



Operation Freedom Paws

Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team

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Operation Freedom Paws

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

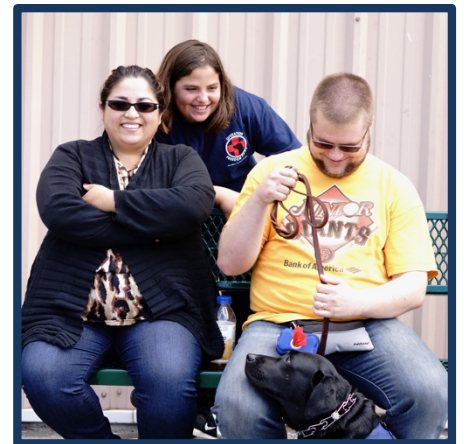
-Mary Cortani

Founder's Message

At Operation Freedom Paws we are always looking for new things to add, and new ways to help reach our clients as they go through their daily struggles, whether they are with life, family or friends. When they face those struggles, sometimes just knowing someone is there willing to give them new tools to put in their tool-belt can change their viewpoint and make all the difference.

The dog is the main tool we give our clients, and every dog that comes through Operation Freedom Paws has been hand-selected in a thirty-step evaluation to make sure it will be a good service dog. These dogs need that forever home, and, just like our clients, that sense of belonging. The dogs allow our clients to view the world in a calmer, safer, more enjoyable way. Dogs do not judge; they allow us all to get through each day knowing we are not alone.

Each one has touched my heart---dog or person, adult or child, veteran or civilian. The greatest reward I get from this program is seeing they are all living a better quality of life and are able to take on new adventures. Whether it is the child of a client who comes up and throws their arms around my waist and says, "Thank you for giving me my daddy back", or the spouse who says, "Thanks for giving me my partner back", or the brother or mother that says, "Thanks for being there; you are the first who has cared." Every day, it is amazing to see the impact.



I have learned over the years that we can only help those that want to be helped, but I am glad we are here to offer a hand, give a hug and be there

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](#).



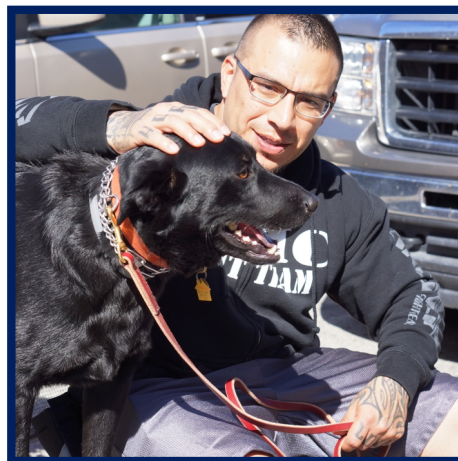
when they need somebody to just listen and watch them succeed. When times get tough for me, there is no greater gift than the smile on a face or a “thank-you” to remind me that we are making a difference, even if it is only one team at a time: four paws, two feet.

I am not alone in this. I have an amazing group of board members, staff, volunteers and supporters behind the scenes. Each of you who reads this newsletter is one of those supporters. If you know somebody who is struggling, let them know there is hope for tomorrow---they just need to grab the hand that is reaching out to them. By taking that hand, they are making a difference in their lives and re-writing their own story.

To our clients: may your adventures grow; may life’s challenges be less mountains and more speedbumps; and may your heart be ever full because you know your service dog has your six!

Mary Cortani
Founder and President

“Veteran’s Voice”: Emilio & Samson by Emilio



Today as I type this newsletter entry up, I realize that August 5, 2016 marks five months since my service dog Samson and I were first introduced to each other, and now five months later, it seems quite foreign to try to imagine a life without him in my life.

In my last write up, I described our initial introduction in some detail, going on about what I was feeling and

thinking that first day of actually being a part of an OFP training class, shortly after just having met Samson. I also wrote briefly about what it was like to be around fellow veterans in the program, expressing my appreciation for their welcome. Since that first day a lot has happened in my relationship with

Awards

2016 American Red Cross: Clara Barton Award

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



Samson, a lot has happened in just the time since my last journal submission to this newsletter, and it gives me a great sense of accomplishment to reflect on where we are as a team now...and for that I am extremely grateful for this opportunity. I truly believe that it is important to acknowledge the successes in your life, I mean really take some time to think them over, to help prevent us from burying ourselves in the occasional failures in our lives that will no doubt come our way. Without going on and on about my experience this far, because I could easily do so, I'll highlight the first few months of being an OFP client as well as some experiences with Samson, and reflect on an awesome adventure that we just shared together.

Immediately following our first day together, I came back on Monday March 7 during the afternoon to spend some free time with Samson, this time with my 15-year-old daughter. It was an awesome experience to be able to introduce her to the newest member of our family, giving her a chance to see the two of us work through some commands together before spending a long while in one of the play yards. Everything that I had expressed to her through words was now there for her to see firsthand. Coming back to OFP the



next day, Tuesday March 8, Samson was so excited to see me, and I would come to notice that would be the case over the next month, as he wasn't coming home with me after every class I attended or visit I made. The following are journal entries I made.

On March 12, 2016:

It was good to see Samson today, it makes me feel good knowing that I'll be seeing him on days when we have class. During my drive out to OFP, I try to relax and look forward to his excited hellos. On this day however, I noted that he was a bit finicky that day, not following commands right away, and on occasion, not at all. Some days in class are better than others for us, but I have been made known to expect that, and to consider it all a part of our journey together.

Over the next few weeks, my journal entries included things like:

March 18, 2016:

It's extremely relaxing visiting Samson, hanging out with him for a couple of hours brings me back to a comfortable place.

March 22, 2016:

Samson did really great in class today! He's always so full of energy when we gather for the beginning of class and line up along the fence.

He always get so excited when we're in class and Mary comes around. His tail starts to wag fast and his head moves around a lot in her direction. She always responds to his attention saying things like, "I know, I know buddy...I love you too." The attention that he gives to her as soon as he sees her or smells her, tells me that he loves Mary, and that she means something to him.

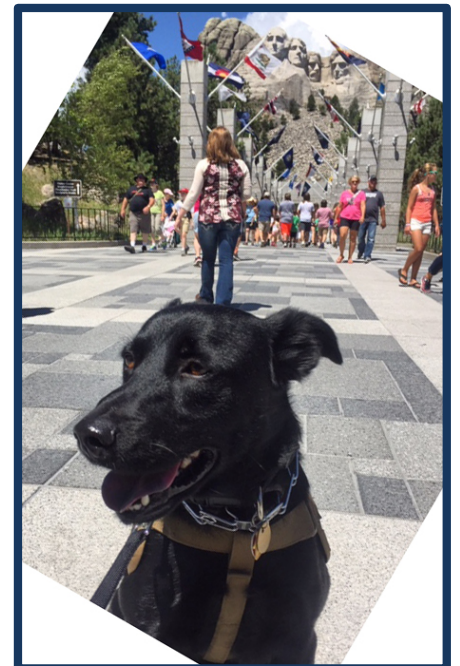
Getting the chance and opportunity to be a part of OFP has been awesome, and the staff is always amazing.

March 25, 2016:

I've been experiencing an increased amount of stress and restlessness with everything related to school, which in turn has forced those feelings into other areas of my life...and Samson has definitely made a big difference on my life already.

After about a month, Samson was finally able to come home with me...and we have been on an awesome adventure together ever since. I will end this write up telling of a recent family trip that he joined us on, as well as share some pictures from our time out exploring.

My family and I recently went on a 10-day road trip, driving out to South Dakota, stopping at Yellowstone National Park along the way, and I could feel Samson growing up a little more each day we were gone. He was so good during the long car rides, choosing to sleep a lot of the hours spent on the road, and he was probably the only one of the eight in our party not to complain one bit about the



Upcoming Events:

Please see the Mark Your Calendars Section Below!



3600 miles that we traveled together. He was so excited to see so many new things, take in so many new smells, and visit lots of new places, and his attentiveness and diligence never wavered. He received so many compliments on his demeanor and obedience, and he loved the constant attention that he drew.

Since the world famous Sturgis motorcycle rally was taking place a short time following our visit, we ran into a lot of men and women on bikes...and as it happens to be, a lot of bikers are Vietnam veterans, or veterans of later wars. It was good to connect to more brothers in arms on this trip, sharing stories and conversing about all sorts of things with my retired Marine Corps and Army veteran uncle and I, and most times, Samson and his vest full of patches was the ice breaker.

Thank you to all the men and women that took the time to say "Thank you



for your service" to my uncle and I as we drove through seven states on this trip, whether it was at a gas station, a rest stop, a hotel, a restaurant, or in the shadows of national monuments and natural treasures. We appreciate your support. And to my adventure partner Samson, I love you buddy,

I'm looking forward to many more memorable times together!

Holistic Healing: Bruce & Sergeant by Nancy (Bruce's Spouse)

If you were to ask me how our life would be back in 2010 when Bruce initially got sick I would not have even been able to fathom where we are today. OFP was a life saver for us in 2013. For three years following Bruce's illness, we had very little hope and felt like (at least I did) that there was no hope of life being what I had envisioned for retirement. Bruce had lost all ambition, was severely depressed and negative—not the fun-loving, ambitious guy, full of life, that I had once known. With the help of OFP all that has been restored and even more!



Tiny House Movement

by Emma West



The rEvolve House has come together rapidly since the beginning of summer construction. The 10 students who have dedicated their summer to this project are putting all their effort into creating a space that will win first prize and create a livable environment for the clients of OFF. Summer began with two weeks of laying down the floor, stuffing the trailer with insulation, and running plumbing lines under the trailer. After the base of the house had been set, the team was able to raise all the walls in just one day. In the blink of an eye, the rEvolve House had taken shape. Since then, the team has installed the sloped roof and rooftop deck, run the wiring through the walls, built the bathroom wall, and



constructed the bedroom platform. These essential components of the house helped make the space feel more like a living space instead of just a shell.

With the structure of the house finished, we have been able to start painting and waterproofing the outside in order to prepare for the cedar siding, which will be covered in an earthy blue-gray paint which will make the house feel contemporary and different than a typical tiny house.

We will be spending the month of August putting in cabinets, installing the final floor and ceiling layers, and assembling the bed frame. The installation of all these features will show us how open the house will feel, since there will only be finishing touches to put in after. The cabinetry has been designed to keep the space open and not block the light coming in from the windows.

September and October are the testing months for the rEvolve House. We will be running tests on the different systems of the house to make sure it is up to the competition's and our standards. While school is in session, we will be



hosting tours for the public and for students to see the house before we compete.

Tiny House Exhibit and Public Tours

Sat., Oct. 15, 2016

9 - 4 p.m.

**Cosumnes River Community College, 8401 Center Pkwy,
Sacramento, CA 95823**



OFP Summer Fundraisers:

Hoofs & Woofs 5k

We would like to thank everyone who came out for our joint event with DreamPower Horsemanship! It was a great time had by all of our two and four-legged friends at Harvey Bear Park.

Paws with Patriots Wine Gala 2016

The Paws with Patriots event had another fantastic year, selling out an additional twenty seats from last year. This sell-out crowd was entertained by both the fabulous Jona Denz-Hamilton as MC and Country Music Artist, Philip Claypool! With both new and returning guests, we had another great crowd who was willing to raise a paddle and wine glass in support of our cause.



We would like to thank the following sponsors of this year's Wine Gala: Palo Alto Medical Foundation, Family Pet Care Center, Ford Store Morgan Hill, Think Results Marketing, Shadow Ops, LLC, and JB Trophies.



Mark Your Calendars

Check our website for our upcoming events! We have a few more events brewing this year and plenty scheduled for next!



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 OFF.



- 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

