The Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc. is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2006. We are dedicated to supporting military working dog teams serving with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. MWDTSA operates with no paid staff or fundraising companies. Historically, more than 97% of all donated funds have gone directly to execute our core missions.

Numerous non-profits have been created since 9/11 to support veterans, assist their transition to civilian life, aid in their recovery from PTSD, and promote the adoption of retired military working dogs. MWDTSA is unique in that its primary focus is to support active-duty service members and their K9s and second, honor retired handlers and dogs. As our country enters its 20th year of the War on Terror, hundreds of military working dog teams continue to be deployed overseas. They face the dual threats of enemy aggression and the COVID pandemic.

During 2020, our 14th year, MWDTSA sent over 1,100 care packages to deployed teams for the second year in a row. Our fourteen-year total now stands at 8,018 packages, with a content value of almost $1,200,000. Our core missions include sending quarterly care packages comprised of purchased and donated goods; visiting home station military kennels to distribute comfort and morale-boosting gifts; honoring active duty and retired handlers and K9s; and conducting recognition and public education events about the significant role these teams perform for our country.

Dogs have long been recognized as “force multipliers” and “sensor systems” by military forces around the world. Today, military working dogs and their servicemen and women handlers constitute a skilled and formidable “team.” The teams’ missions include force protection—explosives and weapons detection, search and rescue, tracking, patrol, security, and drug detection. These dogs and their handlers are deployed worldwide to participate in offensive operations and to help safeguard military personnel and bases—while also protecting themselves during the COVID pandemic.
CARE PACKAGES

Our charter objective when first established, and our most important mission, is to send care packages of morale-boosting gifts to MWD teams deployed in global combat zones. During 2020 alone, MWDTSA delivered boxes to MWD teams in 17 countries around the globe. The 2020 quarterly care packages required more than $15,500 in postage and contained an average retail value of $180 in gifts for “both ends of the leash.” Each care package included necessities and comfort items for the handlers and their K9 partners, donated by individuals and companies or purchased by MWDTSA with donated funds.

The MWDTSA volunteer responsible for our quarterly care packages use their imagination to come up with a unique theme, and our volunteer designer brings that to life with a memorable logo. We then feature that logo on tactical patches, shirts, hats, and other items. Each quarter we look for gifts that support MWD teams, based on their needs as well as the expected climate in the deployment areas.

Our core mission is to send cartons of “thank you’s” to deployed MWD teams. They have always been packed with thoughtfulness and a determination to ensure the teams know that we honor the sacrifices they and their families endure due to their service commitment. Our first year, 2006, we sent 55 packages and over time our volunteers have elevated them to an art form that handlers have come to look forward to each quarter. They collect the various theme items and send us photos of themselves and their K9s sporting many of the bandanas and patches.

Q1 MOUNT RUFFMORE

The “Mount Ruffmore” logo depicts the military’s four most common K9 breeds (L to R: Belgian Malinois, Labrador Retriever, German Shepherd, and Dutch Shepherd). Packages included boot socks donated by Soledier Socks customers and a Condor Dump Pouch for handlers to carry reward toys and treats, as well as Musher’s Secret Paw Protector, Pet Life PL360 dog wipes, and Prima Pet collapsible bowls for the dogs.

Q2 STAY COOL

Summer temperatures in the Middle East can be over 120 degrees Fahrenheit, so the “Stay Cool” logo showed a MWD having ice cream and wearing sunglasses. The care packages included hydration tablets, cooling towels, and a digital thermometer so that handlers can check whether their K9 is in danger of overheating. The dogs also received RexSpecs goggles as protection from glaring sun, blowing dust, and “rotor wash” debris while on helicopter operations.

HOW SUPPORTERS HELP KEEP BOXES FULL

Almost half our donations come from individuals, and we continue to rely on their personal support to help fill our care packages. We maintain an “Amazon Wish List,” which shows items currently needed for each quarter, posted several weeks in advance. Potential donors also can find an array of opportunities by visiting https://www.mwdtsa.org/donations/.
Q3 SOCIAL DISTANCING CHAMPS

We are social distancing because of COVID-19, and the “Social Distancing Champs” logo humorously depicts Sasquatches as distancing experts. The theme reminds MWD teams to protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus during deployment, even while they are conducting operations. The care packages included Kurgo Kibble Carriers that hold 20 cups of dry dog food, perfect for when MWD teams are on missions to support ground combat operations for several days, and a Prima Pet collapsible bowl.

Q4 PROTECT THE FLOCK

The Q4 “Protect the Flock” logo depicts a German Shepherd protecting his flock from a wolf, representing the MWD teams’ mission to protect our forces. The logo also honors Vietnam-era K9s by displaying the ear tattoo of Brutus X321, an Air Force Sentry Dog. Brutus, like most of the MWDs of that conflict, never came home. One of our volunteers was his handler during 1970-71. Both served with the 635th Security Police Squadron at U-Tapao air base in Thailand.

KENNEL VISITS

In 2020, MWDTSA volunteers visited four military kennels in person and seven others “virtually” by sending gift boxes via UPS. The kennel visits delivered $18,836 in gifts to 105 dogs and 119 handlers in nine states and Italy. During in-person visits, volunteers provide breakfast or lunch and distribute dog toys, shirts, coffee, and tactical patches. Board members and volunteers who undertake these trips do so without reimbursement of their expenses.

Visiting military kennels helps MWDTSA volunteers understand the roles and lives of the handlers and dogs we support. We hear about their deployments and the challenges they face. We learn how they train and prepare for dangerous missions. Most important, we receive valuable input on how we can support them and what care package items are most helpful.
Many handlers adopt their retired K9s and provide them a “forever” home. To celebrate K9 Veterans Day on March 13, we sent 102 “Honor Boxes” to retired MWDs with a value of $217 each. These care packages differ from our normal boxes because they have goodies for senior dogs, such as joint supplements and softer toys for these older warriors. This year, we also included collars customized for each retired dog. Hand stitched by Tactipup, these collars are a coveted piece of gear among military and law enforcement K9s.

MWDTSA has also helped honor K9s this year who passed away by financially supporting euthanasia and cremation for five retired MWDs. Rest easy Enyzi, Zippo, Bowie, Kevin, and RReidy—you will not be forgotten. Icy Hot Hydration, makers of Fifty-Fifty insulated bottles, donated 43 custom engraved bottles to the families of retired MWDs who had passed away this year, each with the K9’s name and tattoo number. These “Remembrance Bottles” were a generous and touching gesture to these families who had formed strong bonds during the canines’ active duty and retired life.

DID YOU KNOW?

When a military working dog is in the news, many readers wonder what the four-digit alphanumeric codes are following their names; others question whether the military can spell since many names appear to have typographical errors. Even more are intrigued by a MWD with a military rank.

- The unique four-digit, alpha-numeric code following a MWD’s name is its serial number. The code is tattooed inside each MWD’s left ear. It’s painless and permanent.
- MWDs often have names with a double first letter, such as MMarc or DDelia. It’s not a typo but identifies the K9 as part of the Department of Defense Breeding Program at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. In addition, all puppies of the same litter have names starting with the same letter. Hence BBuck, BBilly, BBibi, etc.
Educational Services & Events

The COVID-19 pandemic curtailed most of MWDTSA’s in-person education outreach in 2020. For example, we had been conducting monthly educational events in a Colorado pet store. Public health guidelines required us to stop this activity in mid-March.

These public events give us an opportunity to meet potential supporters and explain the critical roles that military working dog teams provide for our military forces, especially in combat areas and on the high seas with the Coast Guard.

We instead turned to online options—particularly on Instagram and Facebook—to highlight these teams and the important work they do. This effort was largely successful, as shown in our metrics. Despite a year full of pandemic news, racial unrest, and election coverage, we saw consistent engagement from website and social media visitors. The traffic was only slightly lower than 2019.

MWDTSA also sought to add context to our online profiles at Guidestar.org and CharityNavigator.org, two widely recognized nonprofit information databases and rating organizations. Although the latter does not rate MWDTSA because our annual revenue is under $1 million, it does capture much of our data from other sources. During 2020, we received our fourth Platinum Seal by Guidestar, for the transparency of our profile and reports.

During 2020, Great Nonprofits awarded MWDTSA its “Top-Rated” seal, based on recommendations from the handlers we have served:

MWDTSA provided incredible support throughout my career. I served in the Marine Corps for 20 years and a majority of my career was in the Military Working Dog (MWD) Program. Over the years and through multiple deployments, MWDTSA provided support that focused around care packages during our deployments. The care packages were filled with much needed and appreciated items. MWDTSA always came through for me and my fellow dog handlers with genuine care and support. — ChrisW_9

Each quarter, knowing you will receive one of their fun themed care packages really brightens your day. Sometimes, it is the only thing you have to look forward to...I am grateful to have been supported by them and very proudly represent them each day. Thank you MWDTSA! — Whelchel22

MWDTSA is a fantastic organization that supports U.S. Military Working Dog Teams all over the world. My working dog Johnny and I were recipients of several care packages sent overseas while we were on two separate deployments. These packages brought toys and gear for Johnny, snacks for both of us, and a link to patriotic people back home that truly cared about us and our purpose. The support didn’t stop there. My wife and I, both being former dog handlers, have adopted several retired military working dogs and received Honor packages for two of our retired heroes, CCann and Moira. I cannot thank these folks enough for their support throughout the years. — albyay
MAJOR SPONSORS OF 2020

Two-thirds of the in-kind care package donations come from sponsoring companies, and we are indebted to them for their steadfast support of our MWD teams. The following organizations and individuals provided significant donations, grants, and in-kind support during 2020, valued at $1,000 or more.

Banixx
Bethany United Methodist Church, Marietta Ga.
Betsy Ross Foundation
Blackdog & Fund
Bov Foundation
Chuck & Don’s Pet Food & Supplies customers
DAV Chapter 15, Goshen, Ind.
Dennis Dougherty
DripDrop ORS
Duke Cannon Supply Co.
Focus Consumer Healthcare
Icy Hot Hydration

Jeanne Russell
Justin Melnick, CBS SEAL TEAM
KONG Company
Kurgo Foundation
Laura J. Niles Foundation
Madra Mor Mud
Makripodis Family
Michael Najvar
Outdoor Hygiene
Pale Horse Coffee
Petco Foundation
Cheryl Pliskin

Prima Pets
Rex Specs
ROLL Veterans ERG
Sea Bear Smokehouse
SodaPup/USA-K9
Soledier Socks
Sugarlands Distilling Co.
SunDog Kennel
Surviveware
Swilled Dog
Tactipup

OUR VOLUNTEERS

MWDTSA is a small but very engaged organization of 70 volunteers in 26 states and 4 overseas countries, who donated over 4,500 hours in 2020 to help accomplish missions. They solicit donations, pack care packages, visit stateside MWD kennels, conduct educational events, attend memorial and retirement ceremonies, maintain and improve our website and social media presence, write grant requests, and design materials such as this annual report—all on their own time. Without their dedication and efforts, MWDTSA couldn’t exist.

Since 2006, MWDTSA has established a relationship with the military working dog community, and we now count 11 active duty and veteran military dog handlers and their families as volunteers. In fact, during 2020, the Q2 Care Packages were organized, packed, and mailed by an active-duty MWD trainer, and the Q3 packages by a former MWD handler, both with the assistance of friends and families.

70 VOLUNTEERS  |  26 STATES  |  4 COUNTRIES  |  4,505 VOLUNTEER HOURS
MWDTSA was honored for the second year to be the beneficiary of a major fundraiser by Justin Melnick and his dog Dita, stars in the TV show SEAL Team. During the late fall “Dita’s Donation Drop” campaign, supporters donated enough funds for 801 toys. This included over $3,500 from Justin and other cast members. USA-K9/SodaPup matched these donated toys two-for-one, for a total of 2,403 reward toys valued at over $36,000. The 166 holiday boxes mailed in December delivered 1,252 of these toys to MWD kennels throughout the world, thanks to the “Dita’s Donation Drop” fundraiser. MWDTSA will utilize the remainder for 2021 care packages and kennel visits.

“FIRST BITE” COFFEE
Year round, Pale Horse Coffee offered 12 oz. bags of “First Bite” Coffee at $10 per bag and shipped them to us for our care packages. We were able to acquire over 800 bags during 2020. Additionally, they sell this special blend, roasted just for MWDTSA, to the public on their website and donate $3 per pound to MWDTSA. We encourage you to support this great coffee company owned and operated by veterans.

KONG COMPANY
Our annual “KONGS 4 K-9s” fundraiser had another successful year. Between August 1 and December 31, participating retailers and veterinary clinics collected KONG toy donations. The KONG Company matched each with two toys, yielding 448 toys for care packages and kennel visits. We are grateful for this annual support from the KONG company for the past 10 years.

REXSPECS
RexSpecs supported us with another year-end special discount price for individuals to purchase and donate pairs of RexSpecs to MWDTSA. Donors purchased 179 pairs of goggles valued at over $14,000, which will be going out in our 2021 care packages. Similarly, the RexSpecs collected through the 2019 campaign were included in the 2020 second quarter care packages.

CHUCK & DON’S PET FOOD & SUPPLIES, LONGMONT, COLORADO
Just before the pandemic shut down in-person events, Chuck & Don’s in Longmont had ordered a shipment of toys and treats specifically for a MWDTSA fundraiser. When Colorado went on COVID lockdown, Chuck & Don’s did the fundraiser on MWDTSA’s behalf, even though we couldn’t be there in person. A huge shout out and thank you to the Longmont store. In 2020, Chuck & Don’s customers donated $1,200 in toys and treats for MWDTSA care packages.

FUNDRAISERS BY SUPPORTERS
In addition to direct donations during 2020, supporters on Facebook created more than 60 small fundraisers that contributed over $19,000 to MWDTSA. Additional funds were received from clubs, churches, schools and service organizations, and via online charity support organization platforms such as Amazon Smile and Wish List, Benevity, Charity Choice, Charity Gift Certificates, Chewy.com, Donate Well, Giving Tuesday, Giving Assistant, iGive, Network for Good, PayPal Giving Fund, and Wells Fargo Giving Fund.

SOLEDIER SOCKS
For any pair of socks purchased on their website, Soledier Socks donates a pair of “The Thomas” boot socks to MWDTSA. Over 800 pairs of socks were donated for our 2020 care packages. Two custom MWDTSA designs were launched, both named after MWDs that have passed away.
Total administrative expenses (office supplies, mobile phone, website, insurance, and bank fees) were 2.8% of revenue during the year. MWDTSA pays no salaries nor fundraisers and does not reimburse officers, board members, or volunteers for their travel expenses on behalf of the organization.