

# OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2018



## UTILIZING YOUR INFLUENCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE SPARKS A POSITIVE IMPACT THAT CAN SAVE LIVES!

Operation Freedom Paws is more than a traditional service dog organization. We not only provide a dog and train the handler on how to use the dog for their particular medical needs; we also identify services that tie into that training---services that are sorely needed for the disabled community. Taking this holistic approach allows us to mitigate difficulties our clients face, but as life and societies change so does our approach. Just as the military teaches to adapt and overcome, we as an organization have to be adaptive.

When looking at services to add to our program we evaluate the impact, not just to the organization, but the individual, their families and their community. Not only do we continue to look at adding new services but we are constantly evaluating the current services to see if improvements can be made, so that the quality of life and freedom that our clients experience expands allowing them to see hope and believe in tomorrow.

All of our services remain consistent in messaging, "Take life one day at a time. Do not worry about the future, but know that it will be promising." While it is important to address the past, most of our clients' triggers are embedded there, and dwelling only keeps the wound open rather than allowing it to heal. We teach our clients to focus on their dogs in times of distress and this allows them to live in the present moment, bringing them back from the brink. The services that foster this would not be possible for our clients without donor support. As you read through this newsletter, please consider your year-end donations and possibly making a monthly recurring donation equivalent to the cost of one Starbucks coffee per week...every little bit helps. A monthly recurring donation makes a lasting, profound impact on the organization.

-Mary Cortani

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# DEMYSTIFYING THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

## HOW TO IDENTIFY A SERVICE DOG IN PUBLIC

People like to take their pet dogs out and about in public with them because that dog is a part of the family. Within California we have a lot of businesses that make accommodations for these, such as outdoor (typically patio) seating, pet-friendly hotels that charge additional fees in anticipation of damages, or warehouse stores that allow dogs to accompany patrons whether they are medically necessary or not. While these are fantastic for pet owners, this can cause confusion about where pets vs service dogs are allowed to go.

Currently there are provisions within the ADA that allow a disabled person to train their own dog (we totally love this and incorporate it in our program) and as long as they are in line with the law they may go most anywhere the public can. With the rise of “fake” service dogs, i.e. pets or emotional support animals wearing vests that can be misleading we thought we would mention identifiers that can be observed of a true service dog out in public.



under the ADA.”

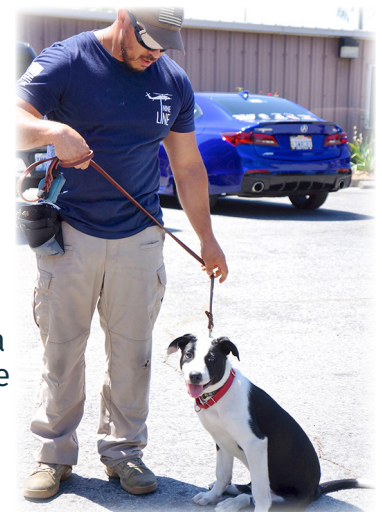
First, one must understand the ADA and how they define a service animal; the ADA defines a service animal as, “a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals

Second, the ADA requires service animals to be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere or prevent the dog to perform the tasks required to assist their handler, or the handler’s disability prevents them from using this equipment. In these instances, the handler must maintain constant control of the animal through voice, signal or other effective controls.

Third, the dog should typically be by the handler’s side at all times, barring emergency scenarios, because the dog is the person’s medical device. If a medical device is too far away or not under the control of the handler, the device cannot be used effectively. Although service dogs must be near the handler, this does not include placing a dog in a cart or stroller. If the dog is too old, has ambulatory issues or is no longer healthy enough for service dog work it should be retired.

Fourth, the dog should not be disruptive. Any person with a real service dog will be the first to leave a situation where their dog is misbehaving. People with disabilities, whether visible or invisible, are usually very self-conscious of their condition(s) and the service dog is allowing them to be out in public. If their dog (whether alerting them to their condition or not) begins to act up, the handler will be the first to remove themselves and their dog from the situation to ensure they are not a disruption for others.

So if you see a dog barking excessively in public, being strolled around in a shopping cart, or roaming around off leash without paying attention to one individual person, it is not under control of the handler and therefore not demonstrating appropriate service dog behavior.



# BOWLING FOR A CAUSE

## CALIFORNIA BOWLING WRITERS TOURNAMENT FOR OFP



This is a great event for both the experienced bowler and the amateur alike. We will have a competition for prizes for the professionals and lanes available for amateurs to just come out and have a fun time helping to raise funds for an incredible cause. When: Saturday, October 27th Where: At Morgan Hill Bowl in Morgan Hill, CA  
See flyer details [here](#).

## MEET KATHY AND CRYSTAL

### CIVILIAN AMBASSADOR AND HER SERVICE DOG

Before Operation Freedom Paws, I had a service dog named Bergin to support my MS and I became involved with Dreampower Horsemanship, a sister charity to OFP. I took part in the Living Strong with MS support group at Dreampower. During that time my diabetes worsened with low blood sugars in the middle of the night and I started to look for an organization that could provide me with a diabetic alert dog.

I found an organization on the web in Texas who appeared reputable with a great website, videos, testimonials and a very personable owner who spent a lot of time answering all my questions. She said she would train a diabetic alert dog for me for 15K and to just make a 1K deposit and pay the rest when I picked up my dog. I did fundraising to raise the balance and Southwest Airlines donated flights for my travel to pick up Crystal. Eight months later I was called to come to Texas to pick up Crystal over a weekend. I was a little concerned because there was no Dr certification requested or any extended time required to stay in Texas to train for a couple of weeks like I had with Bergin. In the meantime, they had sent me pictures of Crystal where she appeared to be over a year old and I fell in love with her.

When I got to Texas, I met Crystal, she was only eight months old, she did know how to alert to high and low blood sugars, but had very little training beyond that. She was unable to go up and down stairs, load up into a car and was fearful, lacked public access skills, and barked and growled everywhere I took her in public. In addition she was very ill with intestinal diseases and my vet found her ears full of insects.

It had never occurred to me that there were organizations out there that would scam and take advantage of the disabled population that needed service dogs, since I had such a great experience with my first service dog Bergin. My vet treated her diseases and she recovered, however I was left with a dog that could alert to blood sugars but could not accompany me in public to work for me.

I was referred to OFP by the Dreampower therapist that led our MS support group. It was then I met Mary Cortani and she evaluated Crystal for me. OFP was my last hope in getting help to train Crystal. I was thrilled when Mary accepted me into the program. I was so surprised when I asked her what the cost would be and she said there was no charge. Then she proceeded to give me a new leash, dog treats, and a vest also at no charge. I was just told to start coming to class twice a week.[Cont. pg. 4]





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

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Mary's level of integrity was so high she required a release of training for Crystal to be transferred to OFP, which the other organization quickly gave me. I was so touched by the acceptance and unconditional love I experienced at OFP, I shed many tears in the beginning weeks and that was the beginning of a healing process not only for Crystal but also for me emotionally, physically and mentally.

I spent a year attending classes and Crystal learned very quickly and soon passed her Canine Good Citizenship test and later her Public Access Test and she became a certified Service Dog through OFP. She and I fully recovered and she is now perfectly well behaved in public and works very accurately with me by alerting me when my blood sugars are out of range. Crystal often receives compliments in public on how well she behaves. Crystal also helps me with my MS by helping me with balance and with knowing where my body is in space on difficult days.

I'm actually glad I had a rough start with Crystal because if I hadn't I wouldn't have ever become involved with Operation Freedom Paws. OFP is one of the best things that has ever happened to me. This is the first place I ever experienced unconditional love and acceptance on this planet. This community is the one place I can go when I'm having a rough day and can't even talk, and people will love and understand me, no questions asked.

Words cannot describe how much I have grown and gained from being part of OFP and I will be forever grateful for all OFP has done for Crystal and me.

**Learn How You Can Make A Lasting Impact At [www.operationfreedompaws.org](http://www.operationfreedompaws.org)**