



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

As 2015 comes to a close, I am reflecting on all that Operation Freedom Paws has accomplished this year. We have made progress on the renovations at our Canine Education Center, but more importantly, we have seen significant progress with our clients. You, our supporters, don't always get to see that progress, but you play an important role. For our clients, progress is in things that you and I take for granted every day: a man stepping outside his home and having a conversation with a stranger; a Marine dad taking his family to Disneyland; a wife reconnecting with her husband over dinner at a restaurant. These small moments happen daily for most of us, but for our clients they are huge milestones that we cheer and congratulate them for----moments we have the honor of witnessing every day. Every minute volunteered, every tax-deductible dollar donated to Operation Freedom Paws makes a difference in our clients' lives, and helps give them moments to be celebrated and cherished.



Mary Cortani
Founder and President

Get our 2016 Calendar!

A Great Gift for the Holidays, this calendar features pictures of twelve service dog teams and explains how the service dog has helped them. [Buy yours today!](#)



Meet Melissa and Holly

"I am an Army Reservist Veteran. I have been serving our country since May 22, 2008. In November of 2009, I shipped out to our mobilization station in Ft. Hood Texas. I was assigned to the 478th tc Co as a truck driver. Training was rough and I missed home just like every other soldier in the same position as myself. November 5, 2009 is one of the most memorable days I have during that time. The safety of our beautiful home was compromised. A gunman intruded into our safety zone, leaving 13 people dead and over 30 injured. Since then I have not been able to feel safe in most places. December 17, 2009 our unit was in route to Kandahar, Afghanistan. The first month or so mainly consisted of training, base operations, and, if you were lucky, a convoy operation. Over the next few months my platoon, 2nd platoon, loaded up to the Pakistani border where we built a VHA yard and oversaw loads of our equipment that came across the border. Over two months later the remainder of my time was spent escorting our convoys with unarmored vehicles. During that time I was able to see a different world. 478th tc Co was stateside on October 22, 2010.

Since Afghanistan I have struggled with myself. I found out what my darkest places are. I had absolutely no value to my life and I believed that I did not deserve anything. In my head I was nothing and in my head that was everyone else's opinion as well. I was in denial of my disability, there was nothing wrong with



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



me. It took me four years to admit that I have PTSD, and it took me five years to get any kind of treatment.

I no longer wanted to live like that, so I started doing research on different types of therapy, and also researched service dogs. I had found Operation Freedom Paws through mutual professional acquaintances. I spoke with one of the trainers and I was sold. OFP introduced to me to the love of my life, my service dog Holly. I have



loved that damn dog since I first laid eyes on her. In the first meeting Holly had already sensed my nervousness and she came to me and licked my face, that's when I knew that she was mine. I have never been so connected with an animal. I feel like she saved me and I have saved her because now she is where she is meant to be. Holly has been teaching me so much about dogs and about myself. No matter how bad I feel on the inside she is right there waiting for me to lay on her and forget that there are bad things in this world.

My new saying is, "Everyone needs a Holly!" I am so grateful and so blessed to have such an

amazing being in my life. She is the

most sensitive and loving dog that I have ever met and it is all thanks to OFP, if it wasn't for them I would be lost. I have only been to the OFP training site 2 times [because I live in L.A.], and each time is a different opportunity. The way that they care for our country, civilians, and our military members is like another world. I have never met such caring and compassionate people. When you walk on the OFP site you can feel and see the love right when you pull up. People like this motivate me to be the best person that I can be. It makes me want to help others more than what I already am doing. This organization is a blessing and every single member is loved. All we need is love and OFP shows that to every

Upcoming Events:

Thank you to all who came and supported us at our events!

Look for Upcoming Events in 2016!



individual they come in contact with. I just want to thank OFP for their dedication and commitment and for helping me find my girl Holly.”

—Melissa & Holly (Army, Afghanistan)

“Hoofs & Woofs” Second Annual Poker Run

October 17, 2015 Operation Freedom Paws and DreamPower Horsemanship came together for their second annual Hoof and Woof Poker Run event. We had approximately 70 bikers come out to support our two veteran programs. After the ride a BBQ, music and prizes were enjoyed by all. We want to thank Gordon Biersch Brewing Company for their support of the event with a donation, as well as the many volunteers who came out that day!



Don't Underestimate the Underdogs (with Heidi Williams, Santa Clara University)

It's almost as if it were meant to be for Santa Clara University's School of Engineering to someday team up with Operation Freedom Paws. Though our SCU mascot is a Bronco, as participants in the 2007, 2009, and 2013 U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Decathlons (competitions in which international university teams vie to design, build, and run the most energy-efficient home), SCU was always the underdog—the team of scrappy undergraduate engineers from a small institution primarily known (then) for its liberal arts education. But after taking 3rd Place honors twice against top dogs in engineering academia, Santa Clara has established itself as a leader in energy engineering and sustainability studies.



Now a new team of students is taking on the challenge of building a net-zero energy home for SMUD's Tiny House competition in Sacramento next October, rallying against Stanford, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, USC, and others. "We were freshmen when the 2013 Solar Decathlon team packed up their 800 square foot house and shipped it off for competition," said 2016 Tiny House student project leader J.J. Galvin, referring to himself and fellow teammate Marcus Grassi, one of the mechanical team leaders. "Back then, coming into the project so late, all I could do was help the team along by 'liking' them on social media. It's rewarding to be able to put the engineering I've learned so far toward this project, and knowing rEvolve House will be going to Operation Freedom Paws makes it that much better," he said.

Galvin and Emma West, an environmental sciences senior, worked with a couple of other stalwarts through the summer creating preliminary designs, researching materials and appliances, building a website, and outlining fundraising needs for the 283 square foot Tiny House. Now that the fall quarter is in full swing, about 25 new undergrad recruits have been added to the team. "Over the summer, our work was mostly theoretical. Now



we're in the design phase and it's more technical—hashing out details, getting specifics on what we want the house to be, and choosing materials," said Galvin.

It's a good bet that one of the materials chosen will be bamboo. Through our participation in past competitions, SCU has advanced the use of this highly sustainable grass as a structural element (think I-beams, floor joists, etc.), rather than simply as an aesthetically pleasing alternative for flooring or cabinetry. The team will also employ their own solar thermal system for hot water management to reduce the water heater's energy draw by 30-50 percent. And let's talk toilets—because Emma and J.J. certainly did this summer. After much consideration, they've chosen an electric, waterless, dry flush toilet that will be low maintenance, odor free and worry-free for our friends at OFP after rEvolve House competes in Sacramento next year.



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](#).



No matter how the contest plays out, one thing is certain: OFP will have a Tiny House that was designed and built for them by group that's as enthusiastic as a pack of Labrador Retrievers. Next time, more on the competition and an update on rEvolve House progress.

Learn more at smud.org and revolvehouse.com

wurldtech™ Wurldtech Donates to OFP's Veteran Cause A GE Company

Wurldtech, a GE-owned company and leader in cyber security solutions, brought a group of employees to visit OFP, where they participated in role-play and other activities with veterans and their service dogs. Wurldtech donated \$25,000, which will help our organization cover most of the cost of two service dogs. "We are proud to partner in such an important and meaningful community initiative," says Paul Rogers, Wurldtech President & CEO and General Manager of GE Industrial Cyber Security. "Our veterans are an integral part of the fabric of our community. They served our country well, and we want to support them in return."



The funds were awarded by GE to Rogers for his exemplary work to donate as he wished, and he chose OFP. When a corporation donates to a cause that supports disabled veterans, it gives them hope they can again become a productive part of society as employees,

because the corporation has demonstrated understanding and support of their new normal.

Rogers said Wurldtech's involvement with OFP is an increasing part of the business's commitment to strengthen community ties. Wurldtech and GE have a large presence in San Ramon, California, not far from our Canine Education Center.

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our mission!



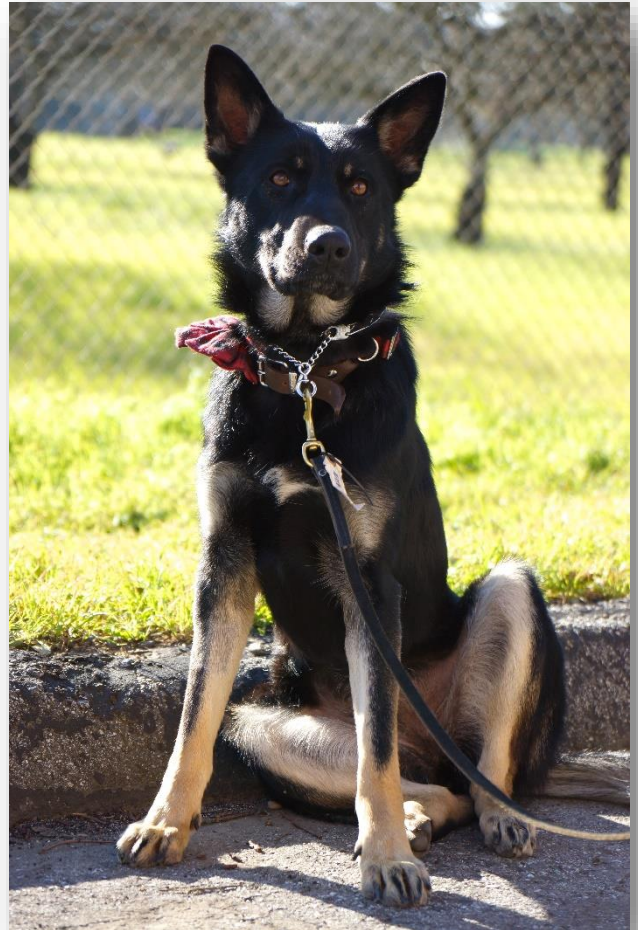
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Adopt Foxy

A unique opportunity is available to a loving family who wants to adopt a dog that has been fostered by Operation Freedom Paws!

Foxy, also known as “Fox Trot”, came to OFP when our Veterinarian, Dr. Curt Moran at Family Pet Care Center in Hollister, was told by Foxy’s previous owner that they wanted her euthanized at six months of age. Dr. Moran could not follow through as Foxy was a good-tempered puppy and he knew she needed the opportunity to live. He contacted Mary Cortani here at Operation Freedom Paws and asked if we could take her in and foster her until she was ready to go to a good home.



Foxy is a 14 month old purebred black and tan German Shepherd. Foxy is a gentle spirit who is very cautious by nature, so she will do best in as the only dog in the family. Foxy has all of the basic obedience training that the Operation Freedom Paws training program offers, including crate training, leash walking and basic obedience commands. She is spayed, is up to date on all of her shots and has a clean bill of health.

For those interested in this rare opportunity to adopt this OFP-trained German Shepherd, please fill out our [application for adoption](#). NOTE: a home visit will be required, and families with other dogs or indoor cats will not be considered.

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 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!
- 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

