

OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2024



A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER, MARY CORTANI

Reflecting on 13 Years of Our Nonprofit: Building Lifelines and Community

Each quarter, I reflect on what we have been up to here at Operation Freedom Paws over the last 90 days. As I sit here writing this now, a lot has happened.

We have continued to add clients and have now worked with 556 since starting in January 2010. We celebrated 13 years as a nonprofit on September 21 and have been providing service dogs and other services to our clients and their families since the beginning, which started with one Marine and his family. We have seen several clients come back for a second service dog due to the retirement or passing of their service dog - lifelines that help them heal and move forward. The loss of a pet is hard enough; losing your lifeline, your partner, is even harder.

In addition to our work with clients, we have continued to collaborate with our community and first responders. We assist them with training handlers, evaluating dogs, and placing therapy dogs in their departments and agencies. Our goal is to help prevent suicide, keep families together, and support our first responders as they assist the community during crises and comfort victims. We even have a therapy dog going with a resource officer into a school - how cool is that? It is so needed.

We are back out giving presentations to companies, community groups, and schools. Thank goodness we work with dogs, because during this time, we have also mourned the loss of another client due to medical conditions. When OFP started, we did not think about second dogs or losing clients. Yet, it is part of who we are and what we do. We have also experienced the loss of three community members who were amazing and did so much for their communities and OFP. We will miss them all and always think of them; they will not be forgotten.

Most people think our mission is just about providing service dogs, but to us, it is so much more. It's about the humans at the end of the leash, their families, building friendships, seeing them live life, reconnecting, going back to school, getting jobs, and having conversations. It's about believing that tomorrow will be better than today and building a community of support for them and for OFP.

I sometimes wonder while writing these Founder's Message sections if this is what you, the reader, want to know. How can I help you see that your support is so needed now and in the future? We do have a mental health crisis; our veterans and first responders deserve our support, and we owe them more than just empty words. We love dogs here, but the human at the end of the leash matters. The dog is not a magic bean. Clients have to do the hard work, and we are here to guide, encourage, and support them while training their service dog for their own medical conditions.

When I sign our children's book, "Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team," I sign it this way: "Dare to Dream, Believe, Find Your Superpower." I am asking each of you to do the same. Help us make the world a better place. Your support is needed now more than ever.

May your life be filled with blessings; may joy, happiness, and peace find your hearts. Tomorrow will be better than today!

With Gratitude,

Mary Cortani, Founder and Executive Director of Operation Freedom Paws

Army Veteran James with Tyrren and Johnny Boy

“Turning the Page, The Next Chapter of My Healing Journey”

Chapter One, We Didn't Really Get Along, Chapter Two, I Think I Fell in Love with You,
You Said You'd Stand by Me in the Middle of Chapter Three,
but You Were up to Your Old Tricks in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.
(Every Day I Write the Book, Elvis Costello)

Chapter One: KAF (Kandahar Airfield), Kandahar, Afghanistan, OEF 11/12

Chapter Two: James and Tyrren

James: retired Army, female, feisty, not good at being sidelined.

Tyrren: Alaskan Malamute, female, all-white, 85 pounds, with a personality the size of Baloo.

An absolute angel who came into my life, chose me and all my "oses" (neuroses, psychoses) to love unconditionally and guide me back from the brink of extinction to live a full life in the sun. I owe her my life and more because I no longer survive; I thrive. I transitioned, slowly and painfully, but not alone, from severe PTSD with agoraphobia to an MFA in Creative Writing in a low-residency program, which means that while we finished the semester remotely, we started with 120 hours of in-person instruction over 10 successive days. She got her own cap and gown for graduation!

Chapter Three: She Gave Me Seven and a Half Years

Of rediscovering myself, years to redefine my new norm, my life post-military as a handicapped individual, one more chance to be a contributing member of society. A story that is, thankfully, becoming increasingly more familiar.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six: Life Takes a Downturn

In addition to many other unfortunate life-changing events, I lost my service dog three times in three months. Suddenly, she became very ill and required hospitalization for well over a week. In our nine and a half years together, this was the first time we were separated, with her in strange surroundings and none of her people. She came home a very different dog. She stopped cuddling and giving kisses. Within a few weeks, she let me know that she was done working. Medical complications continued, and shortly thereafter, she let me know it was that time. Her story had come to its completion. What of mine?

There are those who are fortunate enough to go through life in the same form as they started. Among those of us who must find alternatives, some require tools short-term, and some long-term. A service dog could be employed for a child who has seizures but no longer needed if the child outgrows the medical condition, versus a person with Type I Diabetes, for whom a dog might be required for life. I fall into the "for life" category. I have my MFA, but I also still have PTSD with agoraphobia. Without Tyrren, performing simple, everyday tasks became overwhelming again. Depression ran rampant as years of hard-won gains slipped away from me, and I could do nothing more than watch it happen. There is an incredible sense of loss when a dog passes - a constant companion, a cherished friend, a loved member of the family. When the oxygen tank empties, we replace it. What happens when the oxygen tank is the dog?

Prior service, like those members of the Armed Forces who join more than one branch, or one branch more than once. I still have more story to write.



Army Veteran James with Tyrren and Johnny Boy (cont'd)

“Turning the Page, The Next Chapter of My Healing Journey”

And so, Elvis, here is Chapter Seven: James and Johnny Boy

Another angel has come to my side. JB is an 8-year-old, 60-pound male Standard Poodle, black, with a dashing chocolate mustache. For reasons that aren't mine to give, JB is no longer able to be the other half of his original service team, but like me, he has more story to write.

Tyrren returned me to a life of independence; JB will give me a life of continuing exploration. She was my first step; he will be my next chapter. Tyrren and I chose each other; JB and I were matched. He is not a dog I would normally have given a look. I have never been particularly drawn to poodles. However, I learned an important lesson from the loss of Tyrren: I had to prepare myself that the next dog would be completely different, even if I found another malamute. What I learned is that while poodles may not necessarily be what I look for, JB has characteristics that are beneficial to me. My hope is that I have what JB needs; after all, I'm not his first human. We have been down vastly diverse roads to get to this crossing point, but I look forward to the adventure that will come from this new union—his life experiences and mine, combined into a whole new end.

It's funny; it's kind of like a first and second marriage. My first marriage was based more on emotion because we were young and didn't have much experience. We grew together until we could no longer. I haven't had a second marriage, but I am recently back on the dating scene. The criteria I have now is worlds away from when I was in my 20s (I'm in my 50s... early; be nice!). I am more drawn to personality than looks, idealism holds a new definition, plans should be better informed, goals and aspirations should have deeper foundations, and beliefs should be backed by experience and education.

Tyrren and I were together from the time she was eight weeks old. I was learning how to be a functioning person while she was learning how to be a dog. Together we learned to navigate the pitfalls of, and define, being while also being in society. In order to do said navigation, she and I matriculated through 15 months of specialized training at OFP, Operation Freedom Paws, in San Martin, CA. Under Mary Cortani and everyone else at OFP, we learned forward, back, follow, grocery stores, gas stations, airports, and airplanes. We learned how to pop our ears when driving over the mountains. We learned that I could do whatever I wanted, even on a whim, as long as I had all six of my feet. The first time I ran away from home, I was not yet 2 years old. Two-year-old me would be proud to know that I was back to opening windows, popping out screens, and jumping into bushes in search of adventure.

We are good about giving credit to those who save our lives. Mary and OFP gave me something even more precious: the ability to save my own life.



JB spent years with another human who had a unique list of task requirements, life experiences, societal interactions, familial associations, and all the other trappings of his own life. Now we are learning to compromise to find our happy medium. For example, JB has been a “heel” dog (left side of his human), and I use a “side” dog (right side) because when I need my cane, I utilize the support on my left. Therefore, we accommodate both. When we are in public and he is on the clock, as it were, I put him in a side position. When we are out for a potty break or a leisurely stroll, I will put him in a heel position. We are not experiencing the same firsts together as I did with Tyrren. He reminds me that I need to consider his perspective and experience in order to make this partnership work.

Tyrren felt like a miracle, a second chance at life, a way to start over. JB reminds me that I still have much to learn in this life, that there is still so much more possible, but that I don't have to start over; I just have to keep going. And my prior service dog? Gets a second tour. Where our lives have intersected from the beginning is that JB started his service through OFP as well. Now we have arrived at this crossroads at the same time and found each other back at OFP. Mary saved two more lives, one more time.

OFP 13th Annual "Paws with Patriots" Wine Gala

Sponsor Highlights

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our amazing sponsors who made our "Paws with Patriots" Wine Gala a success! A special shoutout goes to our Double Magnum Sponsor, Star One Credit Union, and our Magnum Sponsor, Piedmont Moving Systems. Your generosity and commitment are transforming lives and making a lasting impact!

Double Magnum Sponsor - Star One Credit Union

The employees, board and volunteers of Star One recognize the importance of contributing to the communities we serve and being a strong corporate citizen. Star One partners directly and indirectly with many different organizations throughout Santa Clara County and neighboring counties to support and provide resources through direct financial support, other in-kind contributions to organizations, and by participating in local public service activities.

Empowering trust.

We are inspired by the veterans and individuals who find hope with the resources Operation Freedom Paws provides, and we are proud to be a long-time supporter.

starone.org



Magnum Sponsor - Piedmont Moving Systems

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MOVING SYSTEMS

Event Highlights

OFP 6th Annual Bowling Event: OFP's 13th Nonprofit Anniversary Celebration! 🎉

What a fantastic celebration OFP had for our 13th nonprofit anniversary! It wouldn't have been the same without the incredible community at our bowling event! 🎳 A huge shoutout to our USBC Tournament winners, Vicky Langley and Gary Dugas - you brought your A-game!

A big shoutout to Donna Morales for organizing the event and keeping the ball rolling, along with Tina Martin, Carolyn Sabaca, Fran Ellis, and Jeff Evanson for their fundraising support. We're grateful to Jessi Matts and Morgan Hill Bowl for hosting, and Jackie Wykoff for her generous donations.

A heartfelt thank you to our in-kind donors—your contributions brought critical resources to our program! We also appreciate all our volunteers.

To cap off the celebration, our Founder Mary and OFP Mentor-Trainer Ramon shared powerful insights on the lasting impact of community support that saves lives. It's the enthusiasm and generosity of everyone who joined us that enables us to provide essential resources like mental health services and care for our service dogs in training. Here's to many more years together! 🎉



Raising a Glass & Raising Hope: OFP's 13th Annual "Paws with Patriots" Wine Gala

We're excited to share highlights from Operation Freedom Paws' 13th Annual "Paws with Patriots" Wine Gala! It was an unforgettable evening filled with hope, thanks to your incredible support. A big shoutout to our fantastic hosts, Mark Turner, Mayor of Morgan Hill and talented auctioneer, and Radio Hall of Fame Nominee Jona Denz-Hamilton, who made the perfect duo, while The Soft Lights provided beautiful music.

We're grateful to the local wineries who put the wine in our wine gala, helping us raise vital funds. The night was full of powerful moments with clients joining in unison on stage with our founder and executive director, Mary, along with their service dogs. Ramon, Vicki, Ben, and Kim shared inspiring stories that showcased the difference our community has made in their lives. Thanks to our generous donors, we met a \$50K match during the Raise the Paddle auction, effectively doubling our impact. A special thanks to the George and Claire Kittle Foundation for their generous support at the gala and throughout the year.

We'd also like to thank all our sponsors and extend our deepest gratitude to our Double Magnum Sponsor, Star One Credit Union, and Magnum Sponsor Piedmont Moving Systems for their critical contributions. This event wouldn't have been possible without our dedicated volunteers and staff, including Renee Hammer, Katie Bailey, Alan Chan, Stephanie Fontana, and Juan Silba. Special thanks to Sue Sickal and Kaye Feskanin for their amazing auction and drawing support.

Finally, we celebrate our OFP Champion Fundraisers, including K9 teams led by Chris Beltz, raising funds in honor of K9 Maxo. The way they rallied their communities was truly inspiring! Together, we raised a glass and raised hope! Your support is vital to our mission, and we look forward to many more joyful evenings ahead that make a lasting impact!



Upcoming Community Events Giving Back to OFP's Mission

10/13 - "Pets for Vets" at J Winston Winery

Wine, live music with Brooke and Emil, food by Letty's Cuisine, great silent auction and drawings, and a Halloween dog costume contest organized by Patty Skovron & Leads Gen Marketing. There is also a virtual pet contest online. We want to see your pet in the virtual pet contest! Email info@jwinstonwinery.com to submit your pet by 10/13. Contest goes live on Facebook on 10/14 and ends on 10/18.



11/7 - LLNL - Lab Ride 18

All riders welcome! Join an amazing procession of motorcycle riders united to make a difference. Ride starts at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and finishes at Alameda Fire House where you'll enjoy a delicious BBQ with tri-tip bites and burgers. Thank you, LLNL Vets in Energy Technology and Science, and Ride Captain Kelly Burns as well as Alameda County Firefighters Association and coordinator Dustin Nevin. Register here:

<https://www.vetsinenergy.com/vets-store/veterans-day-2024-lab-ride-18>



11/17- Morgan Hill Veterans Day Run

It's a Morgan Hill tradition! 5K/10K Run/Walk for adults and kids, in addition to a 1-mile Run/Walk for kids 11 or younger only. Participants will receive participation medals, and the winners, trophies. Thank you to organizer Charles Weston for his support of nonprofit organizations, including OFP, that give back to his fellow veterans in need. Register here: <https://morganhillveteransdayrun.com/>



Win a Meet with George Kittle at a 49ers Game

Join George Kittle's Rally for Good with ALLTROO to Support OFP!

We are excited to announce that OFP has been chosen to benefit from George Kittle's Rally for Good! ALLTROO, a trusted professional fundraiser, helps charities like ours supercharge their efforts through custom giveaways called Rallies. These Rallies offer incredible prizes featuring some of the biggest names in sports, music, and entertainment. Fans can make a donation to support our mission while earning entries for a chance to win! Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code to the right to enter and support our mission. Good luck!

OFP is deeply honored to have been selected by 49ers Tight End and 5-time Pro Bowler George Kittle. George and his family are passionate advocates for our clients and their families, and what an opportunity to win a trip to meet George Kittle on the field at a 49ers game.

It's a win-win! Enter now through November 22nd. The winner will be announced on December 18th, 2024. Don't miss your chance to be part of this exciting initiative!

HEY 49ERS FANS!
WIN GEORGE KITTLE'S VIP GAME DAY

- ✓ Meet George on the field
- ✓ 2 tickets to a 49ers game during the 2024 season
- ✓ 2 pregame sideline passes
- ✓ Flights & hotel

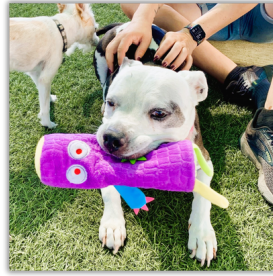


OFF Daycare and Boarding

The TEDD Philosophy at Operation Freedom Paws Daycare and Boarding

Proud to be Morgan Hill's Best Doggie Daycare and Nextdoor Neighborhood Fave!

We are deeply grateful to be recognized as the "Best Doggie Daycare" in Morgan Hill for the second consecutive year by the Morgan Hill Times, and as a Nextdoor Neighborhood Favorite for four years in a row! These honors reflect our commitment to providing exceptional and caring service, guided by the TEDD philosophy - Training, Exercise, Diet, and Discipline - developed by our founder and executive director, Mary Cortani. Mary created TEDD to ensure every dog receives individualized care in a loving environment where they can thrive.



Training

At Operation Freedom Paws, every dog that walks through our doors becomes part of our family - complete with cuddles and belly rubs! We believe dogs flourish in a consistent environment, which is why we conduct thorough evaluations to ensure a good fit for both the dogs and their humans. Our dedicated team cares for dogs of all ages - from playful pups to wise seniors. Each dog learns essential commands like sit, wait at gates, heel, and follow walk and potty routines, fostering security and trust. Our customers can also attend basic and advanced training classes to help their dogs become wonderful canine citizens.

Exercise

Understanding each dog's unique personality is key to their happiness. Whether they prefer small, compatible groups or one-on-one playtime, we ensure social interactions are stress-free and enjoyable. Our structured playtime and walks prevent a pack mentality, creating a relaxed atmosphere. And of course, there's plenty of couch and cuddle time, allowing our furry friends to bond with our caring team - because who doesn't love a good snuggle?

Diet

Nutrition plays a vital role in a dog's well-being. We provide up to three nutritious meals a day, along with engaging Kongs that stimulate their bodies and minds. Our commitment to proper nutrition helps ensure every dog remains their healthiest and happiest during their stay with us.

Discipline

We integrate training techniques from our service dog program, helping dogs develop essential skills while reinforcing discipline. We are proud to support our local law enforcement by boarding their K9s, who thrive in our structured environment. We adhere to their routines and commands; we align closely with our TEDD principles founded on working and service dogs.

Our Mission

Our daycare and boarding services not only support the public but give back to our nonprofit. Our customers enable us to help more veterans, first responders, children, and other individuals with disabilities regain their freedoms and live life - with the support of a service dog at no cost.

Every human and dog that walks through our doors plays an integral role in making it possible for a client and a dog pulled from a rescue or shelter to become a lifesaving team. Thank you to our community for making their journeys possible. Your support means the world to us!

Operation Freedom Paws offers Public Dog Obedience Training Classes. The next class starts the week of October 28, 2024. The following session will start the week of January 6, 2025. Class days and times are Monday - 6:00pm, Tuesday - 10:00am & Saturday - 9:00am. To attend, complete the registration form on our website under "Public Dog Services", then "Training Services", and forward the completed form along with your dog's latest vaccination record to the email address on the registration form.

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!