

Meet Giana and Romeo

A Love Story (cont'd)

My life changed in that moment. Mary took me to meet a dog that had come to the center that same day, a young Pitbull mix they were naming Romeo. He was beautiful, and so gentle, but a definite wiggle-butt at the same time. His personality was like sunshine breaking into my world after years in the dark. At the end of that first class, during puppy yoga, he fell asleep in my arms and snored so loud that everyone stopped to see who was making such a racket. I loved him from that very first day.

The changes that came were not easy. For the first few months, all I could do was show up to class and cry on the couches until class was over. It was so overwhelming to just leave the house on a regular basis that I couldn't do much else except BE there. But slowly, change happened. OFP taught me to trust my dog, and I began to feel safe with him by my side. I began to leave the house to go on walks with him, and then we started to go to stores and even restaurants. He would alert me to medical issues hours before they happened, so I could take action. With him by my side, I felt safe enough to sleep, and when my nightmares came he would wake me up quickly with kisses and snuggle until I could go back to sleep. Slowly and steadily, with a lot of hard work and support from OFP, things were finally improving for me.



Romeo and I certified this past April, after a year and a half of training. 2019 has been a HUGE year for us as a team. We have gone to two major rock concerts, had a vacation in Las Vegas, and-my personal favorite- gone to Disneyland! Perhaps my most meaningful achievement of the year is that I began working at OFP! I am happy to say that I am now working at the front desk at the OFP Canine Education Center as Admin Manager. It makes me so happy to be able to work with such wonderful people, both as clients and as co-workers. I see clients at different stages of their journey and hope that what I do at OFP contributes to their success.

As I am writing this, I am sitting in my office at OFP, Christmas music is playing, and Romeo is curled up next to me, snoring sweetly. As I look back on the person I was before I came to OFP, it's like looking at a stranger. Operation Freedom Paws not only saved my life, they made it a life worth living. My hope now is that I can continue to give back to the organization that has given me, and so many others, so much.



Giana and Romeo