

September 2015
Award Winning
Monthly Newsletter

Volume 7, Issue 9

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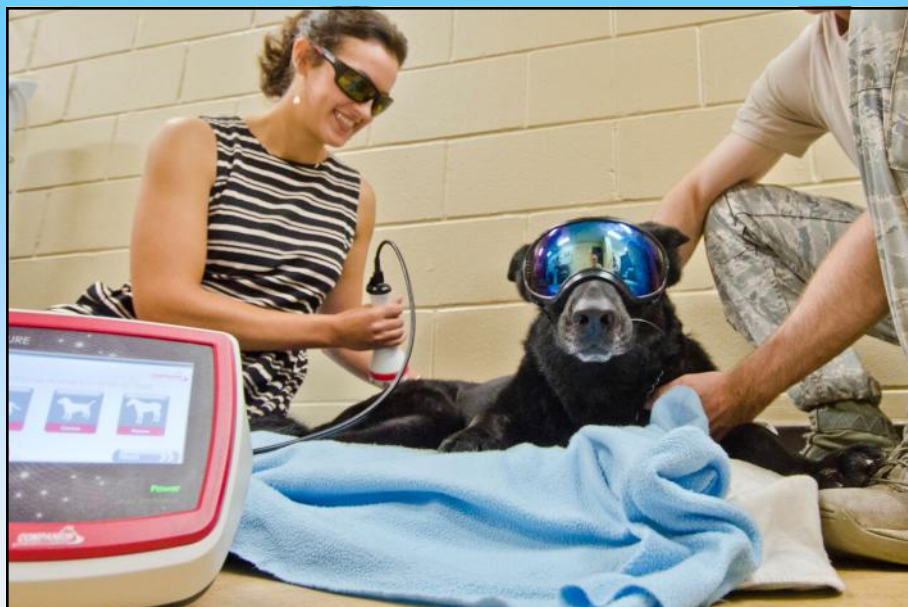
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MWD TSA touches the
lives of dogs and people
near and far. This
month, our articles and
photos take us from
Hawaii to Mississippi and
on to Florida, Georgia,
South Carolina, West
Virginia and North Da-
kota and of course
around the world, wher-
ever our care packages
were sent.

Subscribe to see where
we connect next month!

Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

MWD TSA KENNEL TALK



College of Veterinary Medicine student, Courtney Griffin, administers laser therapy treatment to retired military dog, Maci. The college's class of 2018 created the Vets for Vets program to provide free rehabilitative care for retired military dogs.

MSU Vet Students Help Military Dogs

Story by Karen Templeton, Photos by Tom Thompson

MISSISSIPPI STATE – It is normally the case that when retired military hero Maci arrives for his physical rehabilitation session at the Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine, he has an audience and a lot of treats. Dog treats that is.

Maci, a large, handsome German shepherd, served as a U.S. Air Force military working dog for almost 6 years. With his handler, Staff Sergeant Karl Stefanowicz, Maci served 3 tours of Afghanistan and 1 tour of Oman and is credited with multiple explosive finds. He now resides at home with Stefanowicz and his wife, and like many retired military dogs, Maci has joint and muscle issues.

"I was really interested in prolonging Maci's life and most importantly, making it as comfortable as it could be," Stefanowicz said.

A conversation with MSU-CVM graduate Captain Teri Vaughn when she visited the college last fall led to collaboration with the college and its students.

The Class of 2018 was interested in taking on a project and their secretary and treasurer, Courtney Griffin, was familiar with charitable programs that focus on supporting currently deployed military working dogs and their handlers, but none with an emphasis on canine veterans. After a consultation with Vaughn, Vets for Vets was born.

"Our class wanted to do something for our community and to improve animal health in some way," Griffin said. "Vets for Vets is about taking care of our four-legged heroes."

The students fundraise to pay for the dogs'

MSU Vets continued on page 2

Fort Jackson continued from page 1

treatments. Most of the dogs have severe degenerative joint issues and benefit from regular physical therapy. Treatment and rehabilitation is a team approach at the college. Dr. Christine Bryan, assistant clinical professor and MSU-CVM alumna, conducts a thorough intake exam and then works with Ruby Lynn Carter, veterinary technician, to get the dogs started with physical rehabilitation. The students are involved through observing and helping deliver some of the treatments, such as laser therapy.

"Our goal is to get the dogs feeling better and improve their quality of life," Griffin said. "The bonus is that we can learn about rehab through observing and assisting Ruby Lynn."

The dogs are helped through work on an aquatic treadmill and in an endless pool among other treatment options. Each dog is provided ten therapy sessions and Stefanowicz said the results are obvious.

"Maci is like a puppy again since starting the treatment," he said. "I can see that he is better at managing his hip issues, and he's just become more social and outgoing. It's great to get him out and watch him interact with people."

Stefanowicz said Maci has become a Mississippi State University "ambassador."

"He's got a team at MSU taking care of him," he said. "He's even had meet-and-greets with the mascot, Bully. He's kind of like our base's connection to the college."

Technical Sergeant Dustin Weeks also has a dog in the program. German shepherd, Iva, has done two tours in Afghanistan, one in Qatar, and one in the United Arab Emirates. Iva's walks over difficult terrain and the normal aging process left her with arthritis in her hips. Vaughn introduced Weeks to the Vets for Vets program and Iva has been a regular patient ever since.

"This is absolutely a great program," Weeks said. "I've never seen anything like this in my work with canines. I'm glad we have access to it and I hope that it can grow so others in the area, and even the nation can benefit."

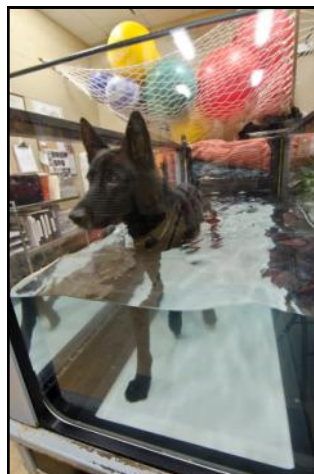
Griffin and her classmates spend time fundraising and also increasing awareness about the program so that they can take on more clients.



Retired MWD Maci enjoying physical therapy to help with degenerative joint issues.

"The best part of all of this is giving back to these dogs," she said. "They have done something so brave and kind for us as part of our military, that the least we can do is make their lives more comfortable."

To inquire about enrolling a retired military dog in the program or to make a donation, contact Karen Templeton at (662) 325-1100 or karen.templeton@msstate.edu.



Maci, a retired military working dog, walks on an aquatic treadmill as part of his physical therapy sessions at Mississippi State University's School of Veterinary Medicine "Vets for Vets" program.



MWD TSA Volunteer Courtney Griffin helps with an MWD TSA care packing event before heading off to Veterinary School.

Working dog competition tests skills, builds camaraderie

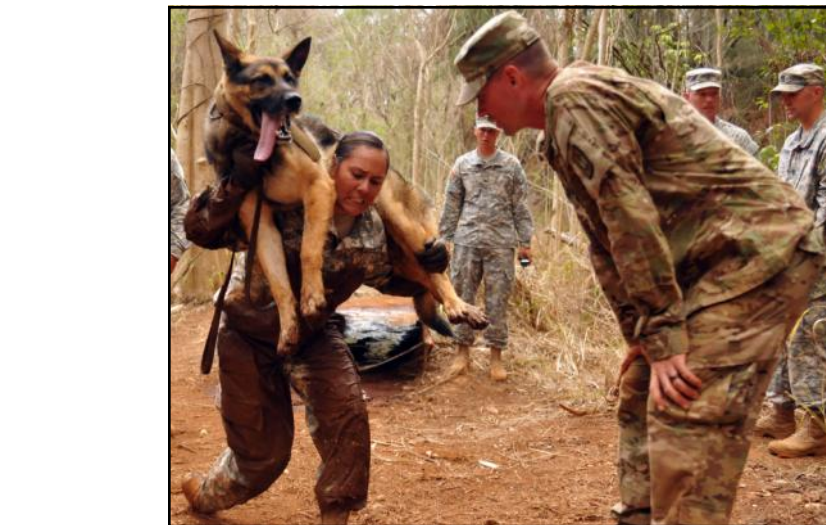
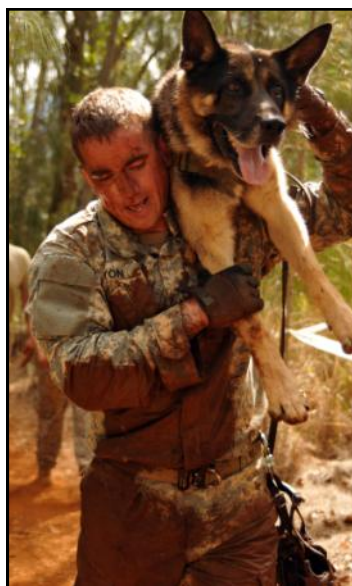
Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Taresha Hill

SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii — Military and police working dog teams went nose to nose while competing in the 2015 Hawaiian Islands Working Dog Skills Challenge hosted by the 728th Military Police Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, here, July 27-31.

Over 25 working dog teams competed and represented the best from the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force and Honolulu Police Department. The weeklong competition tested the mental and physical stamina of both the handlers and the working dogs, driving the teams to give it their all each day.

"Each event was designed to push them past a level of training they may not have experienced before," said Sgt. 1st Class Cory Lorenz, kennel master, 520th Military Working Dog Detachment, 728th MP Battalion. "We wanted to push them out of their comfort zone."

One event proved particularly challenging for Sgt. Veronica Pruhs, a military working dog handler with the 520th MWD Detachment and her partner K-9 Jerry. Still considered a pup, K-9 Jerry had a difficult time navigating the obedience course, which had hundreds of doggy toys strewn about the course.



Military working dog handler Sgt. Veronica Pruhs, pushes herself as she lifts and stands up with her K-9 partner Jerry resting on her shoulders during an obstacle course event in the 2015 Hawaiian Islands Working Dog Skills Challenge hosted by the 728th Military Police Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, here, July 27-31.

Despite K-9 Jerry's determination to play with every toy on the course, Pruhs stuck with it and finished the event.

"I didn't give up," Pruhs laughed.

Lorenz said he couldn't be happier with the teams and their dedication in competing in this year's challenge.

"It gave them the opportunity to see their strengths and weaknesses," said Lorenz.

Events ranged from a stress-shoot, to tactical and non-tactical detections, a written skills test, an obedience course, handler protection and even a hardest hitting dog event, in which the K-9s were scored based on the strength of their bite by a decoy wearing a bite suit. Lastly, handlers had to negotiate an obstacle course while maintaining positive control over their K-9

counterparts.

While the competition was a challenge for military working dog handler Spc. David Kmosko and K-9 Drago, 520th MWD Det., Kmosko said it was also a great learning experience.

"You're always learning and it's important to tap into that knowledge that other handlers have," said Kmosko.

Kmosko also said that K-9s were important to have within the military and civilian police departments and stressed their unique capabilities.

"A dog can find a hidden IED that would take a person a wrong step to find or an extremely expensive and slow-moving piece of equipment to find," said Kmosko.

Kmosko added, "You're not going to be able to beat a dog's nose."

Police Sgt. Gregory Obara, a working dog handler with HPD, also stressed the impor-

Left: Military working dog handler Staff Sgt. Daniel Lyon carries his K-9 partner Zeno during an obstacle course event.

Working Dog Competition continued on page 4

Working Dog Competition continued from page 3



tant role of K-9s and said that it was the K-9's unique and superior ability to detect people, drugs and bombs, which helped to keep the islands safe.

"The K-9 is the part that elevates the team," said Obara.

In addition to exchanging knowledge and building camaraderie, Lorenz said the competition also helped to establish connections within the working dog community.

"Prior to this event, communication between the agencies was nearly nonexistent," said Lorenz.

Lorenz said this year's competition was much larger than the one held in 2012 and added, "I hope we can build upon this and make it a tradition."

Taking 1st Place and "Top Dog" in the competition:

Sgt. Daniel Jackson and his K-9 Bbailey, stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia.



Above: Sgt. Veronica Pruhs and her K-9 partner Jerry, prepare to lower themselves down a rope during an obstacle course event.

Left top: Military working dog handler Sgt. Daniel Jackson and his K-9 Bbailey, stationed at Fort Benning, Ga., take 1st Place and Top Dog after competing in the weeklong 2015 Hawaiian Islands Working Dog Skills Challenge hosted by the 728th Military Police Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, here, July 27-31.

Left Center and bottom: Staff Sgt. Patrick Appling, kennel master, 549th Military Working Dog Detachment, U.S. Army Alaska, role-plays as a suspect while wearing a bite suit and is attacked by working dog Mido during a handler protection event



Fort Jackson Visit

Story and photos by Dixie Whitman

In July, MWD TSA had an opportunity for a quick stop at the Fort Jackson kennels in Columbia, SC. The visit was hastily planned and the timing was a matter of pure luck in that not only were several of the handlers available that day, but also available was local Vietnam veteran dog handler and friend, Johnny Mayo.

While we didn't have the luxury of a dog demonstration, we did bring with us several dog toys to drop off, including Chuck Its, KONGs and some unique and unusual toys that we asked the handlers to use and then share their feedback. We also provided a pizza luncheon and some of our famous MWD TSA T shirts.

As a TRADOC installation, Fort Jackson is critical to the training mission and schools that the Army provides. Basic Combat Training, Chaplains' School, the DoD Polygraph School and Drill Sergeant School are among the schools here. The number of individuals trained at Fort Jackson is pretty impressive and the handlers are rightfully proud to be serving at a facility with such an esteemed legacy.

Their website shares that Fort Jackson is the largest and the most active Initial Entry Training Center in the U.S. Army,



MWD TSA stopped recently at the Fort Jackson kennels for a quick visit with the dog teams of the 17th MP Detachment's K9 Unit. We carried with us a variety of dog toys, our famous MWD TSA T shirts and brought in pizzas for lunch. Johnny Mayo joined us as a guest and the current dog handlers loved hearing him share some history and a vision of the future for the South Carolina War Dog Memorial to be dedicated in Columbia, SC on Veterans' Day.



Right: SGT Cyrus Vaughn, and his SSD Taz on a deployment a few months back. This team was supported by MWD TSA and he was our connection at Fort Jackson

Left: SGT Cyrus Vaughn, 17th Military Police Detachment, and his former K-9 companion, Seagal, demonstrate various tactics military working dogs perform in order to find bombs and harmful chemicals in luggage. DoD photo.



Fort Jackson continued from page 5

training roughly 54 percent of all Soldiers and nearly 60 percent of the women entering the Army each year, providing the Army with trained, disciplined, motivated and physically fit warriors who espouse the Army's core values and are focused on teamwork is the post's primary mission. Accomplishing that mission means training more than 45,000 Basic Combat Training Soldiers each year.

Of course, our time was spent entirely with the 17th MP Detachment's K9 Unit and our great hosts SSG Miller and SSG Vaughn and all of the other great dog teams at this wonderful kennel.

Interestingly, every dog at this location

was available to meet, touch and greet. It was my first kennel experience staffed by an entire cadre of socialized, touchable dogs and very cool indeed.

Johnny, our guest, spent some time talking with the handlers about his experiences in Vietnam working as a Scout Dog Handler with his two partners: Tiger and Kelly. He also shared the current status of his plans for a South Carolina War Dog Memorial and the planned dedication in November on Veterans' Day with the K9 staff.

The location was cozy for eating and we had a great time comparing notes and finding out who we knew in common; the

K9 world is indeed small. At the end of the visit, much information was shared, plans were made and connections were established.

The handlers were even great sports. Our T shirts are meant to be worn with the design on the back, but these guys weren't having any of that, they wanted their photos taken with Johnny and so that their faces could be seen, they turned their shirts around backwards for a photo op.

Time was too short on this visit and I hope to be able to come back again some day very soon. Thanks for a warm and heartfelt welcome.



Left: PFC Sharp and his partner, Dori, pose for a photo op.

Right: Handlers listen to Johnny Mayo talk about his experiences in Vietnam as a Scout Dog handler.

Johnny's time in Vietnam was described at length in our July 2015 issue.



Left: Meyer, Mayo and Vaughn pose for the cameras after the luncheon.

Right: SPC Pearce and his talented and gorgeous partner, Makie, stop for a moment to say "Hello" to their visitors.



Surf's Up in North Dakota: Totally Tubular

Who thinks surfing when you think of North Dakota? Our great care package coordinator, that's who. The MWD TSA team rallied behind the cry of "Surf's Up" and made all sorts of great things happen for our 3rd quarter care packages.

As Jessica says, "It was a really cool experience taking an idea and being part of a team that can really run with it. It was bittersweet as the final day came up: everything we had planned, counted, and recounted was about to be sent out to teams across the DoD."

"There's always that initial thought that what you agreed on wouldn't be enough, but it came together beautifully. An added bonus was jumping on the opportunity to involve my neighbors from another base and network a little. Would I do it again?

Maybe.... once I get the house cleaned up!"

"We had about 10 people help out, sending out 108 boxes in 4.5 hours. We ordered pizza and had a small array of veggies and snack trays."

MWD TSA still has another 20+ addresses that have just arrived so a second wave of boxes will soon be headed out.

It's "Totally Tubular."

MWD TSA thanks the dedicated volunteers from Grand Forks and Minot AFB who really pulled this together. Thanks, Jessica, Chris and your teams.



Our illustrious care package coordinator, Jessica Newton, working on a pep talk with the Surfing Coaches.



Left to right : Bobek showing off his Snicky Snaks and balancing skills, Sam with her entire care package, Handler and dog saying thanks.



Bottom left to right: Gina playing with KONG Tails and Bentley awaiting the Chuck It Flying Squirrel's arrival.



3rd Quarter Care Packing continued from page 7

MWD TSA 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:

Christa Ursini
 Kathy Woodring
 Stanton Bost
 Laurie Newton
 Suzanne Julian
 Stephen Redden
 D.W. Elliott
 Patricia Carter
 Richard Snyder
 D.O.G. Bakery Traverse City, Michigan
 Nikki Rohrig
 Dick Baumer
 Banfield Health
 Edgewell Personal Care, North Ormond Beach, FL
 Burt's Bees, Morrisville, NC
 Ocean Beauty Seafoods, Seattle, WA
 Dayton Nut Specialties Dayton, OH
 Bill & Toni Albert
 Randy & Cindy Albert
 Jimmy Bailey
 Freddy Simon
 Kristen San Antonio
 Michael Hurder
 Bethany United Methodist Men (BUMMs), Smyrna, GA

Right: Handlers from two AF bases in North Dakota volunteered to pack and ship MWD TSA's 3rd quarter care packages.

Showing off the thermometer and lube donated by Banfield Health to ensure temps can be easily monitored in the summer heat.

Packing and shipping boxes. Thanks to all who helped.



Below: From the hands of the handlers packing to the bums of the MWDs deployed. Hard to take a good photo of something as fundamental as a thermometer. But these tools can save lives. Thank you Banfield Health.



Sharing The Elegance of Madra Mor Mud

Story by COL Dick Baumer, USA (Ret.)

Photo by Mike Leffert Photography

Right: MWD TSA 1st Vice President, Dick Baumer makes a presentation to Jacqueline Hynes in recognition of her company's amazing support of MWD TSA care packages.



Madra Mór canine spa mud has been a regular addition to the care packages sent to U.S. Military Working Dog teams deployed in combat areas overseas. The organization that packs and mails the boxes, the Military Working Dog Team Support Assn., supports both active duty and retired military K9s; the packages are the centerpiece of its support of "both ends of the leash."

And Madra Mór has been there for those K9 teams as well, donating almost \$15,000 of spa mud for the group's care packages over the past two years. Madra Mór, based in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida offers pet owners and groomers a line of mud baths formulated to easily spread through the coat. Using earth's medicinal clays, omega oils, aloe vera and a blend of nature's finest ingredients, four unique treatments are achieved to absorb impurities and smells while releasing vital nutrients and lipids.

In recognition of this vital and generous support, MWD TSA recently presented Madra Mór's founder and president, Jacqueline Hynes, a certificate of appreciation

and a numbered Challenge Coin. Only 37 challenge coins have been presented over the nine years since the non-profit's founding, said Col. Dick Baumer, USA (Ret.), 1st Vice President of the MWD TSA.

"Military Working Dogs deserve a pampering-spa wellness experience," says Hynes. "Canine dermatitis is a major concern because the skin is their largest immune organ and it's the last to receive nutrients," she added. "Due to the hostile geographic locations they often work in, we are pleased to be able to offer this support."

Baumer made the presentation to Hynes, a fellow West Palm Beach resident, at Lap of Luxury Dog Spa in Delray Beach, whose managing partner is Jonathan David, star of Animal Planet's "Dogs 101" and "Groomer Has It" and is ranked among the top five groomers in the USA. His clients include Mariah Carey, Ralph Lauren, Kevin Kline and Ivana Trump.

"We are grateful for Jacqueline's generosity to these American K9s who are de-

ployed around the world to protect other soldiers," said Baumer. "Too many people forget that we have substantial forces still overseas who need the unique "force protection" skills of Military Working Dog teams."



Madra Mor Mud has been a favorite item in care packages for two years now. MWD TSA appreciates the dedicated support by Madra Mor Mud and its founder and president, Jacqueline Hynes.
Photo by Dixie Whitman

Fort Benning: Completing the Circle

Story By Dixie Whitman

Closing out my last day as President of MWD TSA at Fort Benning, where it all began, was a beautiful gift and a ending of sorts. A circular journey completed.

Perhaps eight or nine Kennel Masters have overseen the kennel at Fort Benning since October, 2000 when I went on my first visit nearly fifteen years ago. I've lost count on how many handlers and dogs I have had the pleasure of meeting at Fort Benning, but their impact has been a profound one in my life and I treasure the lifetime friendships that I have made.

We have visited Fort Benning for War Dog Memorial Dedications, reunions, base visits, proclamation presentations and to introduce MWD TSA staff and volunteers to the world of military working dogs. Perhaps this visit was the perfect ending of my tenure as President because it was low-key, shared with those nearest and dearest and allowed us an opportunity to really sit and talk with handlers and staff over an amazing BBQ lunch across the river in Alabama.

Fort Benning is a TRADOC installation, which means that the base's mission is to ensure that future Army forces are prepared to win in a complex world. Just a few of the schools that are part of the training mission at Fort Benning are Infan-



Dog handler Collett plays the role of aggressor and helps Tucci train his partner, Odeta, at Fort Benning on July 31, 2015. Members of the 209th MP Dog Detachment greeted MWD TSA President, Dixie Whitman, in her last day in that role. Over the years, events at Fort Benning were the inspiration behind the creation of Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc. (MWD TSA). All photos by Dixie Whitman unless otherwise noted.

try Training, Pathfinder, Jump School and Ranger Training.

There are two major draws at Fort Benning for people who are inspired by military working dogs, the world class War Dog Memorial located on Sacrifice Field and the 209th MWD kennels that support base and combat missions. Our focus on July 31st was a visit with the dog teams of the 209th MP Detachment Military Working Dog Section.

Military working dogs are trained to search for explosives and narcotics. Most are also cross-trained to protect their handlers in a police role and subdue subjects who attempt to escape or evade after being stopped by the military police. Addition-

ally, dogs that are trained as Specialized Search Dogs (SSD) work significant distances off lead and are not trained for any type of protection work. We met both Explosive and Narcotics dogs on our trip this time around along with a cute little SSD Labrador retriever, as well.

We were greeted by Plans and Training NCO Adams and handlers, Collett, Espinosa and Tucci. Interestingly, the Kennel Master, Van Horne, and one of the handlers, Jackson, were out of state working a dog completion in Hawaii. Both Van Horne and Jackson were supported by MWD TSA on their last deployments and, while I certainly had hoped to see both of them, it was a good trip for them with Jackson and his dog, Bbailey, bringing home all kinds of awards for Top Dog from the Hawaii competitions. Way to go, Fort Benning.

Fort Benning Visit continued on page 9



Left: Collett and his partner, Zita, pose for a photo before they begin their demonstration search of cars parked at the kennel parking area.

Fort Benning continued from page 10



Above: Zita searches vehicles during the demonstration phase of our day.

Right: Attendees pose with the handlers at the kennel: Espinosa, Tucci, Adams and Collett.



Zita is a beautiful girl, handled by Collett. She came out and searched through the vehicles parked across from the kennel and found an odor she was seeking in one of the MP trucks. She immediately sat to indicate she had found the source of the odor and one of the kids present was able to help with the training by throwing Zita her reward, a KONG toy with a rope. She was all excited with her reward and walked around with a smile on her face and a KONG in her mouth.

We also got a demonstration of the phases of aggression with MWD Odeta, who had also been previously supported on a deployment with another handler. She took down and then escorted a decoy off the field. Her reward was a chance to carry the sleeve around for a while.

Thanks again to the great teams at this world class working dog facility. MWD TSA appreciates all that you do and looks forward to continuing our relationship into the future.



Two historical events:

Above: Kennel Master, James Allred, works as a decoy for MWD TSA's Governor's Proclamation Event at Fort Benning in May of 2011. Here he is catching a very determined bi-color shepherd. Photo by Susanna Avery-Lynch

Right: Dog handler, James Tolley, and his partner, Fons H358, were gifted with a KONG Tails toy by MWD TSA on the occasion of Fons' retirement from active duty. Also retiring on that same date was MWD Arka. Sadly, both Fons and Arka have passed away. Photo by Ashley Cross



Finding My Niche

Story By Nikki Rohrig

John F. Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Those words have no doubt inspired countless hours of volunteerism within the military and civilian world. We feel drawn to be a part of something much bigger than ourselves. We need a purpose. We need to carve out our own little niche in the world. I want to carve out my own niche, so I'm honored to become the next President of the MWD TSA Board of Directors.

When our past President, Dixie Whitman approached me and asked me to come on board (pun intended), I laughed. Out loud. There's no doubt that this is a huge undertaking. I am more than happy to volunteer my time toward this cause, however, taking on a role this large is a bit daunting. Right about now you're thinking, "Is she crazy?" The short answer is: "Yes, I'm crazy."

I'm crazy passionate about these MWDs and handlers. They deserve all the recognition and assistance that they can get. I'm crazy passionate about getting items

that they may need for care packages and items they need to function from day to day. My biggest smiles and feelings of accomplishment come when I get pictures of our great dog teams that are serving at home and overseas. I'm also crazy passionate about public education. The general public has become more aware of MWDs since the infamous 'Cairo' was involved in the raid on Bin Laden's compound. I have to admit, it got my attention. I wanted to soak up as much knowledge as I could about these fearless warriors. So, I did my homework. I read a few books and became even more interested. Then, fate stepped in.

I saw retired MWD Lucca and her handler, Chris Willingham, during an interview on TV. I immediately felt drawn to the story and wanted to do something to help. How could I send treats and toys to these amazing dogs, who are literally leading the pack, and let the handlers know that someone is thinking about them? I went to Lucca's Facebook page and Chris suggested I contact MWD TSA and the rest just kind of fell into place. In two short years, I

set up a few public education events, packed a set of care packages, did a live TV interview, helped design our MWD TSA Challenge Coin, started our Twitter account, helped design our first tactical patch, packed and mailed two Virtual Visit boxes and got to enjoy my first base visit and meet my very first MWD! I will never forget MWD Ralph and his sweet, grey muzzle.

I'm honored to take on this role and I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work. I hope that I can do half as good of a job as our past President, Dixie Whitman. MWD TSA has thrived under her leadership and I am humbled that she thought enough of me to ask me to take on this role. I'm happy to become a full time volunteer and my paycheck is seeing the smiles on the faces of the dogs and handlers. It feels good to be a part of something that's bigger than yourself. I look forward to seeing where this road takes me and I look forward to meeting more MWD teams in the near future. It's time to find my niche!



Left: Nikki at a recent Bark in the Park event, attending a minor league ballgame all in an effort to educate the public about military working dogs and MWD TSA.

She has also completed base visits, library events, raised in Kind Product donations for our care packages, communicated with Kennels and handlers, raised money, packed packages and is our Twitter Queen.

Everybody loves to work with her and we know she will take this organization to even bigger and brighter places.

Congrats, Nikki, from the MWD TSA Team of volunteers.



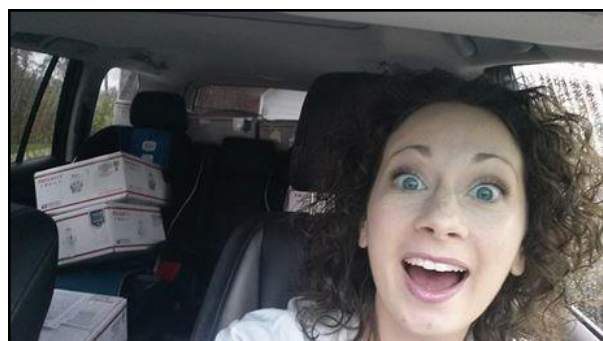
Above left: Nikki on her first base visit at Seymour-Johnson AFB, NC

Above right: Care Packing in Georgia, front row, second from the right.

Right center: Headed to the Abingdon Post Office with about 135 care packages, her first quarter as a coordinator.

Bottom left: Unfurling one of our banners.

Bottom right: Nikki at the first event where she was able to get her hands on a MWD. This is Ralph and he will forever be her first.



Sit. Stay. Support.

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From the Archives



Lance Cpl. Thomas Foster takes a rest with his military working dog Diamond during a patrol through Boldak, Afghanistan March 6, 2013. Foster is a member of Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.
(Photo by Sgt. Bobby J. Yarbrough)

First Contact

"As we walked inside, three goats, two turkeys, a dozen chickens and a single cow stood in the courtyard. Four men were already assembled along the back wall—amongst them, a man the Marines recognized and one of the individuals they hoped to find during the sweep.

For the next half hour, the Marines searched the compound and interviewed the residents. I helped provide internal security alongside Lance Cpl. Thomas Foster, a light armored vehicle operator who serves as the platoon's dog handler. We talked about his life at Twenty Nine Palms, his five weeks of dog training, and what we believed Afghans' perception of Marines is. "

~~Sgt. Bobby J. Yarbrough in an excerpt from "First Contact"