

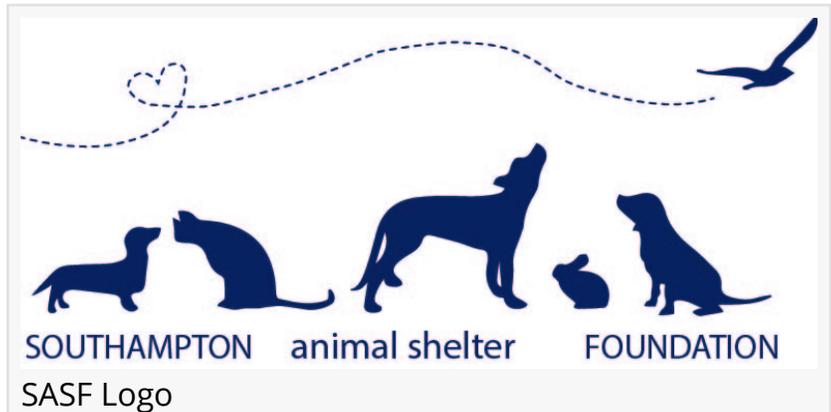
# Operation Warrior Shield & Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation Partner to Provide Companion Pets to Veterans

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 7, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Operation Warrior Shield and Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation Formally Announced Their Partnership to Provide Companion Pets to Seriously Wounded Veterans and Their Families Through OWS' Operation Canine Companion Program

Operation Warrior Shield (OWS) and Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation (SASF) formally announced their partnership to provide companion pets for veterans through OWS' Operation Canine Companion program. The announcement was made during Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation's 13th Annual Unconditional Love Gala, held Saturday July 16, 2022 at a private residence on Gin Lane, in Southampton.

Chaired by Jean Shafiroff, the event honored William Bratton, former Police Commissioner of New York City, and Jonathan McCann, founding President of SASF. The Honorary Chair was Georgina Bloomberg. The annual event has been the most important

fundraiser for the shelter for over a decade, featuring a reception, seated dinner and dancing. A live and silent auction helped raise much-needed funds for SASF's animal residents and



Pat, Chris and Layla the Dog

programs, as well as garnering enthusiastic support specifically for Operation Canine Companion.

Vietnam Veteran and Purple Heart recipient Chris Quirin was in attendance with his new canine companion, Layla, a yellow labrador retriever mix. Quirin is the first veteran through this partnership to be honored and presented with what he calls, "a precious gift to myself and my family.

The love Layla adds to our family is immeasurable. We are in love with her."

"There is no denying the comfort, acceptance and genuine friendship a sweet pup like Layla shares with me, my wife Patrice, and everyone around her. We are truly appreciative for the opportunity to bring Layla into our lives," Quirin shares.

"We are excited to work with Chris as we grow this program," says Chief Master Sgt. Ed Schloeman, Founder and CEO of Operation Warrior Shield. "We thank Chris for his service and sacrifices, and we are honored to be able to provide such a beautiful and loving companion to him through our collaboration with Pat Deshong and Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation."

"Our goal is to provide specially trained, loving and supportive canine companions to veterans and first responders and their families who live with physical and emotional injuries incurred during their time in service," adds Schloeman. Schloeman says he partners with Deshong to provide resources and training so that both organizations can work together to match vets with shelter pets. "In addition, we are grateful to have the support and partnership of The Doris Day Animal Shelter Foundation, and Tunnel to Towers."

Bethann Carbone, CSO of Operation Warrior Shield explains, "We developed Operation Canine Companion because veterans are committing suicide every day. We know how important healing from trauma is. OWS' Operation Canine Companion pets provide safety, camaraderie, unconditional acceptance, and a unique emotional support that helps reduce the stress and challenges that our heroes face every day."

Deshong describes the pet selection process: "Not every dog qualifies to be a trained companion dog. Our trainers spend many hours evaluating each dog for their temperament in different environments, and how they might accept corrections and commands."

Deshong says that once a dog is selected, it receives basic training in commands such as "sit", "stay" and "down", and is brought to public areas such as shopping malls or city streets to help



acclimate the dog to stressful environments so that the pet can accompany its handler to provide companionship in a wide range of situations.

"Each dog will receive approximately 3-5 months of training," explains Deshong. "But our program is unique in that we place the dog in the veteran's home during most of that period, and we provide training instructions to the veteran/handler so they are active participants in training the dog as well. Because accepting a pet is a long-term commitment, we focus on setting the stage for the vet and their pet to develop compatibility and a partnership for the rest of their lives together."

According to the 2021 National Veteran Suicide Prevention report\*, an average of 17 veterans commit suicide daily. Carbone explains, "It is in response to this tragedy that Operation Warrior Shield reaches out to assist military and first responders and their families who are fighting a daily battle for improved quality of life, to help them find a path to inner and outer health and well-being."

Layla and Quirin made an appearance together recently in Times Square in New York city at the taping on the set of the popular TV show, Wonderama hosted by David Osmond. Quirin and Layla were joined on stage with Osmond and OWS team members, Chief Master Sergeant Ed Schloeman, Board Member Wilem Wong, CSO Bethann Carbone and Goodwill Ambassador, Errol Rappaport as Schloeman described the Operation Canine Companion program.

Operation Warrior Shield is currently planning their annual Healing for Heroes fundraising gala on November 4th, 2022 at the Water Club in NYC. This event will benefit Operation Canine Companion, as well as provide support for training in Transcendental Meditation and other effective stress-reducing programs.

\*The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' 2021 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report is available online at: <https://bit.ly/3wrB0aW>

About Operation Warrior Shield:

Operation Warrior Shield is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, whose primary mission is to provide comprehensive support programs for service members, veterans and first responders, with a focus on "Healing Their Hidden Wounds" through no-cost holistic wellness services. See the Scarlett Johansson video commentary on Operation Warrior Shield: <https://bit.ly/3KxYfFX>

About Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation:

The Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation (SASF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, open admission, no kill shelter that relies on the generosity of their donors and volunteers to care for the homeless animals in its community, and to place them in loving "forever homes." Whether caring for strays found wandering the streets, rescuing neglected and abandoned animals, or saving dogs from the horrors of the puppy mill industry, the shelter is a safe haven for all animals and for some, a last resort. The shelter provides a steppingstone for animals to find a

loving home.

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