

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

GALLERY

PAWS FOR PEACE

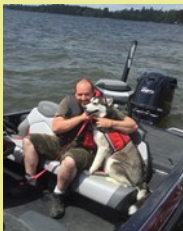


Canine Good Citizen



Coastal Humane Society
Adoption

HEALING RETREATS



Bald Mountain Camps

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When Embrace A Vet began exploring the addition of a much-needed and often-requested support program for caregivers, we decided first to tap into an existing military caregiver peer network spearheaded by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. This three-pronged national program includes community-based peer support groups, peer mentoring, and an online peer community program.

Launched in May 2015, the Military Caregiver Peer Network is expected to provide emotional support and resources to approximately 50,000 caregivers across the nation in the first year. It is especially well-suited to assist in reducing caregiver isolation, an issue very challenging to address in rural states such as Maine. We are optimistic that this new peer network will enhance the lives of our military caregivers, "the hidden heroes" who give so much to our veterans.

We encourage you to explore this new and secure website which can be accessed by going to the homepage, milvetcaregiver-network.org and clicking on "Online Community" located at the top of the page.

In addition to the national program described above, Embrace A Vet is initiating local community-based peer support groups, the first of which was formed this spring in Farmingdale. The purpose of these groups is to provide education and mutual support to caregiv-

ers of military veterans with symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

The group was piloted at an EAV Retreat earlier in the 2015. Spouses or significant others met to complete a national assessment questionnaire to assist in identifying their personal needs. The group then brainstormed topics about which they wanted to learn more, particularly ways in which to reduce the personal stress and fatigue which occurs when caring for a veteran spouse or other relative or friend with PTS and/or TBI.

It became obvious during the retreat that a special bond was forming among the participating couples. Formal and informal gatherings of caregivers met throughout the five days of the retreat, and one of the caregivers, a Registered Psychiatric Nurse, stepped forward and offered to host the first meeting of EAV caregivers at her home. The group meets regularly, on the last Saturday of each month, for a pot luck lunch. They share experiences and offer peer support. On-going resource development is provided by Embrace A Vet. The members named their group Heart 2 Heart, an apt expression coined at a prior retreat.

The beneficial impact of this first caregiver support group has far exceeded our initial expectations. Caregivers of

other veterans have joined this group and either have attended, or wish to attend, an EAV Wellness Retreat. Additionally, some of our Paws for Peace dog training class participants have expressed a desire for their caregivers to join the support group and/or to attend a retreat with their spouse/significant other.

EAV also is reaching out to caregivers who attended past retreats to gauge their interest in caregiver education and support.

We don't know exactly just where this is going....but we are pleased with the results so far and are looking to the future.

A WOOF OF THANKS

Embrace A Vet is pleased to have received a \$5,000 grant in support of Paws for Peace from the Planet Dog Foundation this past spring. Their stated mission is to *promote and celebrate programs in which dogs support and serve their best friends*, and Planet Dog donates 2% to fund the work of PDF. In addition, Planet Dog Foundation has designated Paws for Peace the beneficiary of the 2015 "bark in the park," Sea Dogs' game on July 31, when both dogs and human companions were welcomed.



sit. speak. act.®

PAWS FOR PEACE

EAV discovered early on the absence of programs in Maine providing fully trained service dogs to Maine veterans with PTS and/or TBI. While seeking a qualified trainer, we were able to assist six veterans in locating and financing companion animals.

EAV embraces the practice of pairing dogs looking for homes with our veteran participants. Most come from the Coastal Humane Society in Brunswick,

a wonderful partner. Whether the dog comes from the shelter, or the veteran brings his own dog to training, each canine is first evaluated by the trainer to ensure ability to become a service dog and to meet the veteran's needs.

The training curriculum is divided into three phases. First, the dog learns basic skills and manners, and must pass the AKA Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test. Then the dog is taught to

complete three different tasks identified by the veteran as being most helpful. For example, one veteran's anxiety is manifested in his unconsciously scratching his arms, creating open wounds. His dog is trained to alert him to this behavior by getting in his lap or jumping on the bed when the veteran is asleep. The third phase is public access when the dog and veteran work in public places such as retail stores and restaurants. When completed

successfully, the team is ready to integrate into the community.

Our program is free to eligible veterans. EAV pays the trainer, facility rental and all other costs, including a service dog harness presented at graduation. We also may cover adoption fees. As an all-volunteer group, using the "veteran owner-based" training model allows us to provide a quality program at a lower cost than elsewhere. The generosity of donors makes this possible.



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Reville would like to "go paperless." Please help by sending your email address to embraceavet012@gmail.com. We promise to keep it our secret.

CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

**Next Service Dog
Training Class**

FMI:

www.embraceavet.org

NOVEMBER

Veterans' Day

Wednesday, November 11

Healing Retreat

Point Lookout, Camden

November 12-16

FMI:

www.embraceavet.org

WE'RE REJOICING!

It was a special evening. A beautiful setting with good weather, enjoyable music performed by Five Cold Nickels, and lots of delicious food prepared by the owners and staff of El Camino all greatly contributed to enjoyment of our 4th Annual Barn Party on June 27. Best of all, and the reason for hosting the festivities, we raised about \$50,000 in support of our programs.

We are grateful for the generosity of our corporate sponsors: Supporters Bath Savings Institution and Edward Jones-Brunswick, and Friends Delorme and Mid Coast Hospital; to the many businesses which donated to the silent and live auctions, to our Host Committee; and to our enthusiastic guests and the wonderful donors who were unable to attend. Thank you all for helping



EAV provide our programs and services to Maine veterans and their families living with the symptoms of PTS and/or TBI. Your generosity is critical and greatly appreciated. We just couldn't do it without YOU!

