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July 2014  
Award Winning  
Monthly Newsletter

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www.mwdtsa.org

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MWDTSa touches the  
lives of dogs and peo-  
ple near and far. This  
month, our Kennel  
Talk reports stretch  
from Afghanistan,  
Virginia, Michigan,  
Idaho, Oregon and on  
to California.

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we connect next  
month!

Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

## MWDTSa KENNEL TALK



***I would like to introduce you to one of the finest dog handlers that I have had the pleasure of knowing. During her time as a Soldier and Dog Handler, Gloria has touched the lives of many and continues to lead and inspire. She is truly beloved by all and we are grateful that she shared her journey with our Kennel Talk readers. We appreciate her service and sacrifice—her honor and integrity.***

***Dixie Whitman***

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## A Letter to Dad

Dear Dad,

I remember when I called you from Basic Training to tell you that I was okay and you told me to call you back when I decide to give up. For the longest time I thought you didn't believe that I would make it. I think now I finally get what you were trying to teach me, that if I start something I should finish it....LoL. This is my final re-enlistment. The first time was in the middle of a mine field in Bosnia, the second one was at the Palace near Camp Victory in Iraq, this third one was short and sweet—Afghanistan. I dreamed of my family and loved ones being able to witness it, but knowing all that I been through on this deployment, I am blessed to be standing here alive and well and to be able to raise my hand and say the oath. Thanks to my kennels and the soldiers I have worked with that showed me the way...

*Gloria*

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## K-911: Nothing More Vital To Battlefield Survival

by Master Sgt. Kevin Wallace

MOUNTAIN HOME AIR FORCE BASE, Idaho – The night was bitter cold on the barren landscape as the platoon stealthily made its way across a dusty field. All but one of the Soldiers gazed hard through their Night Optical Devices (NOD), scanning the backdrop for insurgent presence.

The final Soldier didn't need NODs to see, his nose alone could detect Taliban from across a field. That Soldier was Petty Officer 1st Class Valdo, a Navy military working dog attached to the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, and later that night he paid his service forward in blood, vomit and feces, when a rocket-propelled grenade exploded mere feet from him, riddling him with shrapnel.

Valdo and his handler, Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Lee, did their jobs well during that mission, known as Operation Red Sand, and detected booby traps in Kobali and Kamusari Villages. They saved the lives of 11 American servicemen, April 4, 2011.

After several patrols and key leader engagements, the platoon was ambushed in a field outside Kamusari. The team seemed doomed as a six- to seven-times larger force descended on them, barraging them with heavy machine gun and RPG

fire.

They set up defenses in dilapidated ruins.

The moderate defenses the ruins enabled were quickly destroyed as back-to-back RPGs easily eroded the mud walls. Then an RPG landed straight in the middle of Valdo and four others, exploding with deafening might.

While Valdo howled in excruciating pain, Army Sgt. Jeff Sheppard screamed, "Medic ... medic ... medic! Damn it, we need a medic! West, we need you down here!"

Valdo had a shrapnel hole rupturing his colon, multiple other shrapnel wounds to his hind leg and tail, and Lee took a piece of shrapnel to his right shoulder. Additionally, Sheppard, Army Pfc. Ben Bradley and Air Force Tech. Sgt. Kevin Wallace were all peppered with the burning shards of metal.

It goes without saying, their service had a price.

"That was a handler's worst nightmare. When that RPG came in and exploded next to us, all I could think about was how to get Valdo off that field. His screams were jolting and I knew I had to get him to

safety, and felt helpless because there was nothing I could do with the amount of incoming fire," said Lee. "He's a tough dog and made it, though. As much as the platoon owes their lives to Valdo, he owes his life to Spec. [Kellen] West and the other men who carried him off that field and got us on the medevac helicopter to safety."

With five of the 11 men wounded, they moved the K9 to safety while continuing to fight-off an overwhelming number of insurgents without resupply or reinforcements, Valdo and the team were truly lucky to be alive.

Valdo is only one bomb-detection dog from a vast network of military K9s, who all train at the Department of Defense's Military Working Dog program, 341st Training Squadron at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

All military branches rely on MWDs, and the K9s serve vital roles in Air Force Security Forces, Army and Marine Corps Military Police, Navy Master at Arms, Coast Guard Port Security, and other various military inspection agencies and bomb detection or disposal units. In essence, military law enforcement deeply relies on the service of their four-legged warriors.

***Right: Military Working Dog Troll waits for his turn during a demonstration for a local Boy Scout troops April 1, 2013, at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho. Troll had recently returned from a deployment to Afghanistan and was scheduled to deploy again soon. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Samuel Morse)***





**Left: Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Valdo, working dog, wears a Purple Heart Medal on his collar. Valdo and his handler, Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Lee, were both wounded by shrapnel in a rocket propelled grenade attack in Bala Murghab District, Badghis Province, Afghanistan, April 4, 2011. Valdo fully recovered after five surgeries, served another year, and retired with a Purple Heart Medal, and now lives with Lee in New Jersey.**

**Right: Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Lee, master at arms, and Petty Officer 1st Class Valdo, working dog, sleep on a hospital floor in Kandahar, Afghanistan.**

**U.S. Air Force photos by Master Sgt. Kevin Wallace/RELEASED**



Due to the injuries suffered at Red Sand, it took five different surgeries for Valdo to recover. He served another year in the Navy and is now retired, and wears a Purple Heart Medal on his collar. He lives with Lee in New Jersey, and every April 4 the two of them spend the day together, thankful for surviving the brutal Red Sand ambush.

Far from New Jersey in the Southwestern Idaho desert lives another K9 named Troll. He also recently retired from military service and now lives with his handler, Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Wilson, 366th Security Forces Squadron.

According to Wilson, Troll saved his life several times. Wilson recalled one mission where, after an ambush, Troll let his team and a group of Afghan National Army Soldiers through two miles of improvised explosive device-ridden poppy fields before finding a stronger location, where the team could defend themselves.

It wasn't before long the team was on the move again, as intelligence suggested the team had bed-down right down the road from two known high-value targets. It was time to move and take down those tar-

gets.

"As we approached the building, we immediately began taking fire from the enemy," said Wilson. "We returned fire and continued to raid the building. Once inside, Troll responded to an IED which we quickly secured along with everything else."

During this search, Troll found a hidden compartment with a weapons cache containing six AK-47 assault rifles, nine pressure plates and 20 pounds of homemade explosives.

"After the explosive ordnance disposal guys showed up we went outside to conduct an exterior search with a fellow coalition member," said Wilson. "All of a sudden he was struck in the chest by a bullet from an enemy sniper. I immediately regained control of Troll and pulled the guy to a safe spot clear of the sniper. Another Soldier came and helped me get him inside so the medics could begin treatment."

With injured personnel needing immediate medical evacuation, Wilson and Troll were then responsible for clearing a landing zone for the helicopter.

Like everything else asked of them, they cleared the landing zone while engaging insurgents.

Troll and Valdo are merely two examples of the many MWDs serving today. Their time as service dogs has ended; their status as heroes will never end.

The legendary status of K9s like Valdo and Troll pale in comparison to the might they bring to the fight. Though limited in their own MWD program, Afghan allies acknowledge the power a military K9 wields.

"When we go on patrol with American forces, we normally hope for two things: they will have air support overhead and that they will have a military dog along on the mission," said ANA Platoon Sgt. Ghulam Hazrat Mohammadi, 207th ANA Corps, through an interpreter. "Americans like to call their dogs 'man's best friend,' and probably most Afghans don't realize the important role a dog can play not only in combat, but in morale on a camp. Nothing saves more lives than a bomb-detection dog, except for Air Forces in the sky."



## 2nd Quarter Care Packages Received

MWDTSA relies on the generosity of our donors, without whom we would be unable to make the care packages to the MWDs and their handlers happen. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following companies and individuals who gave recent donations:

Jeff Andersen  
 Lin Bayless  
 Rick Bonatto  
 Mike Burgess  
 Amy Cernicky  
 MG and Mrs. George C. Close (USA Ret.)  
 Elizabeth Cobb  
 Christine Daniel  
 Margaret DeShon  
 Enterprise Holdings Foundation, Saint Louis, Mo.  
 Garrick Galvez  
 Kathy George  
 German Shepherd Dog Club of Washington State, Inc.  
 Girl Scouts SW Texas Troop #907  
 Gay Givens  
 Illusions Gallery and Frames, Smyrna, Ga.  
 Pamela Kendrick  
 Lions Club, Rogers City, Mich.  
 Darlene McIntire  
 Mrs. Millard's Second Grade, Butler, Mo.  
 Carol Murray  
 Nose Work Trial participants, Dallas, Ore.  
 Christine Rankin  
 Lance Robertson  
 Stephen Redden  
 Kristen San Antonio  
 Verizon Foundation  
 Scott Van Voris  
 Jacob Wagner  
 Dixie Whitman  
 Jonathan Wilcox  
 Janet Wong  
 Kathy Woodring



**Below L and R: These photos came in via Twitter (see page 9 for details about this new way of keeping up with us).**

**They were accompanied by the Tweet: @MWDTSA a HUGE thank you to you guys for the care package. MWD Body and I certainly appreciate it. U guys r the best!**



## Noses to the Grindstone: From Oregon with Love

Thanks to Carol Forsberg, Terri Spaeth-Merrick and dozens of attendees at the Dallas, Oregon Nose Work Trials, MWD TSA is much closer to our goals of including KONG Traxx Toys, pet wipes, Doggles and much more into the boxes of an estimated 150 dog teams in our upcoming NASCART care packages.

Carol and Terri contacted us in March to get information about our organization and to set up a fundraising event which would coincide with their three day Nose Work Trials in late May. Their fundraiser identified a few items that we planned to ship in the upcoming boxes; allowing participants at the trial to select from among the samples present, those items which they would like to purchase as a donation.

We were overwhelmed by the responses. Approximately 30-35 attendees participated in the fundraiser, which netted about \$2400 in donations.

We are forever grateful for this energetic and visionary team for making this event happen. And, to some of the most generous and caring donors attending the Dallas Trial, we can only send our heartfelt thank you.

For more information on Canine Nose Work, please visit the website of the National Association of Canine Scent Work. This is a new and exciting venue for many breeds. Your dog could earn a title just by using his natural scenting abilities. [www.nacsw.net](http://www.nacsw.net)

For videos of the dogs in action:

<http://www.nacsw.net/trial-calendar-information/video-examples-nacsw-k9-nose-work-trial-searches>

**Right, Top to Bottom: Carol Forsberg (top) and Terri Spaeth-Merrick (second from top) with their "purchases".**

**Maeve Urbany signing up for an item to "buy".**

**Cynthia Frye and her "purchases". She is in her 70's and still competing with her dog in the highest level at NW3!**

**Karen Eby and her "purchases"**

**Below: Just a few of the people who donated to the MWD TSA! I think we had somewhere around 30-35 people raise a total of almost \$2,400.00!**





## CoreLogic Team Donates Again

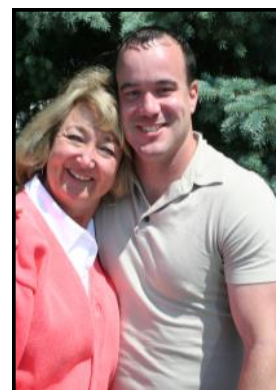
Thanks to Christine Rankin and the CoreLogic team from California for their continued support of MWD TSA. As a part of their team project, these great folks brought in requested product donations or checks in support of our military working dogs. CoreLogic sent a nice variety of toys, treats and grooming items for the dogs. A special shout out to these amazing supporters and to Christine for caring enough to coordinate for us for a second year!



**The CoreLogic Team from left to right is Jeff Andersen, Mike Burgess, Amy Cernicky, Elizabeth Cobb, Christine Rankin, Janet Wong, Garrick Galvez (who is military), Carol Murray and Scott Van Voris. Also donating, but photographed separately, Kathy George and Rick Bonatto. Not pictured: Lin Bayless and Lance Robertson.**



**Left: Rick Bonatto and his dog. Rick is part of the team but works remotely so could not be part of the group photo.**



**Right: Kathy George and her son, James. Her son James was military and passed away about a year and a half ago.**

**Right: A sampling of some of the items sent to MWD TSA from the CoreLogic Team.**



# Woofstock

by Nikki Rohrig



**Above: Check out this 6 month old Belgian Malinois. A Maligator in the wild!**

**Below: Jonathan and Jodi Jackson guard the booth, along with their daughter Hensley and dog Kylee. Hensley was a trooper!**



**Below: MWD TSA volunteer Nikki Rohrig handed out brochures. She also sold mugs to raise money for the next round of care packages.**



Woofstock has gone to the dogs, literally. Held in Bristol, VA on June 7<sup>th</sup>, this day long dog festival was a great way for MWD TSA to educate the public about our hard working MWDs and their awesome handlers. Even though several veterans stopped by our booth, the event brought in many pet owners who weren't aware of what MWDs actually do while they're deployed.

Luckily for me, I had two former MWD handlers at the booth to help me explain. Jonathan and Jodi Jackson were both handlers with the Army and came in from Knoxville to help me man the booth. MWD TSA supported both of them when they were de-

ployed.

"Anything we can do for this organization, we will. They were so great to us while we were deployed and we are happy to be here," said Jonathan. I think Jonathan was overly happy to hand out our brochures. Guess whose face is inside? That's right, Jonathan and his MWD Toby.

Not to be outdone, Jodi made sure to show everyone a picture of her MWD Janis and herself while out on patrol in Iraq. "Our dogs knew what those boxes were when they were delivered and were very anxious to see what was in them."

Jonathan and Jodi brought their dog, Kylee, to serve as our official mascot for the day. Kylee is a beautiful Dutch Shepherd who washed out of K9 school as her love for kisses was stronger than her ball drive. Kylee hit the jackpot getting adopted by these two, don't you think?

Just in case a dog wasn't enough to draw people to our booth, The Jackson's brought their 15 month old daughter, Hensley. She wore the best shirt of the day! It said, "My mommy is the best dog handler ever!" Hensley also has the "daddy" version of this onesie. I wonder who dressed her for the event?

There were lots of dogs that came by to sniff out our booth. I tried to recruit several German Shepherds, but unfortunately it didn't work out. Our favorite visitor was a 6 month old Belgian Malinois! These pups are hard to find as pets and we were thrilled to see one "out in the wild." He was quite handsome and happily posed for a picture with our banner.

Another highlight was a man who recognized MWD's because of retired MWD Remy, who he had seen on an episode of "Saving Private K9." I was thrilled to let him know that we supported Remy when he was deployed and he helped us pack our last set of care packages!

Woofstock was a success and we were able to generate a lot of interest in our MWDs. Several people were anxious to keep up with the handlers and dogs on our Facebook and Twitter pages. I want the handlers to know that you all have great support in this area. Keep up the good work and stay safe!



**Above: This little girl colored an awesome photo! I wonder whose care package will have this in it?**



**Above: Kylee meet....Kylee! This little girl stopped by to visit us. Turns out these two have the same name.**



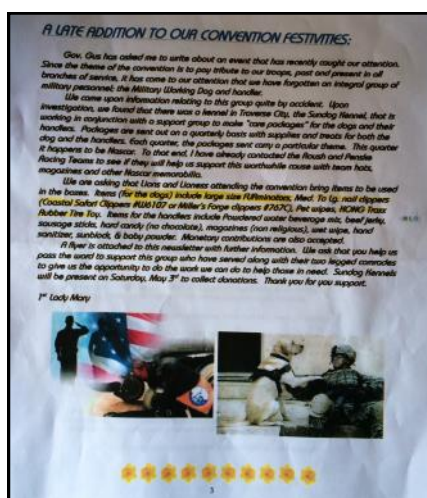
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## Lions Clubs Pounce on Donation Opportunity

MWD TSA friends in Michigan continue to support through various organizations, goals and events.

We are so pleased to share that the 11-E-2 District Lions Club Convention was attended by about 34 Lions Clubs, and we are delighted to be the recipients of their generosity. Funding and in kind items were collected to donate to MWD TSA for our quarterly care packages. We are very "proudful" of our Lion friends.

Thank you one and all.



**Left: Fundraising for MWD TSA was a late addition to the convention activities. A poster was created to announce the collection on May 3rd.**

**Right: Mary and Gus, from the Lions Club, with some of the items collected. Allison Merrill, of Sun Dogs Kennels, Traverse City, Mich., was the MWD TSA coordinator. Allison has been a tireless MWD TSA volunteer and was recently asked to join the MWD TSA Board of Directors.**



## Madra Mor Mud Donation



The business and organizations that support MWD TSA with donations are many and varied. Included in the April care packages were items donated by Madra Mor Mud. The company has a range of mud bath products designed to help clean and nourish dogs' fur and skin.

Check out their Canine Massage information at <http://www.madramormud.com/canine-massage/>





# @MWD TSA: A Twitter Primer

By Nikki Rohrig

Want to see our Tweets? MWD TSA has a Twitter account and we want YOU to follow us. Twitter is a social media app that has over 500 million users. Almost everyone these days has a Twitter account, including The White House and even the CIA. What would the CIA need to tell millions of followers? Well, here's their first tweet: "We can neither confirm nor deny that this is our first tweet."

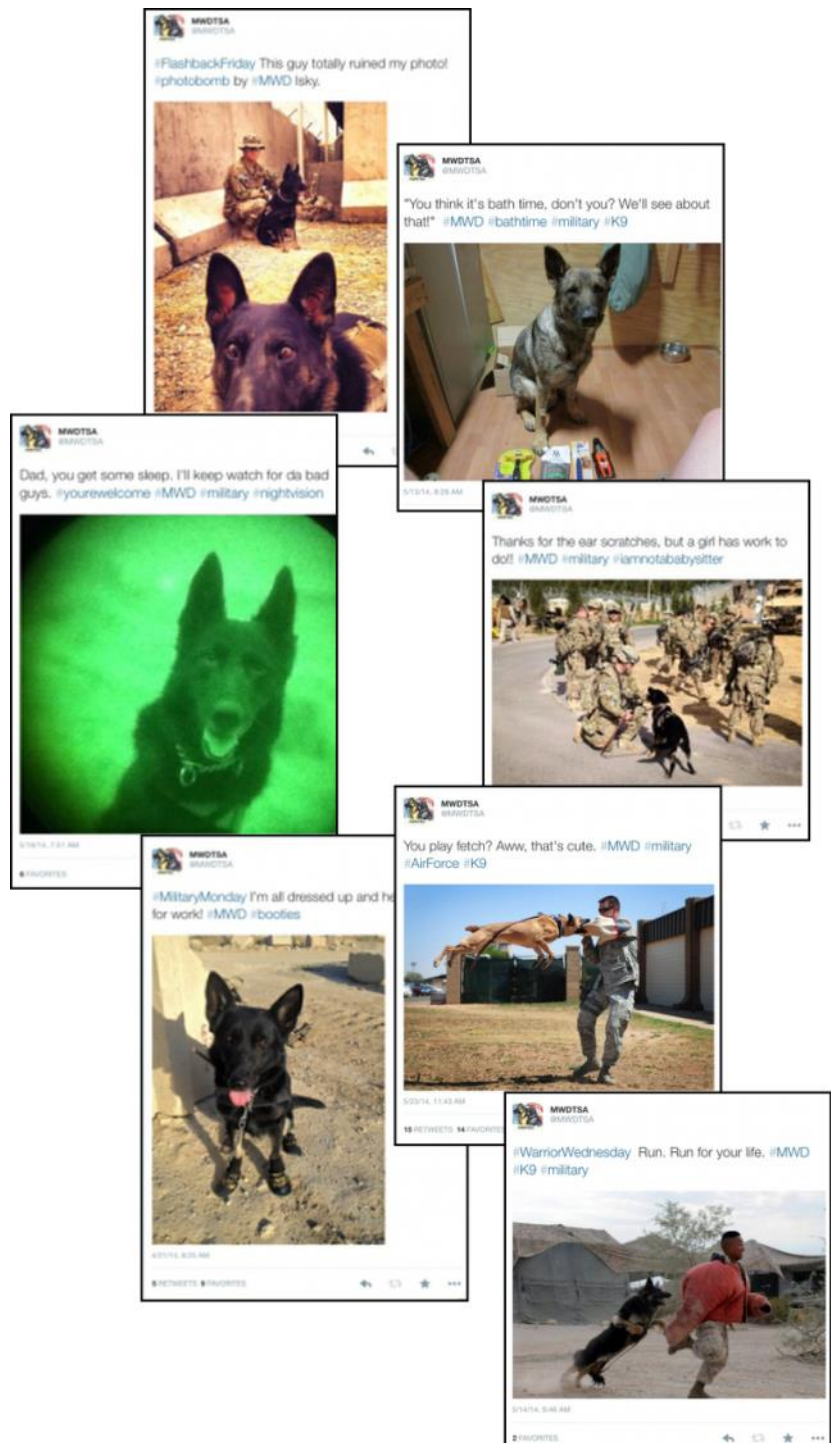
Why does Twitter have such a big following? All tweets are limited to 140 characters and that includes spaces and punctuation! Everything is brief and gets straight to the point. Twitter is like a condensed version of Facebook. You can also include photos and website links in each tweet. Just in case you aren't familiar with Twitter, here's a quick tutorial on how to sign up and use the social media app.

To use on a desktop or laptop computer, go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com). If you have a smartphone, download the free Twitter app. To sign up for your account, you choose a username. This is how other people will identify you when you're on Twitter. You can use your name if you'd like, but a majority of Twitter users create their username. This is your chance to be unique! You'll also need to create a password and enter your email address. After that information is filled in, you will be prompted to follow your first 5 users. Once the registration process is complete, the fun part begins. You can search for users and content that you are interested in and follow them. Your Twitter feed will be made up of anyone you follow, so you pick and choose who you want to keep up with!

For example, your username might be "LikesGSDs" or "MWDlover". In the search box you can search for other individuals, businesses or organizations by name and follow them. You can also search Twitter for specific words by using the # symbol, which is called a hashtag on Twitter. You can search "#militaryworkingdog" and it will bring up all posts that include that phrase. When I tweet for MWD TSA, I always include #MWD so that anyone who may be searching for MWD's will find us!

If you really like a tweet, you can favorite that tweet by clicking on the star symbol below the tweet. If you want other people to see that tweet, you can retweet that tweet by clicking the arrow box and it will send that out to anyone who follows you on Twitter.

Just to get you started, here are a few of our favorite Tweets for you to look at. Go ahead, give it a try. Be #brave and join the #Twitter nation!



## Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

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### Sit. Stay. Support.

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and click the "Follow" button for @MWD TSA

Kennel Talk is the proud recipient of a GSDCA Special  
Newsletter Award!

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## From the Archives

*During World War II, US Marines had to include landing operations from various sea craft in the training given to their MWDs and handlers. Below left: MWD wrapped inside a coverall blouse and lowered over the side of the ship in landing operations. Below right: MWDs and their handlers practice amphibious landings from a Higgins boat at Camp Lejeune, NC, during intensive training in 1943 prior to their deployment in the South Pacific.*

**Photos: U.S. Marine Corp.**

