



# REVEILLE

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## Tracy Shaw Named As Embrace A Vet's First Executive Director

Embrace A Vet is pleased to welcome Tracy Shaw as our first Executive Director. She is the proud daughter of a disabled US Army Viet Nam veteran father and an Italian mother who was a polio survivor. In addition to her parents, Tracy grew up with two blind aunts, providing opportunities for visits to The Seeing Eye in Morristown, New Jersey. She developed a love of dogs and a desire to assist disabled individuals.

Tracy brings a combination of 25 years' experience in working with the Department of Defense Military Working Dog Program and veteran handlers in San Antonio, Texas, in animal welfare nonprofits, and in the private pet care industry. Her volunteer activities have included work with handler/dog teams for traumatic brain injury victims at River Ridge Brain Injury Rehabilitation Center in Kennebunk. She currently resides in Arundel with her husband, Rod Sparkowich, a former US Marine, where she enjoys beach walks, hiking and their "farmette" with a small garden, a wild mustang, a cashmere goat, a few happy hens, and four fantastic dogs. Her life is further enriched by the visits of her two daughters and five grandchildren.

We welcome Tracy to Embrace A Vet and look forward to our collaboration to ensure that we will continue to provide much-needed services to Maine veterans and their families. It's going to be a busy and eventful year, and we are so pleased that she is a part of our Embrace A Vet team.



*New EAV Executive Director Tracy Shaw  
with her dog Rocket.*



### EAV Team Welcomed at Maine State House

Embrace A Vet was one of 12 organizations chosen to participate in the annual *Nonprofit Day at the State House* in January.

This annual event is organized by the Maine Association of Nonprofits.

Pictured are Senator John Schneck (left) with members of EAV's Board of Directors Dean Paterson, Dr. Richard Corbin and Bob Healing. The Association is a network of nonprofits that works to strengthen the leadership and effectiveness of Maine's nonprofits. EAV is honored to have been included in the event!

### Save the Date!

#### 7th Annual Barn Party

Saturday,  
June 18, 2018

WE HOPE  
TO SEE YOU THERE!



## Paws for Peace Program Continues To Benefit Veterans in Many Ways

Those who have, or have had, a pet probably understand the healing powers of animals.

Traumatized people have a difficult time relaxing and feeling physically safe in their bodies. For them, a bond with a dog is preferable to that with another person. The dog serves as part bodyguard, part therapist and part friend.

Dogs can be trained to meet specific needs of the veterans. For example, they can learn to detect early signs of a flashback, and to distract and redirect the veteran. Additionally, they can be trained to interrupt nightmares, detect the onset of a seizure, retrieve medication, and help the veteran navigate and go to public places such as a supermarket or a restaurant.

In essence, the veteran/dog team is similar to the Army's battle-buddy system—they look out for each other at all times.



*Fred and Mattie*



*Jep and Trace*

Over the past five years, the Paws for Peace service dog training has evolved into the current 10-month program. In Phase 1, and after an initial orientation to ensure that the veterans truly want a service dog, not simply a canine companion, and have a full understanding of what will be required of them, the veteran/dog teams begin the series of 16 weekly two-hour training classes conducted by professional K9 trainers. The teams also are required to put in many additional hours of at-home practice. In the following six months of Phase 2, the teams meet monthly for additional training to refresh existing, and develop additional, handling skills.

Equally important are the opportunities to be together and benefit from the mutually supportive relationships which have developed during the first four months.

Members of the most recent Paws for Peace class in Augusta completed Phase 1 in January and already have attended two Phase 2 sessions. A new class is scheduled to begin in late March in Brunswick, and we anticipate an additional group will begin training later in the summer.

### Energetic Volunteers Contribute Generously to EAV Success

Embrace A Vet could not claim its ongoing success in assisting veterans without a cadre of generous and dedicated volunteers. We recognize their contributions and thank them for their continuing support!

Nancy Aliberto  
Linda Austin  
Addie Bacon  
Terry Baker  
Elizabeth Boyce  
Karen Bragaw  
Anne Cole  
Jean Cyr  
Deb Driver  
David Duehring  
Caroline Feely  
Donna Harris  
Sue Loeb  
Barbara Lovely

Crystal Michaud-  
Richard  
Joyce Morgan  
Judy Murphy  
Gerry Orem  
Susan Parker  
Chris Petravich  
Joan Reynolds  
Linda Rier  
Terri Schlotterbeck  
Phil Stanchfield  
David Vaughn  
Kathy Ward  
Doug Watkins



Embrace A Vet is the recipient of a \$20,000 grant from the Petco Foundation in support of our Paws for Peace service dog training program. This is the largest grant EAV has received to date and the second from the Petco Foundation. This generous support of Paws for Peace is greatly appreciated!

## Pilot Retreat Program in October Provided Strength and Support for Caregivers

Veteran/caregiver retreats have become a mainstay in Embrace A Vet's program of service to Maine veterans. At a retreat in 2013, caregivers began to ask an important question: "What about us? Everything in our lives is all about the veteran!" These folks are dedicated to their veteran, be it a spouse, friend or family member, and often feel they too have battle fatigue, are burned out, or simply need a break.

Many caregivers must work full-time to make ends meet, as veteran benefits for those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Traumatic Brain Injury may be insufficient.

Others find they cannot work outside the home because the person they care for is not able to function on his or her own.

EAV listened, and at post-retreat discussions agreed to host and support statewide monthly meetings for caregivers who have participated in a Healing and Wellness Retreat. Over a three-year period three groups were formed: in Bucksport, Farmingdale, and greater Bangor, Maine areas within a reasonable commute of those caregivers interested in attending, and at no charge to attendees



*Caregivers enjoy a lighter moment at their October retreat. Those attending shared their concerns and enjoyed a fabulous hike to a beautiful lakeside area on Maine's North Pond.*

These sessions are supported by volunteer group leaders and an EAV wellness coach volunteer. The Bucksport group, named Aiyana, and the Farmingdale Heart-2-Heart group meet monthly, and the Bangor group, the Margaritas, meets quarterly, but members communicate regularly via Facebook.

The sentiment of "missing each other" and the power of feeling supported and connected resulted in an EAV week-end Caregiver Retreat Pilot program, held in October 2017. Those caregivers attending were able to share their latest worries and concerns about their veterans, which led to brainstorming about resources, new goals and objectives and coping skills. The strength and support resulting from caregivers getting together led to a sense of renewal, ideas about better ways to "cope," and suggestions about "responding" rather than "reacting."

Caregiver concerns at the October retreat centered around support for their fellow caregivers and the issues their veterans face as they age and become more medically fragile. There is worry about spousal and caregiver benefits and navigation of the system, as well as the unknown impact of a veteran's accident or illness that is unrelated to military service. Importantly, these concerns have set the agenda for caregiver meetings in 2018 and into the future.

Evaluations of the October retreat were very positive and resulted in discussion of piloting a Caregiver Retreat in 2018 where caregivers who cannot find support for their veterans may bring them along to participate in a Veteran's Retreat. At a combined couples' week-end retreat, hopefully each participant will benefit greatly from the experience!

Are you a Maine veteran living with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress and/or traumatic brain injury?



**invites you to an all-expense paid  
Residential Healing and Wellness Retreat  
May 14-17, 2018  
Kennedy Learning Center  
Camp Kieve, Nobleboro, Maine**

FMI and/or an application, please visit  
**embraceavet.org**,  
email **info@embraceavet.org**,  
or phone Tracy Shaw at **207-449-9149**.



P.O. Box 516  
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[www.embraceavet.org](http://www.embraceavet.org)

**YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT HELPS US HELP  
VETS! SEND YOUR DONATIONS  
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[www.embraceavet.org](http://www.embraceavet.org)**

## **Breaking News!**

Embrace A Vet will be setting up "housekeeping" at Brunswick Landing. Our mailing address will remain P.O. Box 516, Topsham, ME 04086, but as of April we will have a physical space in which to meet with veteran applicants for our programs, as well as prospective sponsors and volunteers. It also will provide some storage space for various EAV materials which have been stored in some of our homes. We'd like to invite you to an open house, but would have to issue timed tickets for the 233 square feet of Office #1, 15 Terminal Road, Brunswick, ME 04011. Our phone number will remain the same: 207-449-9149.

## **EMBRACE A VET**

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