

November, 2016  
Award Winning  
Monthly Newsletter

Volume 8, Issue 11

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the photos, stories, news,  
and highlights of 2016!

Kennel Talk is a free,  
digital MWD publication.

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MWD TSA touches the lives of dogs and people near and far. This month we are celebrating our 10th anniversary of honoring and supporting our K9 teams deployed around the world. This issue's articles and photos take us from enchanting Hawaii to beautiful Colorado. Our care packages make it around the world to nooks and crannies wherever our teams are deployed.

Our parting shot is from Panzer Local Training Area, Boeblingen, Germany.

Subscribe to see where we connect next month!

## Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

### MWD TSA KENNEL TALK



Our earliest efforts were in support of Vietnam era dog handlers and the War Dog Memorial at Fort Benning, Georgia. Co-founder, Dixie Whitman, is photographed presenting a check to Jesse Mendez, dog trainer at the Scout Dog School at Fort Benning during the Vietnam era, along with other Vietnam era handlers.. Left to right: Ken Goss, Ann Wilkerson, Jesse Mendez, Dixie Whitman, "Flat Ken", John Guerrero and Johnny Mayo.

## Happy 10th Anniversary!

Story by Leigh Steere

Happy 10th Anniversary to Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc. (MWD TSA), a labor of love co-founded by German Shepherd Dog enthusiast Dixie Whitman and Vietnam veteran dog handler Ken Besecker. Today MWD TSA has expanded to support thousands of K9 teams deployed in conflict zones, as well as military kennels, active and retired MWDs, and handlers here in the U.S. Here's a glimpse of how it all started.

### Meet Ken Besecker...

"The relationship between dog and man is an unbreakable bond," says LTC Ken Besecker, USA (Ret), who experienced this truism firsthand in Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, the military classified K9s as equipment, not soldiers. But as Besecker and other veterans can attest, the estimated 4,200 military working dogs in Vietnam provided a variety of military skills: tracking, scouting, and protection, among others, along with companionship, and occasionally, much-needed comic relief during this dark period of history.

Besecker fell into the MWD world by happenstance. While attending the Infan-

try Officer Basic Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, a Captain from the U.S. Army Scout Dog Training Detachment asked if Ken would be interested in working with dogs. Ken's affirmative response led to an assignment with the Scout Dog Detachment. Ultimately, he served in Vietnam as Commander of the 62nd Infantry Platoon (Combat Tracker) and Training Officer at the United States Army Republic of Vietnam (USARV) Dog Training Detachment. MWD handlers and their comrades entrusted their lives to K9s in Vietnam. "The dogs endured heat, rain, leeches, jungle vines, elephant grass, and many other discomforts," reports Besecker, "just to hear 'good dog' and receive a pat on the side or a scratch on the head."

They acted heroically, like the humans they protected. "Vietnam veterans tell of dogs lying beside their wounded buddies or continuing to track or scout or guard in the face of any danger," adds Besecker.

In response to one particular mission, the military awarded an entire 62nd Tracker team a Bronze Star with a "V" for valor, citing hero-

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ism in combat. Since Otis, Tracker Dog number T019, did not have a uniform, the Division Assistant Commander pinned the Bronze Star on a yellow towel so Otis could wear his award, too. Otis, by the way, was one of the few dogs to come home after the war. Toward the end of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Ken traveled all over the country to pick dogs to return to the U.S. for reassignment. "It felt great to watch those first 50 dogs leave on planes for the U.S.," he recalls. "It wasn't until after the war that I learned most MWDs in Vietnam were declared 'surplus,' as if they were unneeded equipment, and left behind to face euthanasia or worse." Only 204 returned to the U.S. Besecker wants to ensure the memory of these MWDs stays alive and that people know the important roles these K9 heroes served in Vietnam and continue to serve in conflicts today, protecting countless lives.

#### Enter Dixie Whitman...

Dixie has studied German Shepherd Dogs for 43 years, fascinated in particular by their tracking skills—the ability to follow an invisible trail and pick up scents left hours or days ago. The first web site she ever visited? The Vietnam Dog Handlers Association (VDHA, <http://www.vdha.us/>), a group of veterans from the Vietnam War. The site contained a Q&A feature, so Dixie started asking questions.

Ken Besecker was one of several Vietnam veterans who answered those queries. He shared about the Vietnam dogs and their handlers, the tragic end many of these MWDs faced, and the shameful welcome Vietnam veterans received upon their return home. Dixie recalls, "It became clear to me that many of these veterans had never heard a simple thank you for their service." She set out to rectify this.

Through the VDHA dialogue, Dixie discovered that Ken lived less than 200 miles away. In 2002, she invited several Georgia-based Vietnam handlers to the Georgia Governor's office, and that's where she met Ken and his wife Liz, face-to-face, for the first time. Dixie and Ken discovered they knew many people in common, as both were involved in the sport of dogs in Georgia. Over the next four years, Dixie spent her own time and money sending care packages to deployed handlers and their dogs, as well as helping organize events at Fort Benning. In 2006, Ken suggested establishing a non-profit organization to facilitate fundraising and reduce Dixie's out-of-pocket expenditures. "I wasn't thrilled with the idea," Dixie said, "because I had no idea how to run a non-profit. But Ken and I met at a reunion of his unit, the 62nd Combat Trackers, and discussed everything from a code of ethics to articles of incorporation. He fronted the money to hire an

attorney to review our paperwork. And at last, we got Lois Lerner's signature on a 501(c)(3) letter." The Military Working Dog Team Support Association officially launched on November 13, 2006.

#### Reflecting on the early years

Curious to learn more about MWD TSA's humble beginnings? Kennel Talk invited co-founders Ken Besecker and Dixie Whitman to reminisce.

#### KT: What were some of the challenges in getting MWD TSA off the ground?

**KEN:** We didn't have any money or previous nonprofit experience. The nonprofit designation was vital for making fundraising easier, but it took some time to get that engine started.

**DIXIE:** Because we had no initial funding, we still did much of the MWD TSA work on our own dime. Also, we were (and are!) a niche group, meaning we must focus on public education since many people don't know about MWDs. Folks don't realize how impactful these dog teams are, and therefore we are not "top-of-mind" when people are making charitable donations or volunteering—until you get to know us. We started with a tiny volunteer crew—maybe two or three people on a great day. You know the old adage, "busier than a one-armed wallpaper hanger?" I gathered experience in everything from writing press releases, to volunteer coordination, to publishing a newsletter, and pretty much every non-profit-running skill in between.

#### KT: What was MWD TSA's first project or event? How did you feel when you were launching that first event?

**KEN:** Top Dogs Pet Boutique, a pet store in Kennesaw, Georgia, hosted an open house for MWD TSA and donated a percentage of the day's proceeds to our organization. That gave us a spring board and felt like a stamp of legitimacy.

**DIXIE:** We received the final IRS letter confirming our nonprofit status shortly before a Fort Benning event that I was helping coordinate. Two hundred people attended that program, where we enjoyed a stunning guest speaker from the Pentagon. I was thrilled that we had enough money to buy a gorgeous standing floral tribute for the event.

#### KT: Think back over the entire history of your efforts. What MWD TSA events particularly moved you?

**KEN:** Dixie had a friend who taught elementary school students. Her class colored pictures and gave those out at a reunion of the 62nd Combat Tracker platoon.

It really inspired me to see people caring about what had happened in the past. MWD TSA was also able to raise money for new pedestals at the War Dog Memorial in Fort Benning. A number of veterans and volunteers attended the dedication of these pedestals, and this sticks with me as a highlight. Additionally, for several years, there was an annual event where dog teams from Georgia installations were selected to visit the state capitol. The governor signed a proclamation for Military Working Dog Appreciation Day. We had the proclamation framed, presented it to the various installations, and had a cookout and dog demonstration. It's been great to see the enthusiasm and bearing of today's soldiers, Navy folks, airmen, and Marines.

**DIXIE:** For me, there are a multitude of moments that stand out. I've been overcome by emotion on many occasions as I think about where I've come from and what this organization has gifted me. One day, very early on, I was trying to send out a press release. It was my very first news release, and I had little idea of what I was doing. I wanted to get it to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and wasn't quite sure how to go about contacting them. The same day I wrote this press release, our Vice President, Ann Wilkerson, called to say she had just run into the wife of the military affairs writer for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution while visiting a new hair dresser. The chances of her running into the exact connection that I needed out of 4.67 million folks in Greater Atlanta were pretty slim. The press release and that connection were a real success for the MWD program at Fort Benning. Even today, when I think back on it, I sometimes have to pull my car over, as it is still very emotional to me.

Last year, I attended a memorial for a Marine dog we had supported on his deployment in Afghanistan. At that event, all three of this dog's handlers were in attendance and shared personal stories with me of their time working with him. I felt beyond honored to have been included in the sharing of such precious and personal memories. This experience culminated in one of my favorite Kennel Talk articles ever. If you haven't read it, check out the cover of the August 2015 issue.

All of the handlers mean a lot to me. Some of them become really close friends, and I love that they ask me to support their deployed friends as well. I am humbled at the quality and caliber of men and women who work with these dogs, day in and day out, to keep us all safe. I have received myriad thanks over the years, but knowing that I've made a difference in the lives of those extraordinary heroes who have been in harm's way is beyond special. I am honored to call so many of them friends.



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**Right: LTC Ken Besecker USA (Ret), at the first Georgia Military Dog Handler Day event.**

**As Dixie was working with members of the 47th IPSD, she realized that no thanks had been given to Vietnam era dog handlers and scheduled an event with the Georgia Governor.**

**Below Right: A copy of the first proclamation dated April 8th, 2002, well before MWD TSA was even a concept.**



**Above: Vietnam handlers are joined by two active duty handlers from Fort Benning for our first event at the Governor's Office in 2002. Standing top row (left to right): Ken Besecker, Jesse Mendez, John Billiot, Stan Stockdate, John Guerrero. Kneeling on front row (left to right): Fort Benning handler, Richard Prest, and Fort Benning Kennel Master.**



## A Circle of Thanks

Story by Dixie Whitman

Starting in 2000, I became interested in military working dogs and, along with some friends, began supporting events that took place at Fort Benning, Georgia. In November of 2006, over six years later, Ken and I began our official drive to become a non-profit organization. Here are some memories and important people "by the numbers."

**1** - First individual to receive a care package from us was Chris Calloway, Navy Handler and his partner, Rex.

**2** - Number of MWDTSA co-founders was two: Dixie Whitman and Ken Besecker.

**3** - Original board members were Dixie Whitman, Ken Besecker, and Ann Wilkerson.

**4** - The number of times yearly that Kennel Talk was originally published was four. It is now published monthly.

**5** - Five is the number of pet stores working with us on our first KONGs for K9s

drives: Ma and Paws in Salt Lake City, Utah; Lucky Duck Pet Stuff, Chesapeake Beach, Maryland; TC Country in Canton, Georgia; Top Dogs in Kennesaw, Georgia; and Leash on Life in Iowa City, Iowa.

**6** - Six is the number of years MWDTSA volunteers were involved in coordinating reunion events at Fort Benning.

**7** - Seven is the current number of Board Members: Nikki Rohrig, President; Dick Baumer, 1st Vice President; Christa Ursini, 2nd Vice President; Jan Slotar, Secretary; Jerri Merklinger, Treasurer; Christina Roberts, Webmaster; and Allison Merrill, Member-at-Large, representing seven states across the country and coast-to-coast.

**8** - Eight was the number of bases visited in a three week marathon road trip by two MWDTSA volunteers in 2010: Columbus AFB, Columbus, Mississippi; Barksdale AFB, Shreveport, Louisiana; Fort Hood, Killeen, Texas; Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas; Hill AFB, north of Salt Lake City, Utah; F.E. Warren AFB, Cheyenne, Wyoming; Peterson AFB, Colorado Springs, Colorado; and Fort Carson, Colo-

rado Springs, Colorado. (As a reminder, all travel is done by the volunteer at their own expense.)

**9** - MWDTSA is well known for its coffee support. Over the years we have partnered with nine different companies to help supply our handlers with coffee. Currently, we are working with San Francisco Bay Gourmet Coffee. They are such great partners and produce yummy coffee that the handlers love to receive in their care packages, but in the past we have also worked with eight other amazing coffee companies, which were wonderful partners.

**10** - Ten, the number of years since MWDTSA was founded.

The journey of Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc. (MWDTSA), is one that is supported by many, but none were more important to its successes than these wonderful people who, in addition to **Ken Besecker**, supported this crazy dream way early on. These folks also

A Circle of Thanks continued on Page 5



**Left:** On his deployment in the mountains of Afghanistan, Chris Calloway and his partner, Rex, became the first dog team supported with an individual care package.

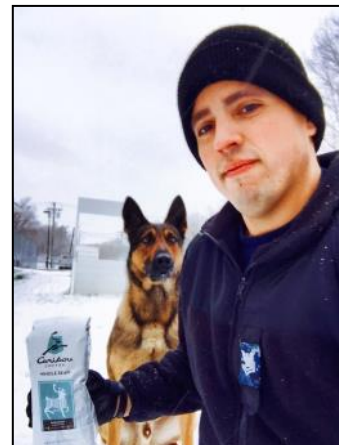
**Right:** The May 2002 47th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog reunion was the first event in which volunteers Dixie and Ann actively took part by, among other things, creating T-shirts which later were used to fund-raise for the pedestals at Fort Benning.



**Right:** Ann Wilkerson, flanked by two Fort Benning dog handlers was the first MWDTSA Vice President and joined a Board with three members.



**Right:** Nine different quality coffee companies have supported us throughout the years, including Caribou Coffee. This photo of a dog team in New Jersey a few years back.





A Circle of Thanks continued from Page 4

deserve thanks and recognition for being there to help when we had few resources, little manpower, and no official organization.

**Rita Richardson:** A friend, who was always available to help. For our very first event in 2002, many years before MWD TSA even became a thought, Rita supported our cause by donating many items for an event raffle to help raise funds at the first reunion we did at Fort Benning. She also attended events with us in support of Johnny Mayo and Celebrate Freedom Foundation events in Columbia, South Carolina.

**Joyce Gibson:** A friend, an artist, a fellow lover of GSDs, Joyce supported us early on with artwork and framing. She attended the first ever base visit when we went to Fort Benning on July 13, 2001 and got to catch a dog. Again, totally by coincidence, her husband, Mike Gibson, had been a friend of Ken Besecker during their college years in the Tidewater area. Early on, when Ken couldn't attend an event, Joyce created a "Flat Ken" that I could take to events and prop up for support.

**Vietnam-era handlers too numerous to mention individually:** those who advised, nurtured, humored, listened and celebrated. Thank you. Welcome home.

**Jonathan Wahl:** A Vietnam veteran of the 47th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog platoon (IPSD) who, in addition to supporting with his ninja web skills, was always in my cheering section, even before he eventually joined our board.

**Jesse Mendez:** A celebrated trainer of the Vietnam era who spent hours with us at Fort Benning educating us about the dogs and told us stories about his missions in Vietnam. Jesse had been in World War II, Korea, and did two-and-a-half tours in Vietnam.

**Ann Wilkerson:** Who was there for the early years and whose spirit runs deep in MWD TSA. Our first Fort Benning reunion event, we spurred each other onward until we got to the point where we were talking about bringing in a Huey helicopter. Our first event, coordinated with the 47th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog folks was a roaring success. Ann has packed boxes, attended events, traveled around the south-east in support of dogs and dog handlers.

And lastly, **Jerry Whitman**, my personal hero, who is there for me always and cares about America, soldiers, and dogs as much as I do.

Thank you, one and all.

Dixie Whitman



Left: Dixie Whitman and Rita Richardson helped Vietnam Veteran Johnny Mayo with several Celebrate Freedom Foundation events near Columbia, South Carolina.



Right: Joyce Gibson, artist, friend, and fellow German shepherd enthusiast, participated in our first ever base visit and created "Flat Ken", a cardboard cutout of our Treasurer that was taken to numerous events when the real Ken couldn't attend.



Left: Ann Wilkerson dressing a dummy in the uniform worn by Mel Gibson in his portrayal of Lt. Gen. Hal Moore. Dixie says: "We were always up to something for our handlers."



Left: Jesse Mendez, the father of Scout Dog Training at Fort Benning during the Vietnam era.

This photo of Jesse and his dog, Pal, taken over Fort Benning on a training mission.

## Schofield Barracks Kennel Visit

Story by Linda Costa-Bryan

On 6 October 2016, I along with five other people made a visit to the Schofield Barracks Kennels. Included in my group were Norm and Ann Ream, Susan and Jim Will and Angel Gagnier. Norm is a Vietnam era Scout Dog Handler and walked point for the infantry. Angel Gagnier is a local high school ROTC student who is very interested in animals. Susan and Jim Will are relatives of Norm and Ann.

After of course missing the correct entry gate we were rerouted and passed through with no problems. Upon finding the kennels we were warmly greeted by SSG Christina Billingsley, the KM. As we started to unload my car we were swarmed by K-9 handlers. Either they smelled food or knew we came bearing

gifts. The car was unloaded in no time and lunch set up. As I introduced myself, my group and our organization the staff all lined up to welcome us. During lunch we spent a lot of time visiting with handlers and sharing stories. Norm had everyone's attention as he told about his time and experiences in Vietnam. A lot of comparison was made between his training and experiences and the training and experiences of today.

After a lunch of sub sandwiches, chips, fruit salad and cake we were treated to a small obedience demonstration and then some of the more "approachable" dogs were brought out of their kennels for us to interact with. I have already picked the dog I am going to go back and steal in the middle of the night. The staff made us feel so comfortable and welcome that we all just sat around in the shade and visited, talked and pet the dogs. A very relax-

ing time and just what we had all hoped for.

As we were getting ready to leave the Command Sgt. Major arrived to thank us all for what we were doing. She insisted on even more pictures than what we had taken already and invited us all to come back again. Even with her busy schedule she took the time to talk with all of us, the individual handlers and even play with her favorite dogs.

Upon leaving we were all wished a safe trip and invited to come back at any time. I intend to take them up on their invitation.

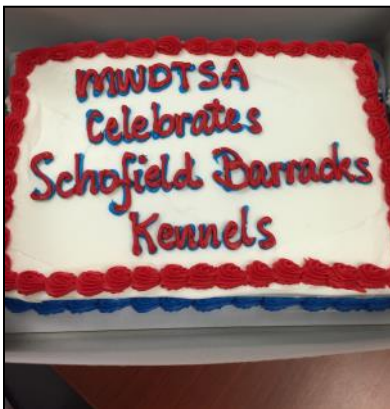
Schofield Barracks continued on page 7



**Scenes from the day:**

**Left: Some of the friendlier dogs are introduced to the visitors**

**Right: The kennels, along with most other military installations, has a cemetery where Military Working Dogs who have passed on are buried.**



**Left: The decorated cake that was taken to the base visit as part of the luncheon.**

**Right: Dog handlers, led by Kennel Master Billingsley, enjoy a lunch provided by MWDTSA.**





Schofield Barracks continued from Page 6



Above: Members of the 520th Military Working Dog (MWD) Detachment, 728th Military Police Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, 8th Theater Sustainment welcome MWD TSA Volunteer, Linda Costa-Bryan (front with blue MWD TSA T-shirt) and guests for a base visit. The brigade's senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Teresa Duncan (standing 1st on the left), personally thanked us for our support of Military Working Dogs. DoD photo. Special guest, Norman Ream, next to Linda in the red shirt, was a Vietnam Dog Handler.



Left: One of the dog teams who were available for a demonstration for the base visit group.

Right: The obedience yard with obstacles on which the military working dogs train, nearly daily.





# Lining Up Care Package Contents

Story by Leigh Steere

Each quarter, MWD TSA sends out between 175 and 200 care packages to MWD teams deployed in conflict zones. In our newsletter and web site, we acknowledge the donors who so generously provide items for these packages. We rarely talk, however, about the process that culminates in each donation.

As we look ahead to the next 10 years, MWD TSA would welcome more help with securing items for care packages. If you're thinking, "I'm not a good salesperson" or "I have a hard time asking for things," the following guide will help assuage your uncertainty and equip you to succeed. Here are nine tips to get you started:

1. **It never hurts to ask.** You probably know at least a half dozen people who might be interested in contributing to MWD TSA care packages. Your veterinarian. The corner drug store you've been frequenting for the past 20 years. The locally-owned store where you purchase your pet supplies. Your neighbor whose son is in the military. The local elementary school students, whose imaginations were inspired by the movie *Max*.
2. **Ask for partnership, not product.** "We are seeking partners who can help provide items once a year or more often for our quarterly care packages." The organization may say, "We can't partner at this time,

but we'd be glad to donate a \$50 gift card." Or, your request might lead to an ongoing relationship that extends years into the future. Think long-term.

3. **Be direct and precise with your request.** Examples: Would your store be available to partner with us in the KONGs for K9s Annual Drive? Would your students be able to draw pirate-themed pictures for our care packages?
4. **Find out if a business has a donation request form.** "Does your store ever supply product donations for nonprofit events?" If the answer is yes, ask how to apply and how much lead time is needed.
5. **Look for ways to make participation a clear win for the business.** Example: "Would you consider hosting a donation bin at your store and inviting customers to purchase items to donate?" In this scenario, a store spends virtually nothing while creating goodwill in the community.
6. **Plan far enough in advance.** Some businesses require 60, 90 or even 180 days of lead time in order to make an in-kind product donation.
7. **Expect rejections.** For every 10 donation requests you make, you may get nine thanks-but-we-are-not-able-to-help-you emails. MWD TSA volunteers get a fair number of rejections in route to finding sponsors for each item we send our K9 teams.

8. **Say thank you, even when the answer is no.** Rejections are discouraging, but let the organization know you are grateful they considered your request.

9. **Ask a follow-up question that keeps the door open.** Example: "For my own learning, it would help to hear more about your decision process. Is our organization different from what you typically support? Was the amount we requested too much?" In the answer, you may find an opportunity—such as an invitation to apply next year or an offer to help with a smaller amount.

MWD TSA volunteers have been so creative in raising awareness about the organization and inspiring a wide variety of donations. If you would like more information on volunteering for MWD TSA, or if you have an idea for a fundraising event or in-kind donation and would like to brainstorm, please contact President@mwdtsa.org.

The Steere family has partnered with Chuck and Don's Pet Supply in Longmont, Colorado to help solicit goodies for care packages and raise awareness about MWDs. Below is a hand-drawn chalkboard sign created by one of the employees at Chuck and Don's. The video monitor displays a continuous loop MWD TSA slide show. Elliott Steere, right, staffs an information table.





## Thanks to our great donors

**MWD TSA relies on the generosity of our donors, without whom we would be unable to complete our missions and prepare care packages. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following companies and individuals who gave recent donations:**

2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade students of Lisa Weir, Intermediate art teacher, Jefferson Academy Elementary, Broomfield, Colorado

Claire Alonzo  
American Legion, Fife Lake, Michigan

Dick Baumer  
Marlene Begaye and Blu

Stanton Bost  
Elaine Byrne Realty, Austin, Texas  
Patricia Carter

Celestial Seasonings,  
Boulder, Colorado

Chuck and Don's  
Longmont, Colorado

Brandon Cohen  
Linda Costa-Bryan  
Costco Wholesale Corporation,  
Superior, Colorado

Peter Cronje  
Rachel Cronin  
Dog Style Boutique, Bandon, Oregon  
Kathy and Neil Funk Jr.  
Beate Frank  
General Anesthetic Services,  
South Park, Pennsylvania

Charles Gili  
Elizabeth Greenberg  
Jennifer from the Wish List  
Takara Halliburton  
Krista Hernandez  
Rox Ann Kight  
Christine Lewis  
Phil and Sharon Lunney  
Beverly Maize  
Mariani Packing Co.,  
Vacaville, California  
Millican Pecan Co., Inc.,  
San Saba, Texas

Kerri Moss  
Francis Murch  
Laurie Newton  
Shelli Patty

PetChatz, Anser Innovation LLC,  
Burnsville, Minnesota

Petsmart Charities, Colorado  
Karen Pickles

Red Rock Country Club  
Las Vegas, Nevada

Stephen Redden  
Marshall M. Reed, Jr.

Sue Ann Richards

Staci L. Reily

Nikki Rohrig

San Francisco Bay Gourmet Coffee,  
Lincoln, California

Kristen San Antonio

Alicia Scholet, Fulton and Chadwick

The Sewell Family

Jan Slotar

Richard Snyder

The Steere Family

Sunset Animal Hospital & Clients  
Fairfield, California

Harry Thompson

Joan M. Trainer

Treadwell Pet Products,  
Haddam, Connecticut

UGA Ice Dawgs Hockey Foundation (David Brooks and Dan McCallister), Athens, Georgia

U.S.A. Hockey Magazine  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Christa Ursini

Veterans United Craft Brewery & Customers  
Jacksonville, Florida

Judith Wedel

Kathie Woodring

Zoey and Daisy

## Support Our KONGs for K9s Drive

Store	Location	Toy	Month(s)
Brown Veterinary Service 304.272.6200	Wayne, West Virginia 300 McGinnis Drive	KONG Extreme Flyer	August—December
Ma and Paws Bakery, Inc. 801.487.3838	Salt Lake City, Utah 1227 East 3300 South	KONG Extreme Flyer	November
Pet Supplies Plus 248-399-4440	Royal Oak, Michigan 29402 Woodward Ave.	KONG Extreme Flyer	November
PetSmart 574-269-7511	Warsaw, Indiana 640W 300N	KONG Extreme Ball KONG Extreme Flyer	November
The Animal Keeper 760.753.9366	Encinitas, California 155 Saxony Road	KONG Extreme Ball KONG Extreme Flyer	November-December
The Animal Keeper 760-941.3221	Oceanside, California 3532 College Blvd.	KONG Extreme Ball KONG Extreme Flyer	November-December
The Animal Keeper 858-748-9676	Poway, California 12280 Oak Knoll Rd.	KONG Extreme Ball KONG Extreme Flyer	November-December
Pet Suites 949-425-0700	Aliso Viejo, California 19 Journey	KONG Extreme Ball KONG Extreme Flyer	November-December
PetSmart 303-543-6060	Superior, Colorado 402 Center Drive	KONG Extreme Ball	December
PetSupermarket 561-253-6000	West Palm Beach, Florida 846 Southern Blvd.	KONG Extreme Ball Kong Extreme Flyer	November-December

## A Sneak Peek of Our 4th Quarter Boxes



Our 4th Quarter Care Packages are going to be heading out in early November; however, we are sharing photos of some of the items that our individual supporters supplied: KONG Extreme Balls which were donated via our KONGs for K9s Events at both Sunset Animal Hospital in Fairfield, California and Veterans' United Craft Brewery in Jacksonville, Florida.

We are also featuring the Musher's Secret Paw Protector and the Krave Jerky that were supplied by individuals via our Amazon Wish List.

Hundreds of donors, large and small, were responsible for getting donated goods into our hands and a dedicated team of volunteer packers will be placing them into the care packages in early November.



## MWD TSA Visits Kennel at Fort Carson

Story by Anna Steere

Photos by Shelli Patty and Anna Steere

On Monday, October 3, four MWD TSA volunteers arrived at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I had never been on a military base before and was shocked by the size.

After clearing the security checkpoint, we pulled over to a large supply building where SPC Pegram stepped out of a white SUV labeled, "CAUTION: Military Working Dog." We shook hands, climbed back into our respective vehicles, and caravanned to the kennel.

As we drove over a small rise, I saw an entire community sprawled before me. A school, a baseball field, and rows of housing. We rolled past amazing military vehicles that my brothers would have drooled

over and at last arrived at a fenced compound with a sign advising visitors they must be accompanied by a dog handler. Several smiling faces greeted us, eager to see retired MWD Falco, who accompanied us. Falco had served at Fort Carson before his adoption by MWD TSA volunteer Shelli Patty and her husband Randel.

After unloading food and gifts from the cars, we embarked on a tour of the kennel, which houses numerous canines trained to detect drugs and explosives. Kennel personnel treated us to demonstrations. LT Hurdman donned a bite suit so that Handler SPC Oratokhi and MWD Duck could simulate an apprehension. MWD Leo with handler PFC Mix demonstrated a standoff. And SSG Olejniczak NCO and MWD Marek performed a detection exercise. Winds in excess of 25 miles per hour blew the scent, making it hard for Marek to locate the source. This let us see a real-life challenge that handlers can encounter

in the field. Throughout these demonstrations, PFC Franklin explained elements of the dogs' training.

We ate a picnic lunch together, assembled by MWD TSA volunteer Shelli Patty. To accompany barbecued meats from a local restaurant, Shelli had sliced watermelon and prepared homemade coleslaw, potato salad, and brownies. MWD TSA presented gifts for both the handlers and their dogs, including KONGs donated by the KONG Company and an array of snacks and other items.

Many thanks to KM SFC Buchanan and the handlers and MWDs at Fort Carson for their tireless work on behalf of our country.

Fort Carson continued on page 12



**Left: Some of the gift baskets crafted by Shelli Patty.**

**Right: Amazing handlers of Ft. Carson and their commanders. Left to right: front row SPC Pegram, SGT Oratokhi, PFC Adams. Back row left to right: PFC Mix, PFC Dillon, SSG Olejniczak NCO, KM SFC Buchanan, PFC Gambill, PFC Franklin.**



**Left: Some of the Fort Carson Kennel staff fill their plates with BBQ and sides provided by volunteer Shelli Patty.**

**Right: Smiles abound as the kennel is gifted with toys, treats and recognition of a job well done.**

**Thanks to our amazing volunteers for making this event happen.**



Fort Carson continued from page 11



**Above: Retired MWD Falco receiving Some love from his former kennel.**



**Left and above: PFC Mix and MWD Leo.**



**Above: Military Working Dogs are able to apprehend subjects on command from their handlers. MWD Leo got SPC Adams in the end!**

**Left: The kennels offer indoor and outdoor runs for the comfort and safety of their dogs.**

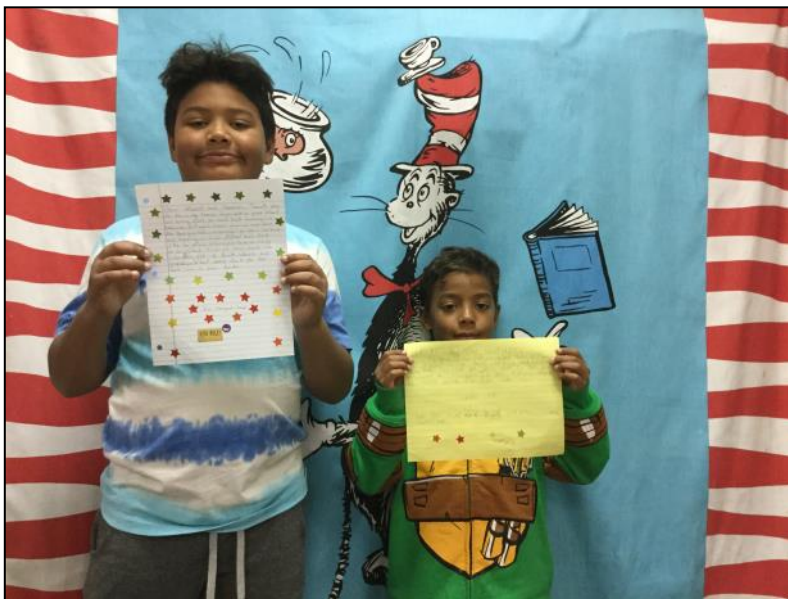
**Right: PFC Gambill with MWD Karlo and volunteer Anna Steere.**





## Students for MWDs

Story by Shelli Patty



**Two of Ms. Chastain's students proudly display their letters to support our soldiers and their dogs.**

It is always amazing how one intention in life can, and often does, miraculously turn into another. In a random coincidence, the handler for our retired MWD sent me a text late in September explaining that he had been delayed and was still at Fort Carson. He said, "Why don't you come down and maybe we can do a demo or something during your visit."

"What a great idea," we thought. "We are in."

Instead of just the two of us and MWD Falco, this eventually grew into a MWD TSA base visit to Fort Carson with multiple volunteers, the majority of the kennel and various members of the command. Even though the handler who initiated the concept had left by the time we got everything organized, the rest of the soldiers welcomed us into their "upstairs" with open arms.

The handlers were generous in providing us with demonstrations of apprehension, stand off, and detection. Knowing that I have arrived at the point of mid-

dle age, I asked if I could video the demos, because I knew senior moments would at some point take over and I would need an accurate record. We were very lucky to have SSG Franklin narrating the demos and giving thorough explanations as to the training and intent of the exercises. My intention for the tape was to refresh my own memory - nothing more, nothing less. But another link in this crazy chain of events was about to change that.

The day after our Fort Carson visit, I received a FaceTime call from Ms. Chastain, a teacher, and her elementary school reading students. They were reading a book about dogs, one of which was a German Shepherd Dog. Ms. Chastain knew we have a retired MWD, so she thought to FaceTime us to see if MWD Falco could impart some knowledge about GSDs. As MWD Falco and I spoke to her class, we told them about our visit to Fort Carson and some of the things that the dogs do there. Through the power of Apple we were able to show the class video from the day prior of the dog demos, and provide

them with age appropriate explanations based on SSG Franklin's narration. The class became so interested in the subject they requested additional photos and explanations, and are now writing letters to be sent to the soldiers! What started for Ms. Chastain as a one-time question about a specific dog breed, has turned into a multi-day lesson and class project about our soldiers and their dogs!

What started as a quick text planning a reunion with a handler, adoptive parents, and a retired MWD, mushroomed into an event that has now touched dozens of lives. It has provided an opportunity for us to offer thanks to soldiers we have never met in towns in which we do not live. It gave students in another state the chance to learn, question, and to participate in supporting our troops and valuing the service and sacrifice which they offer all of us. It has once again reminded us that one small intention in time can miraculously turn into something we never expected.

## Bark in the Park: K9 Heroes

CAMP PENDLETON, CA, UNITED STATES

San Francisco Fleet Week is an event where thousands of Marines and Sailors come to showcase the capabilities of the Navy-Marine Corps team to local residents, and an opportunity for service members to meet and thank the community for its support. (U.S. Marine Corps photos by Lance Cpl. Joseph Sorci, unless otherwise noted).



**Above: U.S. Marine Corps military working dog Ozzy moves to subdue a training target. Ozzy is an escalation of force assistance dog with Headquarters and Support Company, 1st Law Enforcement Battalion, I Marine Expeditionary Force.**



**Above: Quick is an explosive and drug detection dog attached to Headquarters and Support Company, 1st Law Enforcement Battalion, I Marine Expeditionary Force.**



**Above: An emergency service dog from the San Francisco Fire Department practices urban search and rescue techniques during the Bark in the Park event as part of San Francisco Fleet Week, Oct. 8 2016. Photo by Lance Cpl. Robert Alejandro ,1st Marine Logistics Group.**



**Above: A child poses with U.S. Marine Corps military working dog Pascal at the Bark at the Park event during San Francisco Fleet Week, Oct. 7, 2016. Currently attached to Headquarters and Support Company, 1st Law Enforcement Battalion, I Marine Expeditionary Force. Pascal specializes in patrol and explosive detecting and has come to Fleet Week for his final mission of an eight year career.**



## Blitz

Donna Leon: Blitz

From: Donna Leon: On Venice, Music, People and Books

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Donna Leon is an American mystery writer.

It was love at first sight. It had happened to me before but never like this, with a stunning immediacy that knocked me right off my feet. Unfortunately, as I have two of them - feet, that is - and he has four, there was little chance that this love story had much of a future. But I've always been an optimistic sort of girl, so I entrusted my heart to Cupid's care and hoped that something might come of it.

After our first meeting, I found myself thinking about Blitz a great deal, wondering what my parents might have said, decades ago, had I brought Blitz home to meet them. He wasn't very tall, little more than two feet, but then I'm a mere five-foot-three so that hardly seemed a problem. Luckily, my parents had always been open-minded, so the fact that he was black wouldn't have mattered in the least. There was, however, the difference in our educations, something my parents had always warned me could lead to serious problems between a couple. I'd spent all those years at university, while Blitz had had only three months of formal education.

But then there was the distinct advantage that he had a secure job, enjoyed perfect health, and was, well, he was gorgeous.

Blitz, to stop teasing, is a bomb dog and works at the U.S. Air Force base in Aviano, an hour north of Venice. He's an eight-year-old Dutch shepherd and has been working in Aviano for six years. I met him when I was at the base a year and a half ago to write a story for *Ziet* about the opening of the new shopping mall. The site was filled with generals in their medal-dripping uniforms, cheerleaders from the high school, shopping addicts lined up six deep waiting for the doors to open, and there, sitting quietly beside his handler, was Blitz. Since I have been a dog addict all my life I approached with the usual greeting, "Hello doggie-woggie," never having

been ashamed of making a fool of myself for a dog. The sergeant towering above me said, "If I were you, ma'am, I wouldn't touch him," and when I asked why, poker-faced, he responded, "Because Blitz'll bite your hand off, ma'am."

Playing hard to get, as we all know, is a technique that seldom fails. I suppose the threat that he'll bite your hand off is about as hard to get as a male can play. Tactics dictated that the surest way to Blitz's heart was through his handler, and so I started to chat with him about this and that, where Blitz lived, who his parents were, where he worked, whether he had a lot of friends...perhaps even girlfriends. The sergeant answered my questions, the responses to which made me even more interested in Blitz, and when I blurted out I might be interested in writing an article about him, the sergeant glowed.

Few can resist the human need to anthropomorphize the animals around us: the closer they are to us, the more we insist they be like us. Bears and elk seem fine having their completely alien animal responses, and we leave it to animal specialists to figure out what those mean, but cats and dogs and other things we invite into our homes are almost obliged to be just like us, if not in their behavior then certainly in their feelings.

Blitz, however, and the other dogs he works with - Rocky, Layca, Carlo, Arny and Allan - aren't dogs in the way people usually think of dogs, as friends and companions who live with us, amuse us, comfort us, and love us. They are work dogs, highly trained animals who can sniff out drugs or the chemical components of bombs at stunning distances, and so the anthropomorphism becomes a bit more complicated, for these dogs give their human companions rewards different from what people are accustomed to getting from their dogs; in certain situations, the dogs will save human lives by bringing even the most dangerous attacker to ground. Most family dogs are sloppy things that lie around all day and are perfectly happy to love everyone in the family, or for that fact, just about anyone who comes through the door or who pats them on the head in the supermarket. Bomb dogs love their handlers, though to speak of "love" is to engage in more anthropomorphism. They obey their handlers, respond eagerly to their commands, and give every sign of excitement to be in their presence. If there is love, my guess is that it is on the part of the handlers, for they speak of the dogs with the

highest regard and bask in any praise that is given them.

The kennel at the air base at Aviano is set a bit back from the main highway that runs from Pordenone to Aviano. It's an enormous prefabricated building with pens for at least thirty dogs, though today there are only six dogs in residence. Their job is to seek out either drugs or bombs as well as to guard and attack. From what I learned from the soldiers, I'd say that all dogs need for this job is a good nose and training. In fact, civilian airport security is increasingly turning to the use of Labradors, border collies, even the beagle, all called by military handlers in tones of great condescension, "passive" dogs. The military, instead, wants dual-purpose dogs: those who can sniff as well as attack.

Behind the building is a large fenced-in field where the dogs are trained and exercised. This seems to be the only place where the dogs are allowed to run free; otherwise they are in their kennel or working, which means they are on a short lead at their handler's side, either guarding the gate to the base or patrolling the base and its perimeter.

This lack of exercise is only apparent: the dogs' veterinarian, Dr. Mark Smith, said that these dogs get a lot more exercise than the average family dog and that an eight-hour shift is nothing for them. Further, their health and weight are regulated, and they're given a thorough physical exam every six months. A few months ago, Blitz broke off the tip of a tooth, necessitating a root canal that was done by one of the military dentists. No crown, though. I asked. It seems that the pressure exerted by the biting jaw of a dog this size, 2,500 pounds per square inch, is so strong that it would snap off even the best-made crown. So there's a hole in Blitz's smile. When they are too old to continue to work, the air force has a policy that allows some of them to be adopted by a trained handler. But if disease prevents them from working and the disease is considered terminal they are euthanized.

This is precisely what happened to Roy, a German shepherd, this past summer. Dr. Smith diagnosed bone cancer and the air force, which is the owner of the dog, decided that he should be put down. The men who described Roy's death, all large men in the prime of life, spoke of it with evident raw feeling. Sergeant Howard, the kennel master, decided that, after a lifetime of loyal

Donna Leon: Blitz Contined from Page 15

service, Roy deserved a military funeral, and that's what he got, complete with a twenty-one-gun salute from the honor guard.

Talk of death led me to ask Dr. Smith what happens to the pets of military members who die while their owners are stationed in Aviano. He explained that there is an Italian contractor who disposes of the bodies of pets for a fee: \$30 for a cat or hamster, \$80 for a Great Dane. There is a flat fee of \$180 for any cremation; the ashes are returned to the owner. These sums led me to suspect that many Italian landlords must discover, after their American tenants are transferred to some new military post, lots of suspicious small bones in the backyard.

The corpse contractor had taken Roy away before the funeral took place, and so the guns fired into the empty blue sky over an equally empty coffin. This deceit had no sooner been revealed to me than the speaker put his hand over his mouth and said, "I didn't mean to let the cat out of the bag," a metaphor that, however inappropriate, seemed perfect.

Though it embarrassed me to ask, considering the delicacy of my feelings, I could not stop myself from inquiring about Blitz's sex life. None. The training is so strong that even the scent of a bitch in heat cannot override a command from his handler. The only possibility of a romantic life open to dogs like Blitz is to be selected as part of the Department of Defense's breeding program, a new policy, begun perhaps to answer the increasing demand for dogs skilled at the task of sniffing out bombs. At present, most of the military's dogs are bought from vendors in the United States and Europe, but bought on approval and kept for ten days, during which time their general health and their natural inclination to hunt are assessed.

The men who work with these dogs find their lives enmeshed with those of the animals. This was particularly evident when they discussed the "personalities" - careful to apologize for the use of the word - of the dogs. Layca, it turns out, is weird, and her handler never knows if she is going to bite or snarl or lunge at a person. Rocky, by general agreement, is the most laid-back and peaceful. In fact, during their discussion of Rocky, I had the suspicion that the dreaded word "passive" was but a hairsbreadth from the tongues of the handlers. Blitz, I was pleased to note, was generally conceded to be the handsomest of the lot.

We passed on to the subject of emotions, and the soldiers heaped scorn on the official stance that these animals have no emotions. They spoke of love and dislike and jealousy and, as evidence of this, mentioned one dog who, for a period of time, had to share the handler with another dog. Whenever the handler came to take the second dog out for work or exercise, the first one made every attempt to stick his paw out of his cage and hit the other dog and displayed a great deal of aggression toward this other dog whenever it went by in the company of the handler. Further, during this time of joint belonging, he would often hold up one paw and feign injury in order to gather attention to himself. Jealousy? Hell, that's what I'd call it, regardless of what the animal theorists say. And listening to the way the handlers talked about their dogs there was no question that love existed.

All theory dropped from my mind the day we all went out to play. Before I could get near the dogs, I had to worm my way into the protection suit. This suit, which is made of thick burlap and weighs about twenty pounds, is not a garment designed for the making of a fashion statement: its purpose is to protect the wearer from the attack of dogs, from those two thousand pounds of pressure as well as from the

repeated, fast biting, which the handlers refer to as "typewriting."

I stood in the field, the snowcapped Dolomites behind me, and Blitz came out at the end of his handler's leash. For what seemed an inordinately long time, Blitz and I got to know each other at last. I stood in the suit, arms outstretched, and Blitz sat on the ground, looked at my throat, and barked. I noticed that the tooth cut down in the root canal had done nothing at all to reduce the number of his teeth: there appeared to be ninety-two of them, and they all, from that angle, appeared to be the size of sardines. As I watched him bark, saw his saliva splash out onto my feet, and counted those teeth, my memory fled to the time, twenty years before, when I was being evacuated from Iraq during the revolution and a young revolutionary guardsman climbed onto our bus and stuck a Kalashnikov in my face. It had been that long since I'd been the prey of such raw, animal fear.

After my time in the suit, after Blitz and I had gotten to know each other a bit better, I watched him in the company of his handler. And in those minutes, while the soldier caressed his head and accepted licks on his neck from that long tongue and gave him a drink of water from the same bottle, I realized that Blitz, even Blitz of the many teeth, has in him that wondrous canine quality that creates the bond between man and beast. The words came to me unasked. "Hello doggie-woggie."





## R.I.P. Eny

Story by Adam Serella

Today, Karisa and I had to lay our sweet Eny to rest... From the moment I met her, she was always my girl. We had a relationship and an understanding. Sometimes, it was hard not to have her out of the kennel and playing with her all night, instead of training or hanging with my actual assigned dog. Admittedly, much more often than not, she took up the couch with me while on a 24-hour shift.

Eny served the United States for over 10 years, including 4 real deployments and countless protective missions for the United States Secret Service.

Once Eny was able to come home, she transitioned perfectly from working dog, to...dog. It was said that she didn't like other dogs, but she interacted with them fine. It was said that she did not or could possibly not like kids, and she became a playground for ours. She was so gentle and forgiving with our daughter, Abbi, who would poke her in the eye repeatedly and say "EYE"...

Karisa and I knew that this day would come, but it doesn't make it easier. We wanted to give her the best retirement possible. I am proud of myself and K, and firmly believe that we did.

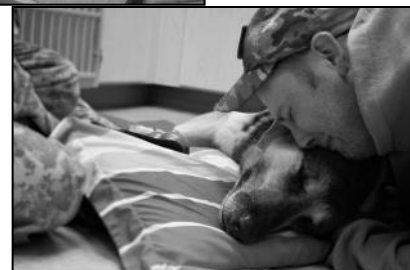
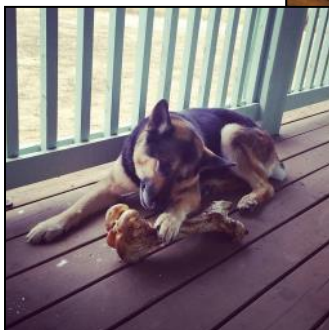
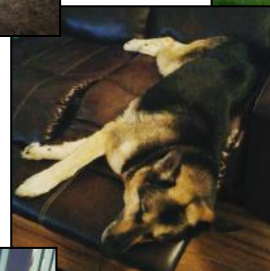
She will forever have a piece of my heart. It's been 8 hours and I've checked for her or looked for her out of habit a dozen times...

Thank you, I miss you, I love you Eny.

Adam

**Photos to the right tell Eny's story of retirement: Arriving home with a new baby, enjoying just being a dog with a family that loved her, and snuggling with Adam before she took her final walk.**

**Rest in peace, sweet Eny. Hugs to Adam, Karisa and their family on the loss of this beautiful girl.**



## Sit. Stay. Support.

### MWD TSA

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MWD TSA is committed to ethics in everything we do. We are honored to be among the select few non-profit organizations to receive the GuideStar Gold Participant seal.

All of our volunteers sign a code of ethics which outlines how we do our business. We are committed to transparency, but also handle the monies and goods you donate with efficiency, respect and appreciation.

Our missions include supporting active duty dogs and handlers, veteran dog handler causes and events, and war dog memorials where handlers can gather to remember, recognize and heal. We offer educational opportunities for the general public and advocate on behalf of retired military working dogs. Please support us!

Kennel Talk is the proud recipient of multiple  
GSDCA Special Newsletter Awards!



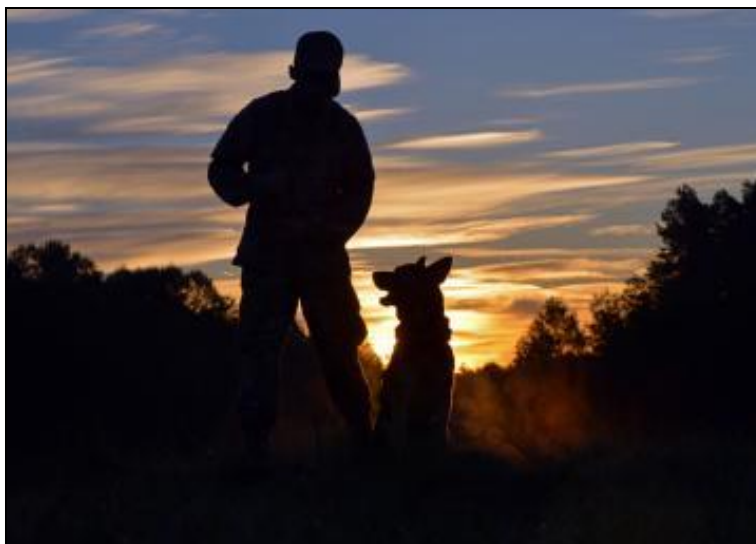
We invite you to join the ever-growing MWD TSA family!

To learn, volunteer, engage or subscribe, click here for info:

<http://mwdtsa.org/about/links/>

## Parting Shots

## Panzer Local Training Area



Boeblingen, Germany, Sep. 29, 2016.

Military Working Dog, U.S. Army Sergeant Astor P720, assigned to 92nd Military Police Company, obediently sits and waits for his next command from U.S. Army Specialist Kurtis Swift during an obedience training exercise which took place in the Panzer Local Training Area, Boeblingen, Germany, Sep. 29, 2016. Obedience training is a regular part of the training regimen designed to instill trust, loyalty and obedience between a working dog and his or her handler. U.S. Army photo by Visual Information Specialist Jason Johnston.