

OPERATIONFREEDOMPAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2024



A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER, MARY CORTANI *Transforming Lives and the Tails of Change - Join Us in Making a Difference!*

Since that first Marine contacted me in 2010, 540 clients have been accepted into OFP's service dog program. We are proud of what we have accomplished as a grassroots nonprofit and want to thank the many donors, volunteers, board and staff members who have helped make this possible over the years and continue to make it happen on a daily basis.

As we continue on our mission, we look forward to continuing this journey with you. Your support helps us show more teams with four paws and two feet, along with their families, how to create their own new normal, sometimes referred to as "Tails of Change".

In the second half of 2013, we launched this newsletter. What I said in the inaugural issue still rings true today:

"This is another example of how it really does take a village. This village truly has come together and made an impact. I couldn't do this alone, and I am eternally grateful for all the support and help. I am busier than I have ever been, and though it gets tough sometimes, my life is enriched every day by the clients we serve. We truly are a family that I am so proud of."

Just like our clients, we continue to grow, learn, and change to meet the needs of our clients and their families. Change is certain; how we face that change helps define us as an organization and assists our clients and their families in learning how to create a new normal and face the challenges ahead with hope for a better tomorrow and future.

Even now, years later, 22 veterans a day will commit suicide, and over 900,000 will need some type of help. The VA system cannot handle this alone. In our small way, we hope to ease the pain and assist those who so desperately need our support. We help one veteran at a time. Their dog is one tool they can pull from their tool belt to create a new normal and begin to enjoy life again.

So, here is my challenge to you: what can we count on you to do? Help us save lives PLEASE. You can set up monthly donations via the OFP website's donate button, you can create fundraisers, or you can place out a donation jar like one of our supporters did at their family BBQ and share the story of OFP and what it means to you. BUT PLEASE do what you can to help! Our clients, the dogs, and their families need you, and those yet to come need you now more than ever.

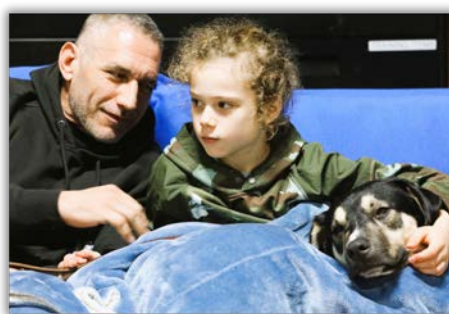
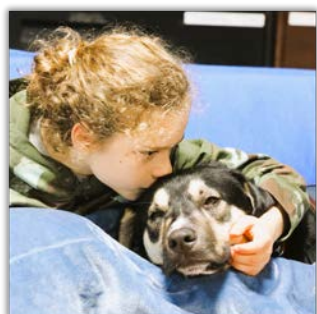
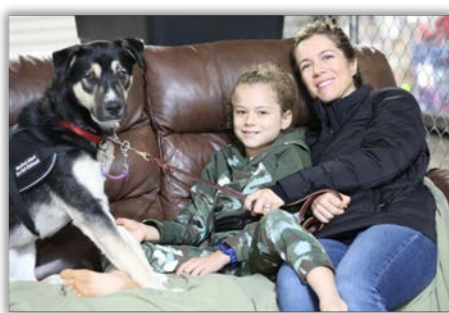
With Gratitude,
Mary Cortani, Founder and Executive Director of Operation Freedom Paws

OFP Client CJ & His Service Dog Roscoe

“CJ and His Parents Journey to Find Healing and Hope”

For the past two and half years, Cristiano (CJ) has endured the challenges of childhood epilepsy, including both big tonic-clonic seizures and smaller focal seizures. Despite exploring various traditional medical treatments and holistic natural remedies, we found ourselves at a loss as nothing seemed to alleviate his condition. Cristiano's seizures persisted, and our family experienced immense emotional and physical strain as a result. Sleepless nights filled with worry became our norm as Cristiano's seizures often occurred during sleep or upon waking. We implemented various safety measures, including alarms and specialized pillows, but the fear and anxiety remained constant. Cristiano's quality of life was greatly impacted, and as parents, it was heartbreaking to witness his struggles and suffer alongside him.

However, everything changed when we reached out to Operation Freedom Paws for assistance. Through your organization, we were blessed to welcome Roscoe into our family. From the moment Roscoe entered our home, his presence brought a sense of comfort and security to Cristiano that we had not experienced before. The transformation was remarkable. Immediately, Cristiano's sleep patterns improved significantly. No longer did he struggle for hours to fall asleep, nor did he wake multiple times throughout the night. With Roscoe by his side, Cristiano found solace and reassurance, enabling him to rest peacefully through the night. Roscoe also wakes Cristiano up each morning early, when he knows it's time. This prevents Cristiano from being in the sleep-wake state which is when he has his seizures. Now, the anxiety that once plagued him during the day has begun to dissipate.



Remarkably, since Roscoe joined our family, Cristiano has not experienced a single tonic-clonic seizure, and the occurrence of smaller focal seizures has dramatically reduced. Cristiano was on the maximum dose of seizure medication, and since getting Roscoe, we have been able to take him off his medication completely. It has been four months of uninterrupted rest and relief for our family, and we attribute this newfound stability entirely to the presence of Roscoe and God's grace in our lives.

The impact of Roscoe has had on our son extends far beyond mere relief from seizures. He has brought immeasurable joy and comfort to Cristiano, fostering a bond that transcends words. Each morning, Cristiano wakes with a smile, eager to start his day alongside his beloved dog. In light of these profound changes, I wanted to convey our deepest appreciation to Operation Freedom Paws for the invaluable work you do. Your dedication to providing service dogs to individuals in need has made a difference in our lives, offering hope where there was once despair. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for giving Cristiano and our family the gift of Roscoe. We will forever be grateful for your kindness, compassion, and unwavering support.

-Andy and Breanna Rubi

Operation Freedom Paws

The 2024 Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit of the Year!

Every year, the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce acknowledges local individuals, nonprofits, and businesses that significantly contribute to the betterment of our community.

Operation Freedom Paws is deeply humbled to be recognized as one of those organizations receiving the "2024 Nonprofit of the Year" award, especially in a community with such amazing nonprofit colleagues. Despite a torrential downpour, the chamber team surprised us at our Canine Education Center with the great news! This honor reflects the collaborative efforts of our founder, board members, staff, mentor-trainers, volunteers, and supporters. Most importantly, it's a testament to our clients and their families' determination to navigate a new normal through the program and its resources.



On Sunday, March 24th, the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce hosted Celebrate Morgan Hill, a cherished tradition spanning 66 years, to recognize all the honorees within our community. It was a beautiful evening at Guglielmo Winery, filled with connection and joy, showcasing what we can accomplish when we all come together to serve our community. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all the businesses and individuals recognized alongside us and offer a special thank you to Veteran and "Man of the Year" Brian Shiroyama for his resilience and service to his country and community.

As articulated in Mary's heartfelt acceptance speech, "it truly takes a village", and we take immense pride in being a part of this community and how they embrace and help to move our mission forward.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce team and their nominating committee for this recognition and their support in service to our mission. Thank You!

Event Highlights

The OFP Annual Crab Feed and the OFP Annual Easter Egg Hunt

THE OFP ANNUAL CRAB FEED

What a fantastic night we had at the OFP Annual Crab Feed on Saturday, February 10th! Tickets sold out fast, and laughter filled Old City Hall Restaurant as our community came together for an unforgettable evening.

Huge shoutout to our amazing volunteers for going above and beyond to ensure everyone felt welcome and had a great time. Brooke and Emil treated us to their amazing music, adding even more fun to the evening's festivities. Special thanks to Old City Hall Restaurant for being incredible hosts and serving up such mouthwatering crab! And the silent auction and drawings were a hit, thanks to generous donations from our supporters.

But what's truly special? We didn't just share a meal and good times; we made a difference together. Your support helps us bring vital resources to our clients and their families, saving lives in the process.

To everyone who joined us, volunteered, donated, sponsored a meal, or bid - thank you! Your kindness and generosity make our work possible.



THE OFP ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT

We told everyone "rain or shine" and we got both! But our wonderful community didn't let unpredictable weather dampen their spirits. From egg hunts to chalk art, face painting, and bouncing in the bouncy house, there was a lot of joy shared.

A heartfelt shoutout goes to our incredible staff and volunteers! Your dedication and positivity made the event possible, from setup to keeping the fun going strong. Your efforts brought countless smiles to the faces of children, and that's what the day was all about! And let's not forget our fluffy friend, the Easter Bunny, who delivered true magic to the festivities and the best candy!

To everyone who joined us in celebrating and making Easter memories, we hope you and your families enjoyed the day as much as we did!



Upcoming Scheduled 2024 OFP Events

Come Join Us!

Save the dates! We're excited to share our lineup of upcoming events that are sure to spark joy and make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.



APRIL 13, 2024 - OFP All-You-Can-Eat Pasta Feed at Old City Hall Restaurant

Get your taste buds ready for a pasta extravaganza! Join us for an evening filled with delicious pasta dishes, a wine pull, silent auction, and exciting drawings.

Seats are limited, so grab your tickets now for \$45.00 per person. It's going to be molto bene! Tickets and info: <https://2024ofppasta.givesmart.com>



MAY 10, 2024 - OFP 13th Annual Golf Tournament at Coyote Creek Golf Club

Help us save lives, one swing at a time! Grab your golfing friends and join us for a foursome scramble tournament! Enjoy a warm-up on the driving range, a light breakfast, and a full luncheon buffet overlooking the 18th hole directly after the tournament. Plus, there'll be fantastic silent auction items, drawings, and games like "Beat the Pro." 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners will receive awesome prizes! Check out our great sponsorship opportunities and book through April 10th to enjoy early bird pricing - just \$190.00.

Tickets and info: <https://tee2savelives.givesmart.com>



AUGUST 3, 2024 - OFP 13th Annual "Paws with Patriots" Wine Gala at OFP

Raise a glass and help raise funds for lifesaving service dog teams! Hosted by radio personality Jona Denz-Hamilton and the Mayor of Morgan Hill Mark Turner, join us for a very special evening of delicious food, live music, exquisite wines from across the valley, and captivating auctions where joy meets impact!

Stay tuned for all the details, and you can inquire about some amazing sponsorship opportunities by calling OFP at (408) 683-9010 and ask for marketing.



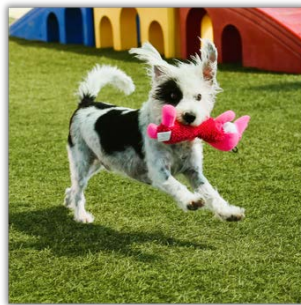
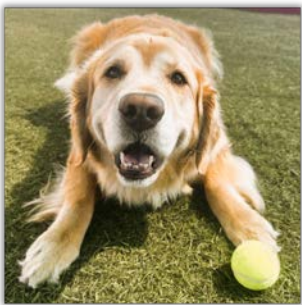
Save the dates, spread the word, and get ready for a season of connection, celebration, and making a difference with OFP. We can't wait to see you there!

OFF Daycare and Boarding Update

Spring into Action with Top Tips for Your Dog's Care

In this springtime edition as we happily embrace the outdoors and become more active, it's the perfect opportunity to share some tips on caring for our furry companions. Really, these tips are not just for spring—they're useful all year round for keeping our pets happy and healthy!

- **Exercise:** Regular exercise can help your dog bond with you and tire them out. It can also help your dog relax and calm down. Exercise is not just running, socializing with other dogs, playing fetch, or going for walks; it includes working your dog's brain. Teach your dog new tricks, play new games, and create puzzles. Since dogs have a heightened sense of smell, they love using their nose to explore. Try scattering a few treats around your home for your dog to find. Remember, it's important to use your obedience training always; be their leader.
- **Annual vet visits:** Schedule annual check-ups, even if your dog seems healthy. Prevention is key, as many health conditions can go undetected.
- **Hydration:** Provide fresh water throughout the day.
- **Living Space:** Provide a clean and protected environment for your dog.
- **Diet:** Feed your dog a quality diet to maintain a healthy weight and prevent obesity.
- **Grooming:** Regularly groom your dog; it's another great opportunity to bond with your dog!
- **First aid:** Prepare a first aid kit for your dog that includes bandages, iodine, tweezers, and a pocket knife.
- **Cooling:** Help your dog stay cool on hot days so they can pant effectively.
- **Household Dangers:** Be aware of potential hazards around the house like buttons, plastic wrap, cotton, batteries, rugs, towels, twist ties, and more. And you'll want to be especially careful if you have a chewer or young puppy.
- **Crate train your dog:** They love the den-like feel; it's in their DNA and if properly trained, it's a go-to space for them to feel secure and safe.
- **Take them for a visit to the Vet even when they don't have an appointment.** Ask their team to give your dog treats so they see the office as a fun place to go.
- **Socialize your dog:** It's more than playing with other dogs; it's about how they interact with humans and other animals out in the world and in your home.
- **Practice Patience:** Take a breath and don't get frustrated. If you use clear and consistent communication, it will pay off.
- **And most of all, praise them, love them, and remember all the amazing things they bring to your life!**



Many of you have been cooped up indoors due to the rain, but now it's time to get back outdoors, reset your dog's worldly skills, and provide them with some good ole exercise in the fresh air. This is something OFF Daycare and Boarding facility has always provided. And yup! If you didn't know it, we offer daycare and boarding services to the public. We opened our facility to the public on October 18, 2014. The fees help fund our nonprofit's mission, which empowers veterans and other individuals with disabilities to restore their freedom to live life, by pairing them with dogs pulled from rescues and shelters and training them together to become OFF Certified Service Dog Teams! Our facility is staffed 24/7, including holidays. We do book up quickly around the holidays, so we suggest you make reservations now to ensure your dog's awesome staycation with us – (408) 683-9010.

Hidden Pearls' Inaugural Wellness Journey Gives Back to OFP!

A Mission-Driven Collaboration Between OFP, Hidden Pearls & Nanda Journeys

At Operation Freedom Paws, we are always seeking meaningful collaborations that will advance our mission. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Hidden Pearls and Nanda Journeys for their incredible support. Through their Hidden Pearls Podcast, Bruce Kittle and Emma Kittle Ponce's commitment to changing lives through storytelling has brought both impactful visibility and support to our mission. Additionally, their newly launched Hidden Pearls Studio, with its focus on yoga and mindful meditation, aligns with mental and physical well-being as a priority in our program.

Nanda Journeys, under the leadership of its CEO and Founder, Nicola Balmain, nurtures experiences worldwide that create authentic connections and travel with purpose and passion. Their dedication to meaningful travel that gives back, and their support of our mission made this collaboration feel like a great fit—a wellness journey that would benefit mission-driven travelers and empower students in India while empowering our clients at home - and it did!

The group embarked on a journey, traveling up to eight thousand miles to make a difference on two continents. During this inaugural Hidden Pearls International Wellness Journey to India, they embraced the concept of 'Seva,' an honored tradition of selfless service, as they connected with local communities. At the Baas School outside New Delhi, the group engaged with teachers, parents, and students, assisting with lessons, playing sports, and hosting a yoga session led by Emma and Bruce. Continuing their journey to Old Delhi, the group visited the Bangladeshi Sahib Temple, where they joined local volunteers in preparing meals for the community. In these moments of shared service, they experienced the universal language of compassion.



One of the highlights for our team was witnessing Bruce speak to our mission and share the children's book Mary Cortani and Connor Quinn co-authored, "Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team", with wonderful educators like Rana. He will translate the book for his students, teaching them about the vital role of service dogs in the lives of veterans, children, and other individuals with disabilities. Notably, this visit occurred during the week of World Book Day, adding an extra layer of significance to see how far this book and our mission had traveled.

To Nicola Balmain, Bruce Kittle, Emma Kittle Ponce, and all the wonderful individuals who joined them, we extend our deepest gratitude. Together, the group empowered youth with sponsorships and critical supplies for the 2024-2025 school year in rural schools in India. They also raised 3.2K for vital mental health resources to empower OFP clients and their family members! What a unique and beautiful collaborative effort that exemplifies the power of community.

There are so Many Ways to Help

SOCIAL MEDIA

1. LIKE AND FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND LINKEDIN

Share our posts with your friends! facebook.com/OperationFreedomPaws
instagram.com/opfreedompaws • linkedin.com/company/operation-freedom-paws



SHOPPING

1. **USE THE CHEWY GIVES BACK WISH LIST** - Purchase items to donate to OFP via our Chewy Gives Back Wish List, and they're delivered directly to us. Scan the QR code or check out their website: www.chewy.com/g/operation-freedom-paws_b75331095



2. **USE THE AMAZON WISH LIST** - Purchase items to donate to OFP via our Amazon Wish List. The items are delivered directly to us. Scan the QR code or check out their website: www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/1SDVEUAF75ZYM?pldnSite=1



DONATE

1. **DONATE DIRECTLY** - Make a donation directly on the Network for Good website that comes straight to OFP. To donate Scan the QR code or check out the website: <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/OperationFreedomPaws>



2. **CONSIDER A RECURRING GIFT** - When you commit to a recurring donation, this is considered a recurring gift. Recurring gifts help give nonprofits an expectation of predictable cash flow. To set up a recurring gift, scan the QR code or go to our donation website: <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/OperationFreedomPaws>



3. **MAIL-IN DONATIONS - CHECKS BY MAIL**
Send a check to Operation Freedom Paws
at our mailing address:

777 First Street
PMB 515
Gilroy, CA 95020



4. **DONATE YOUR CAR** - Donate your car to Able Auto Charity Donation Corp. They will take your car IN ANY CONDITION! Call (408) 963-9588, scan the QR code or check out their website: <https://www.ableautocd.com>



ESTATE / FINANCIAL PLANNING

1. **MAKE A LEGACY DONATION** - Making a legacy or memorial donation to OFP makes a lasting difference in the lives of our clients and their families. Contact Mary Cortani directly to discuss making these donations to OFP. Phone: (408) 683-9010



2. **MAKE A LIFE INSURANCE DONATION** - OFP can be named as the beneficiary of an existing life insurance policy or as the owner and beneficiary of a new life insurance policy. Contact your policy holder for more information.



3. **MAKE A STOCK DONATION** - To donate stock to OFP, fill out a stock transfer form from your brokerage. In the form, you'll list information about the stock you want to donate and which charity you want to donate to. Call OFP for more info (408) 683-9010



CORPORATE

1. **WE WELCOME CORPORATE GIVING** - OFP encourages community corporation partnerships in giving. By making a matching donation to an OFP donation goal or if the corporation provides employee donation match programs. For info call (408) 683-9010 and ask for marketing.



Thank You!