as well as private donors. Everyone enjoyed the summer night and helped raise funds for the organization. We raised enough money to fund at least two more service dog teams.

Thank you to all of the volunteers, staff, donors and guests who helped make our third annual "Paws with Patriots Wine Gala" an amazing success!



## Training Tip: NFL "No Free Lunch"

Initiate "NFL" with your dog, which stands for "No Free Lunch". Make your dog work for his/her meals! For a number of reasons, we do not recommend free-feeding (allowing your dog to eat from a bin of food whenever it wants). Dogs need to learn that food comes from their human, not from their bowl. Set the bowl of



food down, step in front of it to "claim" it, and make your dog sit and wait until you give the "take" command to eat. Increase the wait time from a few seconds to at least a minute. This

reinforces that you are the leader of the pack. As you and your dog solidify this behavior, add new behaviors such as "puppy-pushups" (going from a down to a sit and back to a down) . Start with one or two and gradually increase to ten reps. Next, have your dog hold that sit while you go out of sight for a few seconds; with success, increase those hold times to five minutes or even more. Once you "own"



feeding time, you will have your dog's full attention. And remember to always PRAISE your dog verbally!

## Dream Tiny: OFP to Receive Tiny House in 2016

As she did in this issue's Founder's Message, Mary always tells us to "Dream Big". But for the next year, that translates to "Dream Tiny". Part of Mary's Big Dream has been to have temporary housing onsite at the Center. Thanks to local contractor Steve Ashford, OFP was suggested as the possible recipient of a "tiny house" to be designed and built by engineering students from Santa Clara University for a statewide competition. They came to the Center to see what we do, how we might use their creation, and where we might situate it. For the next several newsletter issues, we'll be featuring articles from Heidi Williams, one of SCU's team members. Heidi will keep us updated on what we hope will be the embodiment of Mary's Big Dream.

### When going to the dogs is a good thing—Written by Heidi Williams

How can you reap gigantic benefits from a teeny house? For a group of SCU students competing in the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) 2016 Tiny House Competition, the solution was easy: when the contest is over, pass along the 238 square foot solar-powered home to a



very worthy organization—Operation Freedom Paws (OFP), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization empowering military veterans and others with disabilities to restore their independence by teaming them up with a service dog.

“We’ve already done a lot of research and bought the trailer that our Tiny House will be built on, but construction hasn’t started yet. Knowing who we are designing for and how the home will be used, informs our design choices and gives us even more passion for the project,” said JJ Galvin ’17, a mechanical engineering major working on the thermal analysis and HVAC systems for the house.

Recently, the students spent a morning at OFP’s facility in San Martin, California, seeing the operation in action and getting to know founder Mary

## 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](#).



Cortani. A Certified Army Master of Canine Education, Cortani prepared dogs for work in sentry and explosive detection during the Vietnam era. In a way, she does much the same thing through OFP, training dog-and-veteran teams to deal with the daily minefields encountered by those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and/or any number of other physical, neurological, or psychological challenges.

During their visit to OFP, the SCU students helped teams learn to deal with strangers wanting to pet the dogs (nearly every breed imaginable: Chihuahua,



Rottweiler, Great Dane, Poodle, Greyhound, Labrador Retriever, and plenty of mutts); they witnessed the healing powers of “puppy yoga” as veterans practiced calming exercises; and they knew this was where they wanted their Tiny House to find its “forever

home.” Following the competition, their Tiny House will serve as temporary accommodations for a variety of visitors—out-of-town veterans being paired with a dog, shelter workers receiving training to identify potential service dogs, or trainers coming in to help lead classes. Installed between the Victory Garden and meditation memorial garden, and adjacent to the children’s play area, rEvolue House will provide a serene and soothing environment for its guests.

“Before we ever met the people at OFP, we’d named our house ‘rEvolue,’ in the tradition established with SCU’s entries in the 2007, ’09, and ’13 Solar Decathlon competitions—Ripple House, Refract House, and Radiant House,” said Nick Jensen ’15, M.S. ’16 civil engineering. “It’s almost like it was meant to be, that SCU and OFP would come together. Being a part of Operation Freedom Paws’ evolution and of the veterans’ growth and healing is a gift far greater than anything we are giving.”

Learn more:

[operationfreedompaws.org](http://operationfreedompaws.org)

[smud.org](http://smud.org)

[revolvehouse.com](http://revolvehouse.com)





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## How you can help

- 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.
- Traveling? Working? Our new 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!
- Have time to volunteer? There are youth and adult volunteer opportunities. Contact us at [Volunteer@operationfreedompaws.org](mailto: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!
- Proclaim your love for OFP by purchasing your very own "swag" from our new online store (linked to our website).
- 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!



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