

OPERATIONFREEDOMPAWS



OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS IN 2024



A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER, MARY CORTANI

A Year of Impact: Celebrating Milestones and Looking Ahead at Operation Freedom Paws

As 2024 ends, I am reflecting on all that Operation Freedom Paws has accomplished this year. We have added new clients, had clients graduate, and begin a new journey to live the best life possible. We have reconnected with our communities, been able to get back to face-to-face presentations and outreach. We have worked with local first responder agencies to train therapy dogs for their organizations. We see amazing things happening every day with these teams. Trauma is trauma; preventing suicide and allowing folks to get help before it becomes a crisis is paramount to what we do every day.

We have made progress on the renovations at our Canine Education Center, and there is still more to do. 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 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' and their families' lives and helps give them moments to be celebrated and cherished. We try to keep you updated through social media and our newsletters. So please follow us and see the amazing stories.

Although a service dog cannot resolve the many physical and psychological challenges a disabled veteran, first responder, other adults, or children may be facing, it is one very powerful tool in the arsenal. A rescued dog can help a person in ways medical science can't predict - or even understand. "Maybe the best medicine isn't a pill at all; perhaps it's simply a dog!" That's why here at OFP we have wrap-around services, like including the families in everything we do, having therapists available during class and outside of class, for both the client and their family members, and outings, showing them, they can get out and live life. We added our 575th client this quarter.

Looking back, it has been a crazy year, and the uncertainty of what the future holds is a little nerve-racking. However, we know that we will continue to be here and fight to make the world a better place, one team at a time. We believe that tomorrow will be better than today. Please help us make that difference, giving hope to those who had none, bringing families back together, helping them learn to communicate in a different way, and showing them how to get out and live life. Together we can make a difference.

'Service before self' - that is what every veteran signed up for when they take the oath to defend the Constitution and our country. They write that blank check of service to protect and defend.

Founder's Message (cont'd)

A Year of Impact: Celebrating Milestones and Looking Ahead at OFP

Today, my and OFP's 'service of self' is a call to improve the world of our clients. Today and every day, I am re-dedicating myself to the ideals, values, and mission of OFP. It is a charge that I accept. I love being a part of an agile and smart organization that has the support of an amazing group of talented people who are like-minded, but we cannot do it without your help.

May peace find your hearts, may tomorrow be better for you. May 2025 bring you much joy, love, prosperity, hope, and may it see your dreams fulfilled. Happy Holidays!

With Gratitude,

Mary Cortani, Founder and Executive Director of Operation Freedom Paws



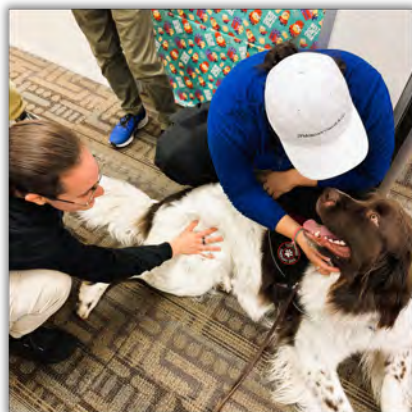
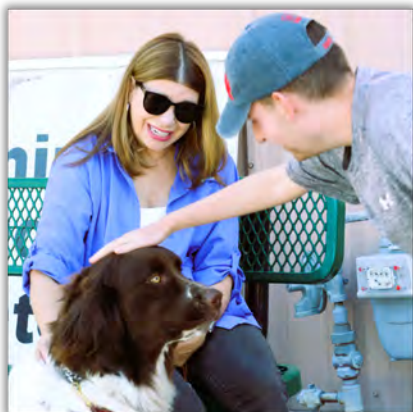
OFP Therapy Dog Team: Rosanne with Riggins

Cleared to Provide Comfort, Compassion and Joy Together!

Hi, my name is Rosanne, and I would like to introduce you to my best friend, Riggins. Some of the greatest memories I have while working as a flight attendant for 43 years are of the four-legged passengers we carried. Oftentimes, we would carry a variety of working dogs for the military, as well as service animals for our passengers with special situations. It was always amazing seeing the positive impact therapy animals could have while visiting the airport. There wasn't a time when my flight crew and I wouldn't stop to say hello and give those beautiful animals a pet! We jokingly used to say, "If your flight was late, we were probably petting a therapy animal!"

As I was getting closer to retirement, I realized that having a therapy animal was something I was interested in, but because of my flight schedule, I had never really had the time to make that commitment.

After I retired, we sadly lost our Bernese Mountain Dog of only six years. Our hearts were broken, but my husband and I felt we would be happy having just one dog, our Great Pyrenees, Becca, who was five at the time.



We were amazed by how many of our friends reached out to try to give us another animal! We continued to say, "No, thank you." Then, on Labor Day of 2023, we received a group text from seven friends all begging us to have a look at a dog who needed a family. They shared that this guy was a giant breed Landseer Newfoundland, and he was already 16 months old. Again, we said, "No, thank you!"

That evening, I started thinking about how this beautiful dog needed a family, and how we had been so sad about the passing of our Bernese Mountain Dog. We were all in need of some extra happiness. Perhaps we should meet him. And that's when the real story begins.

Riggins became a member of our family on September 4, 2023. We knew right away that he was a perfect fit. His love and sweetness, mixed with his crazy puppy vibe, brought laughter and happiness back into our home, not only for us but for Becca as they ran and played in our backyard.

As I got to know Riggins, it quickly became apparent that he needed training. Having used Operation Freedom Paws in the past for public training, I immediately enrolled him. I was very aware of the fantastic program that Mary and her crew ran and knew it would be the right fit for Riggins.

OFP Therapy Dog Team: Rosanne with Riggins (cont'd)

Cleared to Provide Comfort, Compassion and Joy Together!

When we began training, I mentioned to Mary that my goal would be for Riggins to be certified as a good citizen and also to work to see if he had the personality and temperament to become a therapy dog. Mary was supportive and helpful and got us going in the right direction. Riggins continued his lessons and eventually moved into the more advanced training classes as Mary continued to evaluate him. As Riggins and I trained and did puppy yoga together, our bond strengthened. I could see the love and desire to please in his big, beautiful, amber eyes. The day came when Mary asked us to test for his certification, and Riggins passed with flying colors!

Now, Riggins is excited to put on his collar to attend training, but his real joy comes when he wears his official certified therapy dog vest on work days. Riggins and I have visited elementary and junior high schools with Mary to do presentations that teach children the difference between a therapy dog and a service dog. Over the last couple of months, Riggins has also spent several days at San Jose State University, relieving the anxiety and stress that the students feel during their final's week. This is one of his most rewarding jobs because of all the hugs and kisses he gets from the college kids, and he seems to love taking selfies with the students.

In addition to his work in educational environments, every other week, Riggins visits the many patients at Gilroy Health and Rehab. He is quite a celebrity there and is now asked for by name! The happiness Riggins brings into the hospital has been so rewarding to witness!

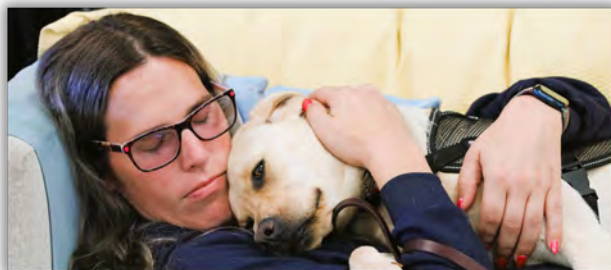
Riggins and I plan to continue bringing joy, happiness, compassion and love to all in need. How many people can say they get to bring their best friend to work every day? I am very lucky I get to.

And as for those seven group texters.... They are now all his dawg-parents and love seeing all of Riggins' great achievements.

Navy Veteran Alexis and Her Service Dog Mulan

"I Was In A Dark Place"

Before OFP I was in a very dark place. With Mulan and OFP it's like someone turned the light on in my dark place. I used to have really bad depression and anxiety to the point I would shut down for weeks on end. I wouldn't leave my house besides work. I could not walk into a store. I would break down into a spiral when someone would talk to me.



Since working with Mulan and my family at OFP my life is turning around and becoming bright. I can go food shopping and not have to look behind me. When my pain starts getting bad Mulan lays across my hip, so I don't move and hurt it more. When my anxiety and panic attacks start, she lays across my chest and is a 60-pound weighted blanket to help me recenter and ground myself. She lets me know a few hours before I start having an episode. A few hours definitely makes a difference between being able to cope with it or ending up in the ER.

OFP Is a Target Circle™ Rewards Program Participant

If you follow us on social media or receive our email updates, you know that Operation Freedom Paws is a featured nonprofit in Target Circle™! With last-minute holiday shopping or prepping for a New Year's get-together, there's still time to vote for us through 12/31/24. Every vote helps us provide service dogs that empower veterans, first responders, and others to lead independent lives. It's quick and easy to participate! Here's how to vote: 1. Choose 'My Target' in the Target app or 'Account' on [Target.com](https://www.target.com), 2. Tap 'Cast Votes', 3. Find Operation Freedom Paws and vote!

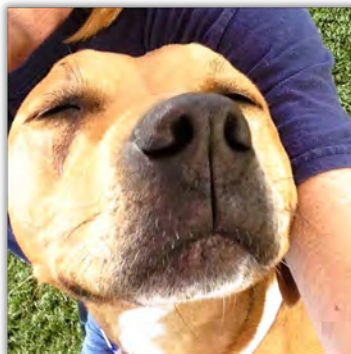
Different nonprofits are featured in different communities. If you live in Salinas, Sand City, Capitola, Gilroy, Hollister, Morgan Hill, Scotts Valley, or Watsonville, you can vote for us. If you don't live in these areas but want to help, please share the campaign with friends and family who do! To learn more about Target Circle, visit: www.target.com/circle. Thank you for your ongoing support!

OFP Daycare and Boarding

Reflecting on the Past and the Future An Update from Renee, Director of Operations

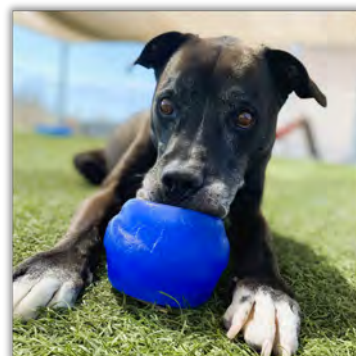
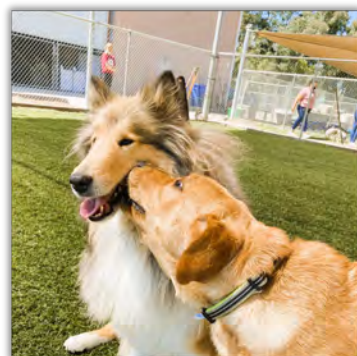
“The gift which I am sending you is called a dog, and is in fact the most precious and valuable possession of mankind.” - Theodorus Gaza

It is that time of year when we reflect.... Reflect on the months and events passed. Reflect on those things we want in the upcoming year. In these reflections there is joy, loss, love, hope, things we are proud of and not so proud of, obstacles, and happiness. For me personally, I think of all the dogs that have come through our doors.

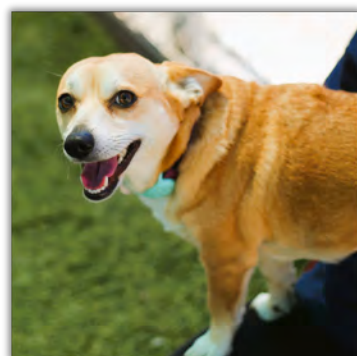


It's amazing all the wonderful customers who have trusted us with the care of their fur babies, supported our mission by using our services and help spread the word about Operation Freedom Paws. I also think of all the lives saved because of OFP, whether they have two feet or four paws.

Behind the mission scene is our kennel. We operate a 24/7/365 kennel which means we have Kennel Technicians on duty around the clock. Not only are the Kennel Technicians responsible for the daycare and boarding dogs, but they are also responsible for raising and training the dogs we pull from shelters to become service dogs. Everything they do on a daily basis can change lives.



Yes, we have had a lot of successes this year. And we've had some losses. Speaking for myself though, I am always grateful, and my life is always positively touched when it involves a gift with four paws. I have been with OFP since 2016. There is so much, in words, I can tell you about years gone by, 2024, and all the highs and lows. But what I really want is for people to feel the love and joy we experience here every day. So, to keep this brief and per the old adage, a picture is worth a thousand words. Here are photo reflections of OFP throughout the years.



Event Highlights

Community Events That Empowered Our Mission in Q4!

National Pets for Vets Fundraiser - 10/19/24

A huge thank you to organizer Patty Skovron, the J Winston Winery team, and our wonderful community for making the National Pets for Vets Fundraiser a success! The event featured fantastic vendors like Hart Lavender Farm, Pawsitive Vibes, Boutique by Stacey Habina, Letty's Cuisine, and Holly Pop's Cake Pops, all of whom donated to support our mission. A heartfelt thank you to Brooke and Emil for their amazing live music and for generously donating their tips to OFP.

We appreciate everyone who joined us to sip, shop, and bid in support of our mission. A big shout-out to those who participated in the online pet costume contest, as well as those who joined us for the in-person dog costume contest. The creativity was off the charts - every dog was a winner in our eyes! Mark Your Calendars for 10/25/25.



Veterans Day Lab Ride 18 & BBQ - 11/7/24

The Veterans in Energy, Technology & Science Lab Ride & BBQ, with 115 participants, was the largest yet - thanks to the dedication of Ride Captain Kelly Burns, and fellow organizers Michele Morris and Alameda County Firehouse Coordinator Dustin Niven. Participants rode from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) to Alameda County Firehouse for a delicious BBQ, which firefighters starting preparations early in the morning.

The event gave us the chance to show how LLNL's continued support is making a real impact. OFP Mentor-Trainer Janet, with her service dog Jenny, and Rosanne, with her therapy dog Riggins, shared firsthand how service dogs provide lifesaving support to our clients and how therapy dogs are essential in helping enhance the mental well-being of individuals in our community.

This year's event held extra meaning as we bid a heartfelt Happy Retirement to Kelly Burns. What a ride, and what an impact! Since 2021, this event has benefited Operation Freedom Paws, and we are grateful for LLNL's continued support!



Event Highlights (cont'd)

Community Events That Empowered Our Mission in Q4!

Exit Realty Keystone Santa Holiday Photo Event – 11/9/24

The Exit Realty Keystone Santa Holiday Photo Event was a holly jolly success! Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the amazing Morgan Hill team, led by Margaret Vierra and event organizer Marian Sacco. The event welcomed 48 participants in the photo session, including members of the OFP two- and four-legged family. And we can't forget Santa and Mrs. Claus for being there.

Special thanks to photographer Laura Marshall for donating a portion of her proceeds to OFP, as well as Ganado Feed and Pet Supplies for being such gracious hosts. The most wonderful gift of all was the corporate match of funds raised by Exit Keystone Realty, allowing the Morgan Hill team to double the impact of their fundraising efforts! An thank you to OFP therapy teams Bruce with Abigail, and Rosanne with Riggins, for being there and adding to the holiday joy! Mark Your Calendars for 11/8/25!



Morgan Hill Veterans Day 5K/10K Run/Walk – 11/17/24

The Morgan Hill Veterans Day 5K/10K Walk/Run saw 325 participants and continues to grow each year. It was inspiring to see active military, veterans, and community members of all ages come together to raise funds for veterans and their families. Many wore shirts or pins honoring a veteran close to their hearts.

A special shout-out to event organizers Charles Weston, Lesley Miles, and all the volunteers who worked the event. We're proud to be part of this tradition and look for an exciting update regarding this event in 2025! Mark Your Calendars for 11/16/25!



NECA Annual Golf Tournament – Cinnabar Hills Golf Club

We were honored to be one of the recipients of NECA's Annual Golf Tournament at Cinnabar Hills Golf Club. NECA and IBEW 332 are deeply committed to supporting the veterans and their families in our program. Their ongoing support throughout the year helps us provide the tools veterans need to transform their lives.

A special thank you to SCVNECA Tournament Organizer Jared Gamble, SCVNECA Executive Director Doug Lung, IBEW 332 President and veteran Pete Seaberg, IBEW 332 Business Manager Javier Casillas, and all the IBEW 332 members for their continued commitment to our mission.

We are deeply thankful for the generosity, and passion of our community. Thank you for empowering our mission!

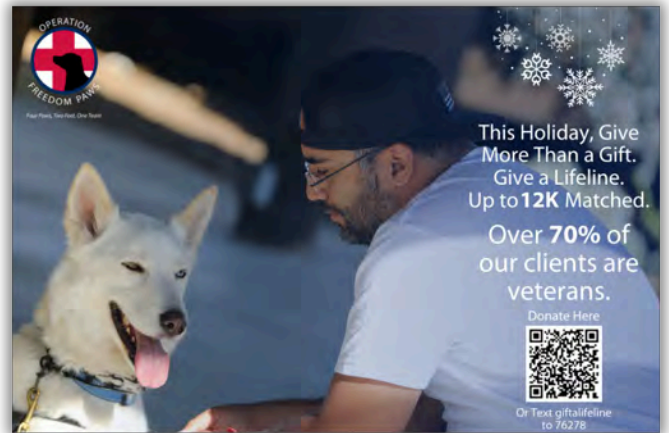


End of Year Giving

Give More Than a Gift. Give a Lifeline.

This holiday season, join us for 10 Days of Giving starting 12/21/24. During this time, we'll be sharing client stories and testimonials on our social media platforms, but you can make a tax-deductible gift starting now to provide service dogs, training, and mental health support to veterans, first responders, children, and other individuals with disabilities - at no cost to them.

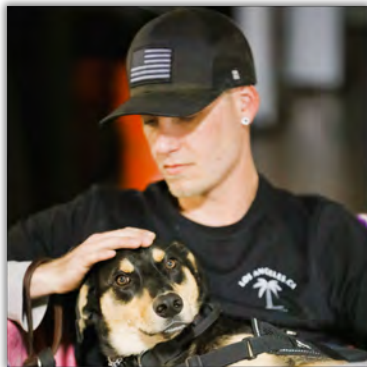
You can unlock the potential to double the impact - up to \$12,000 - thanks to Piedmont Moving Systems and anonymous donors, doubling the hope for those in need. Check out our End of Year Giving platform here: <https://giftalifeline.givesmart.com>, where you can donate and double our impact!



Our Recent Graduates

Congratulations to Our Newest OFP Certified Teams!

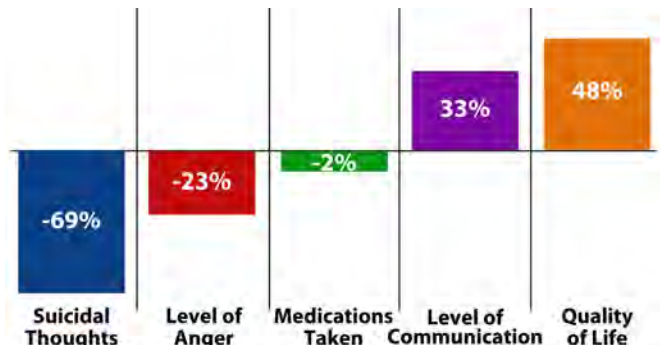
We're excited to announce the graduation of our newest OFP Certified teams: Army Veteran Tony with his service dog Max, Katelyn with her service dog Whiskey, and Gilroy Firefighter Scott with therapy dog Dallas Rose. These teams represent the diverse individuals we serve - veterans, first responders, children, and others with disabilities - empowering them to regain independence and lead fuller lives. In Scott's case, he has trained Dallas Rose to support his fellow first responders, helping them manage stress and trauma on the job before it becomes critical.



These teams have completed our 48-week training program and will always remain part of our OFP family. Their success is a testament to their hard work alongside our mentor-trainers and counselors, made possible by your support.

We are proud to have worked with 575 clients, supported over 2,700+ family members, and pulled hundreds of dogs from shelters and rescues. Your generosity is helping them transform their lives, heal their families, and strengthen their communities. Together, we're creating lasting change.

This year's graduate survey results highlight the direct impact of your support, but the true impact extends far beyond what can be measured.



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!