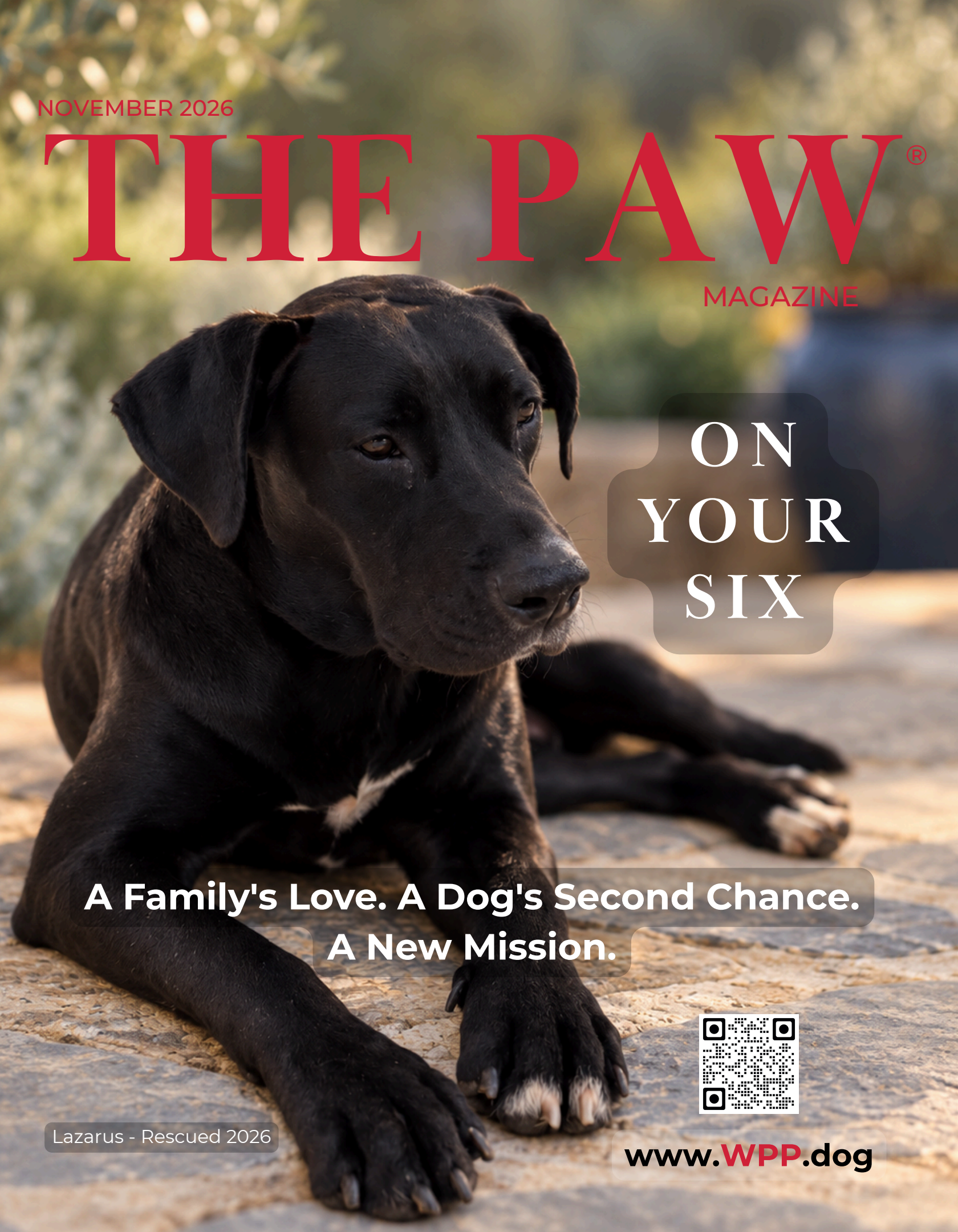
NOVEMBER 2026
THE PAW®
MAGAZINE
ON YOUR SIX
A Family's Love. A Dog's Second Chance. A New Mission.
Lazarus - Rescued 2026
www.WPP.dog

The PAW® Magazine
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November 2026

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Wounded Paw Project® exists to end the cycle of abuse for dogs everywhere.
We rescue, rehabilitate, and advocate for the voiceless—and we fight for second chances with courage, compassion,
and unwavering commitment.

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A WORD FROM THE FOUNDER...

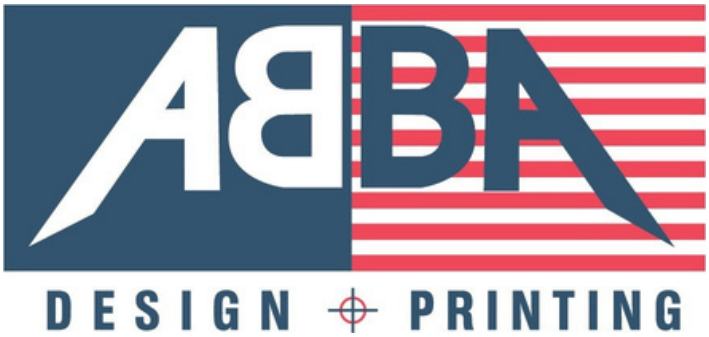
As a veteran and the founder of Wounded Paw Project®, I have always believed that service is about more than the mission in front of us. It is also about the people beside us and the connections that remain long after an assignment ends. This November, as we honor those who have served, I am reminded of how much those relationships matter. The story of Lazarus, the love of Noah's family, and the development of **Wagployment® On Your Six** reflect something deeply personal to me: the belief that even the most difficult experiences can inspire opportunities to make a difference.

When Daisy and I began this journey, I could never have imagined every direction it would take us. Yet our purpose remains unchanged. Every dog deserves compassion, every second chance carries responsibility, and every meaningful connection deserves to be valued. Thank you for believing in that mission and helping us **Be The Voice For The Voiceless®.**

With gratitude and determination,
Ernesto P. Hernandez III
Founder of Wounded Paw Project®

Lazarus - Rescued 2026

Our mission is stronger because of partners like you. Together, we are creating safer futures for animals in need.



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

A Mission Worth Sharing

For Lazarus, a second chance is becoming part of something larger—a developing mission rooted in remembrance, connection, and a commitment to those who serve.

In October, readers of The PAW® met Lazarus, a remarkable rescue dog whose survival captured attention far beyond the Texas field where he was found.

His story was extraordinary. But survival was never meant to be the final chapter.

Today, Lazarus is part of a developing Wounded Paw Project® initiative that brings together two causes central to the organization's mission: protecting dogs who deserve a second chance and supporting the men and women who serve our country.

The initiative is called **Wagployment® On Your Six.**

Daisy - Rescued 2008

When Two Stories Came Together

The vision behind **Wagployment® On Your Six** began with Wounded Paw Project® founder Ernesto P. Hernandez III, whose own experiences and relationship with his rescue dog Daisy helped shape his understanding of the connection between people and dogs. As a veteran and animal advocate, Ernesto envisioned a program that could bring the companionship of dogs into military-unit environments.

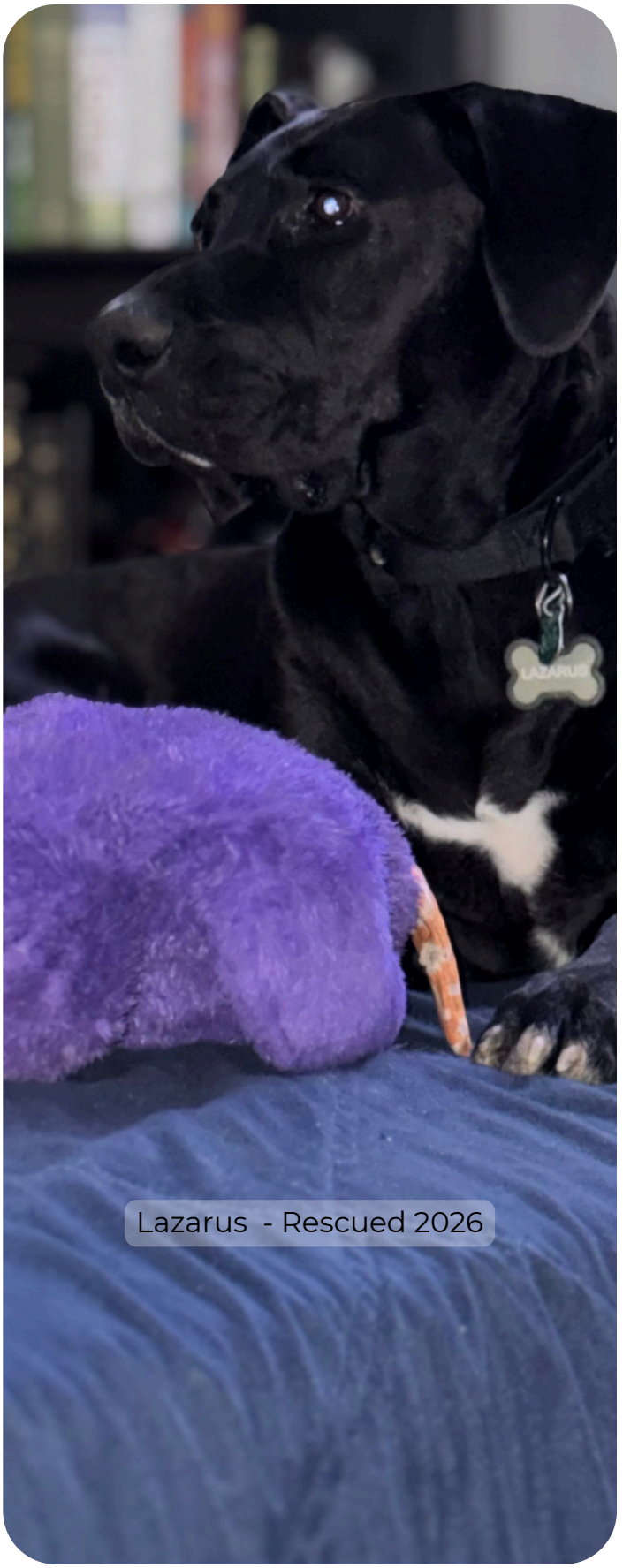
That vision gained a more personal dimension when WPP became connected with the family of a young Army soldier named Noah through the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS).

Noah had served in South Korea, and following his death, his mother sought an

opportunity to bring a dog to the military base associated with her son. She believed that access to canine companionship might offer comfort and connection to other service members. What began as her request developed into an ongoing relationship with Wounded Paw Project®, with both of Noah's parents becoming actively involved as the initiative moved forward.

Their involvement brought together a family's desire to honor their son, an organization's developing vision, and the possibility of giving a rescued dog a meaningful new opportunity. Noah's life and his family's continuing commitment are explored in a dedicated feature later in this issue.

For Lazarus, that connection has helped open a potential path toward a role within a military community. It is an opportunity that WPP is



Lazarus - Rescued 2026

approaching with both optimism and careful consideration.

Preparing for a Different Kind of Mission

Preparing Lazarus for **Wagployment® On Your Six** involves more than traditional obedience training. Because the program envisions dogs becoming part of an active military-unit environment, understanding how Lazarus responds to people, unfamiliar surroundings, and different levels of activity is an important part of determining whether the proposed role will be appropriate for him.

Wounded Paw Project® has been introducing Lazarus to a variety of environments where he can encounter different people, experience new surroundings, and become familiar with situations outside his everyday routine. These outings provide opportunities to observe his behavior while allowing him to experience aspects of the wider world at a thoughtful pace.

One particularly memorable experience brought Lazarus to the Henderson Hall Marine Corps Exchange (MCX) Grand Re-Opening in Arlington, Virginia. Surrounded by members of the military community, Lazarus enjoyed the opportunity to be among people and even had his photograph taken alongside the official Marine Corps bulldog.

Lazarus - Rescued 2026

The outing also offered a glimpse into the personality WPP has come to know. Lazarus genuinely enjoys human interaction and has shown an eagerness to engage with the people around him. His interest in other dogs is similarly social. When encountering another dog, his general tendency has been to seek playful interaction rather than respond defensively or display territorial guarding behavior.

These observations are encouraging, particularly for a dog being considered for a role centered on companionship and connection. However, friendliness alone does not determine suitability for a military-unit environment. Different settings bring different expectations, and continued observation will help WPP better understand how Lazarus responds to changing circumstances, activity levels, and unfamiliar experiences.

Each outing is therefore more than an opportunity for a photograph or public appearance. It is another chance to learn about Lazarus as an individual and make informed decisions about his future.

A Mission Built Around the Dog

The expression *on your six* comes from military terminology and refers to someone positioned behind you, watching your back. For Wounded Paw Project®, it reflects the desire to create additional opportunities for companionship and connection among those who serve.

Military unit dogs are distinct from military working dogs trained for specialized operational duties such as detection or patrol. They are also different from service dogs individually trained to perform

disability-related tasks. **Wagployment® On Your Six** is being developed around the idea that an appropriately selected and prepared dog might become a familiar, welcome presence within a military unit.

For Lazarus, one possible destination is Camp Humphreys in South Korea. That possibility carries particular meaning given Noah's connection to military service there, but it remains a potential placement rather than a guaranteed outcome.

Lazarus's lasting injuries, including vision loss in one eye and hearing loss in one ear, are important considerations as WPP evaluates his future. His preparation must account for those limitations, his individual temperament, and the demands of any proposed environment. A successful placement would require more than a compelling story or an enthusiastic response to a few outings. It would need to be appropriate for Lazarus himself.

That commitment reflects a principle central to Wounded Paw Project®: a second chance should never come with an obligation for a dog to fulfill a role at the expense of his own welfare. If Lazarus is ultimately suited for the mission, his preparation can continue toward that goal. If another path proves better for him, choosing it would be an equally meaningful expression of responsible rescue work.

The Journey Ahead

Lazarus's story has already brought together people who might otherwise never have crossed paths. From those who helped him survive in Texas to the individuals now exploring his future with Wounded Paw Project®, each chapter has been shaped by people willing to recognize his value and create opportunities for him.

His developing connection to **Wagployment® On Your Six** adds another dimension to that journey. What began as a second chance for one injured dog has become part of a larger conversation about service, remembrance, and the many ways dogs may contribute to the communities around them.

There are still important questions to answer and preparations to complete. The military-unit environment must be appropriate, the necessary arrangements must be established, and Lazarus's well-being must remain central throughout the process.

Lazarus's next chapter has not yet been written, but it is beginning to take shape around a remarkable possibility: that a dog once given a second chance may someday have the opportunity to share that gift of connection with others.

And that is a mission worth sharing.

Lazarus - Rescued 2026

A FAMILY'S LOVE. A MISSION THAT CONTINUES.

How one family's love for their son is helping create new opportunities for connection among those who serve.

Photo Credit: Samuel-Siegel Family

At 18, even before graduating from high school, Noah made the decision to join the United States Army. His service took him to South Korea, thousands of miles from home and the people who knew him best. Like so many young service members, he entered a world of new responsibilities, unfamiliar surroundings, and

experiences that would become part of his life's story.

Yet Noah's military service is only one part of who he is. To his family, he is a beloved son whose personality, interests, and place in their lives extend far beyond the uniform he wore. Among the things they cherish about him is his love of dogs, a seemingly ordinary detail that would eventually become central to an extraordinary effort.

In November 2021, Noah died by suicide. His loss changed his family's lives in ways that words cannot fully express. In the years that followed, however, his parents found themselves considering how something their son loved might become a source of comfort and connection

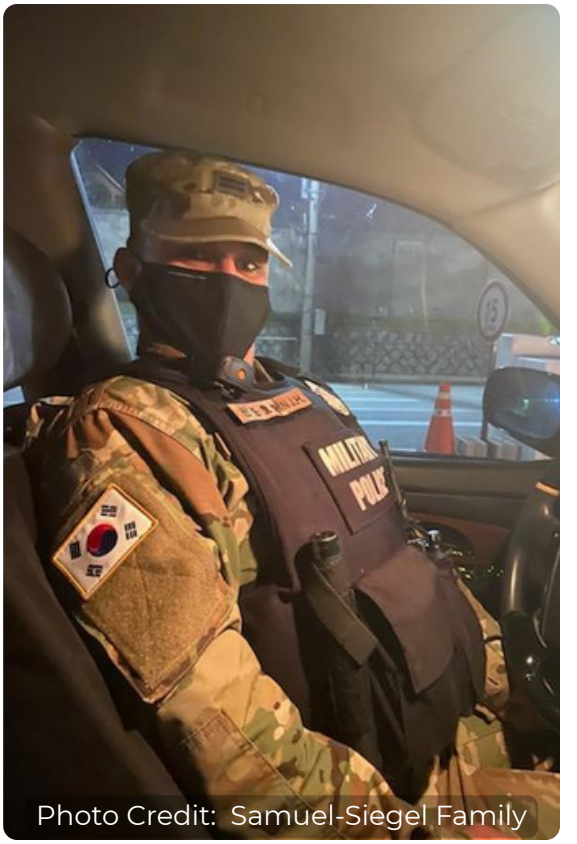


Photo Credit: Samuel-Siegel Family

for other young people serving far from home.

An Idea Rooted in Love

Life on a military installation overseas can be an experience of both opportunity and adjustment. Service members build friendships, develop routines, and take on responsibilities while navigating the distance between their assignments

and the lives they left at home. For some, simple opportunities to step away from daily demands and enjoy a familiar activity can be particularly meaningful.

Noah's mother began thinking about the difference a dog might make in such an environment. She imagined service members having the opportunity to spend time with an animal as part of ordinary life on an installation, enjoying moments of interaction that did not depend on a special occasion or formal program.

That idea led her to pursue the possibility of bringing a dog to the military community where Noah had served. After she took the first step, both of Noah's parents have remained actively involved in the effort that followed. What began as a personal request has grown into a shared commitment to create something positive in their son's honor.

When Two Paths Met

An important connection came through the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), which supports families and others grieving the death of a military or veteran loved one. With assistance from TAPS founder Bonnie Carroll, introductions were made that ultimately brought Noah's family together with Wounded Paw Project® founder Ernesto P. Hernandez III.

The timing was significant. Ernesto had already been considering how rescued dogs might become part of military units in a role centered on everyday

interaction rather than operational duties. Noah's family's request offered a specific place and personal purpose through which that developing idea could be explored.

From those conversations, a relationship began to take shape. Noah's parents brought their hopes for the military community their son had known, while Wounded Paw Project® brought its experience in animal advocacy and a developing concept for connecting dogs with those who serve. Together, those perspectives helped give direction to an initiative now known as **Wagployment® On Your Six.**

A Tribute With A Personal Meaning

One of the most meaningful connections between Noah's family and the developing initiative involves his Army uniform. Wounded Paw Project® has received the uniform with plans to incorporate some of its material into a commemorative vest for Lazarus, the rescued Great Dane mix being prepared for the program's first mission.

The vest's significance is already clear. It offers a personal way to honor

Uniform Provided by Samuel-Siegel Family

Noah's military service while connecting his memory with a dog whose own life has been given a new direction.

Wounded Paw Project® is working toward bringing Lazarus to Camp Humphreys in South Korea, where Noah served. That remains the intended destination guiding the organization's efforts and Lazarus's preparation. The goal holds particular meaning because it would bring canine companionship to the same military community that helped inspire his mother's original request.

The Love That Carries Forward

For Noah's parents, this effort is about more than establishing a new opportunity within the military. It is also about the enduring bond between a family and the son they love. Their continued participation reflects a desire to turn something deeply personal into an opportunity that may touch the lives of people they have never met.

There is no single way to honor someone whose presence remains such an important part of our lives. For Noah's family, sharing stories, celebrating his life,

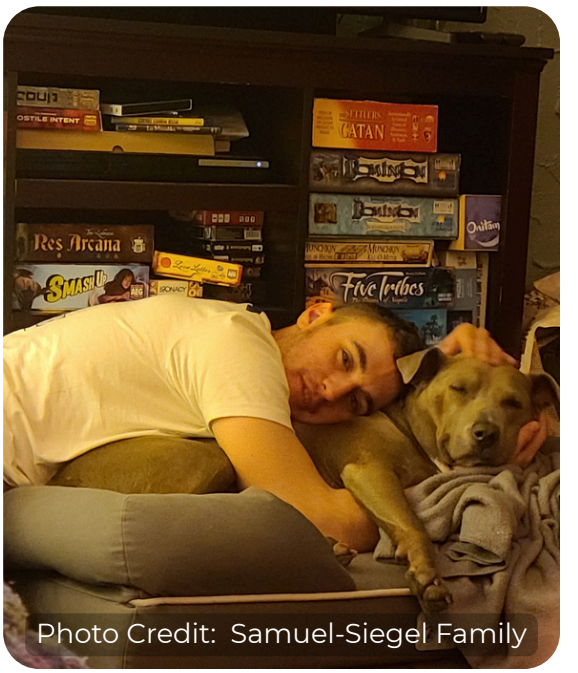


Photo Credit: Samuel-Siegel Family

and keeping his spirit present are all part of that continuing love. Their hope of bringing canine companionship to service members in South Korea represents another deeply meaningful way to honor Noah, connecting his military service with one of the simple joys he experienced in life. It is one expression of a family's enduring love and their desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

Noah is a beloved son, a soldier, and an enduring part of his family's story. Whatever form the initiative takes as it develops, the love behind his parents' commitment remains constant. Through their efforts, Noah's memory continues to inspire a mission built around connection, compassion, and the hope of making a difference for others.

Photo Credit: Samuel-Siegel Family

947th Military Working Dogs

Wagployment® On Your Six

Different Missions.
Same Team.

Dogs have long held important roles alongside the men and women of the United States military. From highly trained military working dogs performing specialized assignments to beloved companions waiting at home, their relationships with service members take many forms. While these roles differ in purpose and responsibility, they reflect the remarkable ways dogs become part of people's lives.

Wounded Paw Project® is developing **Wagployment® On Your Six** to introduce another kind of relationship between dogs and the military. The initiative is designed to place suitable rescued dogs within military units, where they can become

familiar companions and a positive presence in the daily lives of service members. Rather than serving one individual or performing operational duties, these military unit dogs are intended to be part of a shared environment, offering opportunities for interaction and connection throughout the day.

The concept reflects a simple understanding: meaningful connections often develop through ordinary experiences. A dog greeting familiar faces, providing a welcome interruption to a busy schedule, or becoming the reason two colleagues stop to share a conversation can create moments of enjoyment within established routines. **Wagployment® On Your Six** seeks to make those interactions possible while giving rescued dogs an opportunity to find a new purpose.

Strengthening Connections Within the Unit

Military life is built around teamwork, responsibility, and shared experiences. Service members often work closely with people from different backgrounds, forming relationships through common assignments and the demands of their profession. For those stationed far from home, these connections can become particularly important parts of everyday life.

Wagployment® On Your Six approaches canine companionship from that collective perspective. A military unit dog is intended to become part of the environment shared by service members, rather than being assigned exclusively to one person. Its role is distinct from that of a military working dog trained for operational responsibilities or a service dog

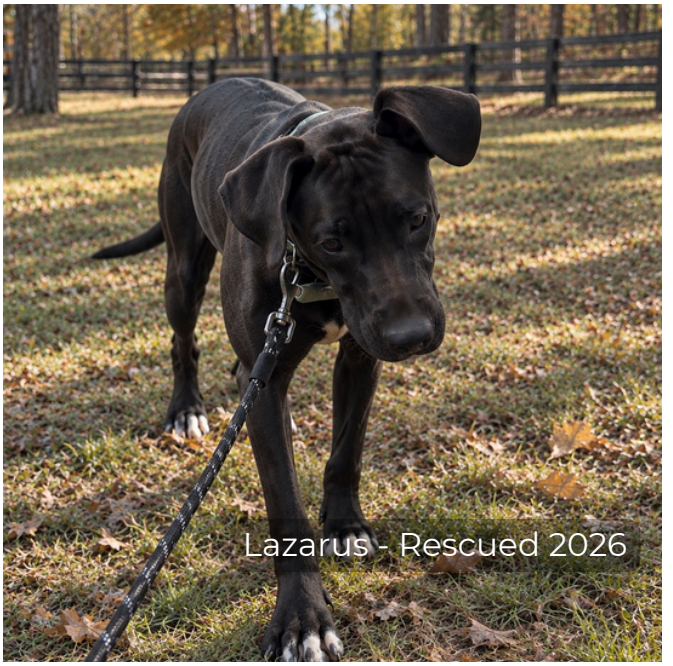
Through this approach, Wounded Paw Project® hopes to encourage positive interactions, support unit morale, and contribute to an environment where companionship becomes a natural part of the day. A dog's presence may offer a shared point of interest, encourage conversation, or provide moments of comfort during demanding routines. These experiences will differ among individuals and units, but they represent the possibilities the program is designed to explore.

The goal is not to replace existing relationships or professional support services. Instead, the initiative seeks to introduce another opportunity for connection within communities where looking out for one another is already an important part of the culture.

Preparing for a Meaningful Second Chance

Finding a new purpose for a rescued dog begins with understanding the individual animal. Every dog has its own personality, preferences, and needs, and not every environment will be an appropriate match. A military unit may involve unfamiliar people, changing schedules, and activity levels that require thoughtful preparation and a willingness to adapt.

For Wounded Paw Project®, that responsibility begins well before a dog enters a military setting. **Wagployment® On Your Six** is being developed around a process that considers temperament, health, training, and suitability, while allowing dogs time to build confidence and become comfortable with new experiences. The objective


Lazarus - Rescued 2026

is not simply to prepare a dog for placement, but to determine whether the proposed role provides an opportunity in which that dog can thrive.

Equally important is what happens after a suitable match is identified. Clear expectations, dependable care, and continued communication with participating military units are essential to the kind of lasting relationship WPP hopes to establish. A dog's well-being does not become less important once it begins its new role; it remains central to the success of the arrangement.

These responsibilities are reflected in the program's four-stage framework, from initial evaluation and preparation through placement and ongoing support. Together, they provide a foundation for developing opportunities that respect both the rescued dogs and the military communities they may join.

The First Mission Takes Shape

Lazarus, the rescued Great Dane mix featured on this month's cover, is at the center of Wounded Paw Project®'s inaugural effort. His preparation has included opportunities to experience different surroundings and interact with people outside his familiar environment, allowing the organization to learn more about his responses and individual needs.

Wounded Paw Project® is working toward bringing Lazarus to Camp Humphreys in South Korea as the first military unit dog through **Wagployment® On Your Six.** This remains the intended destination guiding the organization's efforts as preparations and coordination continue. The prospect of introducing a rescued dog into that military community represents a meaningful beginning for a program designed to grow thoughtfully over time.

Although Lazarus is helping bring this initiative into focus, its purpose extends beyond a single dog or assignment. Each future opportunity will require the same consideration of the animal, the environment, and the people who will share responsibility for its care. What Wounded Paw Project® learns through the inaugural effort will help inform the program's

Rosie - Rescued 2009

Different Missions. Same Team.

At its heart, **Wagployment® On Your Six** brings together two communities connected by Wounded Paw Project®'s mission. Rescued dogs deserve opportunities to experience stability, care, and meaningful relationships. Military service members deserve supportive environments that recognize the importance of human connection and everyday well-being.

The program offers a way to explore how those interests might come together. For service members, a military unit dog may become a familiar companion and an enjoyable part of daily life. For the dog, an appropriate placement may open the door to a new environment filled with positive interactions and dependable relationships.

Wagployment® On Your Six is still taking shape, but its direction reflects Wounded Paw Project®'s commitment to **Giving Them A Second Tail In Life®**. By approaching each opportunity with thoughtful preparation and a long-term responsibility to the dogs involved, the organization hopes to build a program in which companionship and service find common ground.

Different missions. Same team. And a new opportunity to make a meaningful difference.

Kane - Rescued 2018

DIFFERENT MISSIONS. SAME TEAM.

WAGPLOYMENT® ON YOUR SIX
RESCUED FOR A REASON. TRAINED FOR A MISSION.
WOUNDED PAW PROJECT®

Scan to Learn More About Wounded Paw Project®.

MILITARY UNIT DOG PROGRAM

OUR MISSION

Wagployment® On Your Six is designed to place suitable rescued dogs within military units to provide companionship, connection, and emotional support in the military environment.

By integrating rescued dogs into unit life, we aim to strengthen morale, enhance day-to-day well-being, and foster a positive, supportive culture for the service members who serve our country.

HOW IT WORKS

1. **RESCUE & EVALUATE**
   Select dogs from WPP's rescue program based on temperament, health, and suitability for military unit environments.
2. **PREPARE & TRAIN**
   Provide decompression, training, and socialization to build confidence and prepare for the unique demands of military unit life.
3. **UNIT PLACEMENT**
   Partner with military units to integrate dogs as unit companions, with clear guidelines and expectations.
4. **ONGOING SUPPORT**
   Provide continued guidance, resources, and check-ins to ensure long-term success for both dogs and units.

PROGRAM IMPACT

ENHANCED UNIT MORALE
A dog's presence can help create a more positive, supportive, and connected unit environment.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
Provides comfort and a calming influence that may help reduce stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue.

STRONGER TEAMS
Encourages communication, camaraderie, and a shared sense of purpose within the unit.

A MEANINGFUL SECOND CHANCE
Gives rescued dogs a purpose and a new life while supporting the men and women who serve our country.

WOUNDED PAW PROJECT®

Be a Part of the Mission.

www.WPP.dog

SADIE SAYS

PERSONAL SPACE? NEVER HEARD OF IT.

Think you own the couch? That's adorable. Your dog considers your lap prime real estate, your pillow community property, and bathroom privacy a ridiculous concept. Whether you're watching TV, answering emails, or sneaking away for five minutes of peace, your furry supervisor is right behind you. Personal space? Sorry, you surrendered those rights the day you brought home a dog!

Diva - Rescued 2020

Not All Working Dogs Wear The Same Vest

Understanding the different ways dogs support people—and why the role they play matters more than what they wear.

Spend enough time around dogs, and you'll discover that their relationships with people can take many forms. Some are specially trained to assist individuals with disabilities, while others visit hospitals, provide emotional comfort, or simply share their lives with the families who love them. Their contributions may look similar to an outside observer, but their responsibilities, preparation, and legal protections can be very different.

The distinction matters because terms such as service dog, therapy dog, and emotional support dog are often used interchangeably, even though they describe different roles. Understanding what separates them helps protect the rights of people who depend on trained assistance dogs while recognizing that companionship can also be meaningful without a formal working designation.

As Wounded Paw Project® introduces **Wagployment® On Your Six,** a developing initiative involving military unit dogs, those distinctions become especially relevant. The program explores a different kind of canine role, one built around everyday companionship and connection within military communities.

Service Dogs: Training With a Specific Purpose

Service dogs perform work that directly assists people with disabilities. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service dog must be individually trained to perform tasks related to its handler's disability. Those tasks can vary considerably depending on the person's needs, from guiding someone with vision loss or alerting a person who cannot hear certain sounds to retrieving objects or responding to specific symptoms of a psychiatric disability.

What defines a service dog is not its breed, appearance, or the equipment it wears, but the work it has been trained to perform. A dog trained to recognize the onset of a panic attack and take a specific action to assist its handler, for example, may qualify as a psychiatric service dog. By contrast, a dog whose presence provides comfort without performing a trained disability-related task does not meet the ADA definition.

Service dogs generally have the right to accompany their

handlers into public places covered by the ADA, including restaurants, stores, and many other locations where pets are not normally permitted. However, a common misconception is that these dogs must wear an identifying vest or carry certification documents. Federal ADA rules do not require either. The dog's training and function, rather than its clothing or identification, establish its role.

Emotional Support and Therapy Dogs: Different Kinds of Assistance

Emotional support dogs provide companionship that helps individuals manage the effects of a mental or emotional disability. Their presence may offer reassurance, comfort, or a sense of stability, but unlike service dogs, they are not required to perform individually trained disability-related tasks.

That distinction affects where they may accompany their owners. Emotional support dogs do not receive the same general public-access rights as service dogs under the ADA, although qualifying individuals may be entitled to reasonable accommodations under federal housing law. These housing protections are separate from the rules governing access to restaurants, retail stores, and other public places.

Therapy dogs serve a different purpose. Typically accompanied by their handlers, they participate in organized visits to places such as hospitals, schools, senior living facilities, and community programs. Their role centers on interaction with other people rather than performing disability-related tasks for one individual handler.

Many therapy dog organizations establish training, behavioral evaluations, and registration standards, while participating facilities determine their own requirements for visits. A therapy dog may be particularly

well suited to interacting calmly with unfamiliar people, but its designation does not automatically provide the public-access rights granted to service dogs.

Although emotional support and therapy dogs may both offer comfort, the nature of their relationships with people differs. Emotional support dogs generally assist an individual through an ongoing relationship, while therapy dogs participate in activities intended to benefit people beyond their own handlers.

The Everyday Value of Companionship

Not every dog needs specialized training or an official designation to make a meaningful contribution to someone's life. For many people, the greatest value of sharing their home with a dog is found in familiar routines and ordinary experiences. Morning walks, time spent outdoors, playful interactions, and quiet companionship can become enjoyable parts of daily life.

Dogs may also create opportunities for social connection. A walk around the neighborhood can lead to conversations with other dog owners, while volunteering with an animal welfare organization may introduce people who share a common interest. These relationships develop naturally, without requiring the dog to perform a particular task or fulfill an officially recognized role.

Companion dogs do not receive the same legal protections as ADA service dogs simply because their presence is important to their owners. Nevertheless, their relationships with people deserve recognition and respect. A dog's value should never be measured solely by whether it has a vest, a certification, or a formal assignment.

This understanding also reinforces the importance of considering each dog's personality and needs. Some dogs enjoy meeting unfamiliar people and exploring busy environments, while others are happiest with predictable routines and quieter surroundings. Responsible companionship means recognizing those differences and creating opportunities appropriate for the individual animal.

Military Unit Dogs: A Different Approach to Service

Wounded Paw Project® is developing **Wagployment® On Your Six** around a distinct concept: introducing military unit dogs into military communities, where they may become familiar sources of companionship and opportunities for everyday interaction among service members.

Military unit dogs should not be confused with military working dogs, which are trained to perform specialized operational duties such as detection or

patrol. They are also different from service dogs individually trained to perform disability-related tasks for a particular handler. The intended role of a military unit dog centers on companionship within a shared military environment rather than providing specialized operational assistance or individualized disability-related services.

Lazarus, the rescue dog featured in this month's cover story, is being considered for this developing role. WPP has been introducing him to different environments and groups of people, including an appearance at the Henderson Hall Marine Corps Exchange Grand Re-Opening in Arlington, Virginia. These experiences offer opportunities to observe his

Lazarus - Rescued 2026

his social behavior and better understand his potential suitability for the program.

As Wagployment® On Your Six takes shape, appropriate preparation, clear responsibilities, and the welfare of participating dogs will be essential considerations. The designation military unit dog describes the program's intended role; it does not establish a separate legal category of assistance animal or automatically grant the public-access rights of an ADA service dog.

Understanding the Role, Respecting the Dog

The many ways dogs contribute to human lives deserve appreciation, but understanding their differences is just as important. Service dogs perform specialized tasks for people with disabilities, emotional support dogs provide disability-related comfort, therapy dogs participate in organized interactions with others, and companion dogs enrich everyday life through the relationships they share with their families. Military unit dogs represent another developing approach, one intended to create opportunities for connection within military communities.

These roles are not interchangeable, and none should be judged solely by its title or appearance. Each carries different expectations for training, behavior, handling, and the environments in which a dog may be asked to participate.

For Wounded Paw Project®, responsible advocacy means recognizing each dog's unique role while keeping its well-being at the center. Whether serving an individual, supporting a community, or simply sharing a home, every dog deserves appropriate care, respect, and a purpose suited to its needs.

Understanding Canine Support Roles

Different roles. Different responsibilities.

Not every helpful dog has the same job. Understanding the role helps protect people, respect the dog, and set the right expectations.

Service Dog

Individually trained to perform specific tasks for a person with a disability.

ADA Public Access: Yes*

Emotional Support Dog

Provides disability-related emotional comfort through companionship, but is not trained for specific tasks.

ADA Public Access: No

Therapy Dog

Visits schools, hospitals, or care settings with a handler to comfort and engage others.

ADA Public Access: No automatic right

Companion Dog

Shares everyday life, routine, and companionship with a person or family.

ADA Public Access: No

Military Unit Dog

A developing Wagployment® On Your Six role centered on companionship and connection within military communities. Distinct from military working dogs and individual service dogs.

ADA Public Access: No automatic right

Myth vs Fact

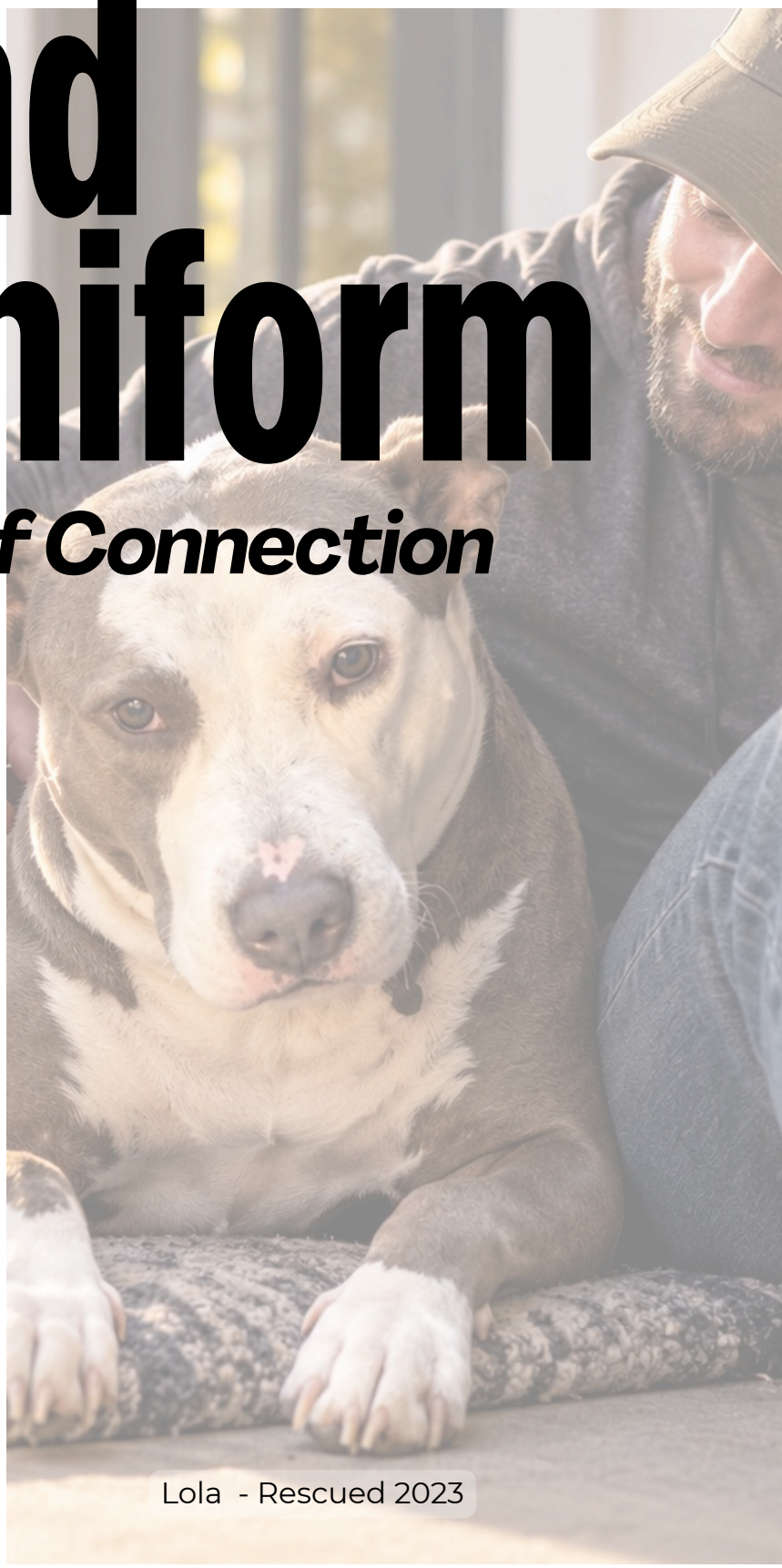
MYTH:
If a dog wears a vest, it must be a service dog.

FACT:
A vest alone does not determine a dog's legal role. Training, purpose, and applicable law matter.

*General ADA public-access summary only. Housing, facility, and installation rules may differ. Military unit dogs are part of Wounded Paw Project®'s developing Wagployment® On Your Six program.

Beyond The Uniform

The Meaning of Connection



Lola - Rescued 2023

A military uniform represents service, responsibility, and a commitment to something greater than oneself. It can also reflect years of experiences, friendships, and shared responsibilities that leave a lasting impression. Yet a uniform reveals only one part of the person wearing it. Beyond military service are individuals with families, interests, ambitions, and personal histories that

continue to evolve long after their time in uniform.

For many veterans, leaving military service means entering a new chapter filled with possibilities. Some return to established communities and familiar routines, while others move to new places, pursue different careers, or discover interests they previously had little time to explore. The transition is not the same for everyone, and it should never be defined solely by the challenges that sometimes accompany it. Veterans bring an extraordinary range of experiences and perspectives to civilian life, just as they did during their years of service.

One aspect of life that remains important through these changes is the opportunity to build and maintain meaningful relationships. Friendships, family connections, shared interests, and community involvement can provide a sense of belonging that extends well beyond any particular occupation or stage of life.

Millie - Rescued 2017

Roxie - Rescued 2024

Finding Community Beyond Service

Military life often creates opportunities for close relationships through shared experiences and responsibilities. Service members may work together under demanding circumstances, move between assignments, and develop friendships with people from backgrounds very different from their own. Those connections can remain meaningful for years, even when military careers take individuals in different directions.

When service members transition into civilian life, the communities surrounding them may also change. The familiar routines of a military installation, the regular presence of colleagues, or the shared understanding that comes from working toward a common mission may become less central to everyday life. For some veterans, building new connections happens naturally. Others may need time to discover where they feel most comfortable and how they want to participate in their communities.

Meaningful connection does not require a large social circle or constant activity. Sometimes it develops through a few dependable friendships, a regular volunteer commitment, a shared hobby, or a community organization where people feel welcome. What matters is having opportunities to participate, contribute, and form relationships that reflect individual interests and values.

Organizations serving veterans can help create those opportunities, but meaningful relationships also develop in ordinary places. Neighborhood gatherings, recreational activities, professional networks, and volunteer programs can bring together people who might otherwise never cross paths. These interactions remind us that community is not simply a place where someone lives; it is something people build through shared experiences and continued participation.

The Unexpected Connections Dogs Create

Dogs have a remarkable way of becoming part of everyday social life. A neighborhood walk may lead to a conversation with someone who recognizes a familiar dog.

A visit to a dog-friendly park can introduce people with little else in common, while volunteering with an animal welfare organization may bring together individuals of different ages, occupations, and backgrounds around a shared interest.

For some veterans, a dog may also become an enjoyable part of daily routines, offering companionship and opportunities to engage with the world around them. The relationship can be personally meaningful, although every person's experience with dogs is different. Not every veteran wants a dog, and canine companionship should never be presented as a substitute for human relationships or professional mental health care.

What dogs can sometimes provide is another opportunity for connection. Their presence may encourage conversation, participation in community activities, or moments of shared enjoyment. These experiences do not need to be extraordinary to have value. Often, their significance comes from becoming familiar and welcome parts of everyday life.

This understanding is one of the ideas behind Wounded Paw Project®'s developing Wagployment® On Your Six program. Through the introduction of military unit dogs, WPP hopes to create opportunities for companionship and everyday interaction within military communities. The program is still taking shape, but its underlying purpose reflects a broader recognition that relationships and a sense of belonging are important dimensions of community life.

Connection Is a Year-Round Commitment

Veterans Day provides an important opportunity to recognize the service and sacrifices of military members and their families. Ceremonies, tributes, and public expressions of appreciation help preserve that recognition, but meaningful support also exists in the relationships and opportunities available throughout the rest of the year.

A community that welcomes veterans as neighbors, colleagues, volunteers, mentors, and friends recognizes something important: military service may be a

significant part of someone's identity, but it does not define every interest, ambition, or experience that follows. Creating opportunities for connection begins with recognizing individuals as they are, rather than making assumptions about what they need.

For Wounded Paw Project®, that philosophy helps explain why the organization is exploring a new role for rescued dogs within military communities. **Wagployment® On Your Six** is one developing expression of a larger commitment to service, companionship, and responsible animal advocacy.

Ultimately, meaningful connection is built through participation, understanding, and relationships that develop over time. Whether those relationships begin through shared military experiences, community involvement, friendship, or a mutual affection for dogs, they remind us that belonging is not limited to any one uniform, profession, or chapter of life.

Elvis- Rescued 2022

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WOULD NEVER RECOVER
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HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP AWARENESS WEEK

NOVEMBER 8-14, 2026

The Other End of the Leash

Our dogs know the little details of our lives: the sound of our keys, the opening of the treat cupboard, and the familiar rhythm of our daily routines. Over time, these moments become part of a shared language built on companionship and trust.

Human–Animal Relationship Awareness Week reminds us that this connection works both ways.

While we often celebrate the happiness dogs bring into our lives, an equally important question deserves our attention: How do we make their lives better?

Sadie- Rescued 2016

A meaningful relationship is not measured simply by a dog's loyalty or affection, but by how safe, comfortable, and understood that dog feels in our care.

LEARNING TO LISTEN WITHOUT WORDS

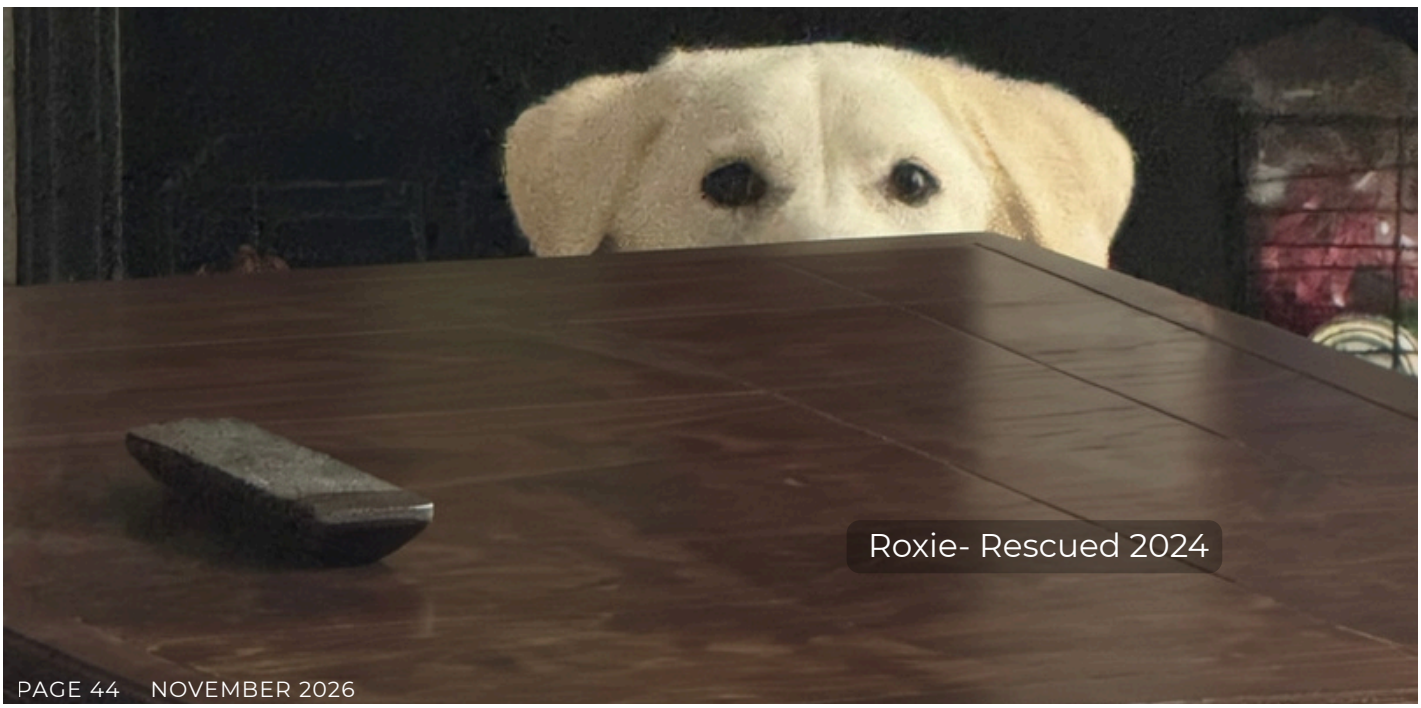
Dogs communicate through posture, movement, facial expressions, and behavior. A relaxed body and voluntary approach may signal comfort, while stiffness, turning away, or retreating can indicate uncertainty or a need for space.

Understanding these signals helps us respond with greater patience. A dog who moves away from a visitor is not necessarily being unfriendly. The dog may simply need more time.

Respecting those choices is an important part of building trust. Rather than expecting dogs to tolerate every interaction, we can allow them to approach new people and experiences at a pace that feels comfortable.

TRUST IS BUILT IN EVERYDAY MOMENTS

Strong relationships rarely develop through grand gestures.


Roxie- Rescued 2024

Lola - Rescued 2023

They grow through consistent care, predictable routines, and positive shared experiences.

A leisurely walk with time to sniff, a favorite game, or a quiet afternoon together can strengthen the connection between people and dogs. Reward-based training also helps establish clear communication while encouraging confidence and cooperation.

Just as importantly, dogs need opportunities to rest, explore, and make appropriate choices. Every dog has individual preferences, and learning to recognize them is part of responsible ownership.

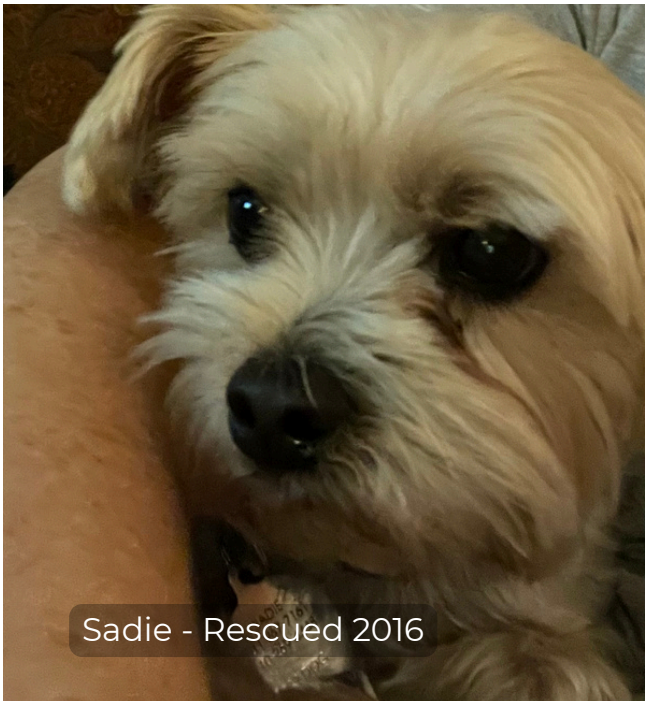
Sometimes the most meaningful thing we can offer our dogs is not another activity, but the reassurance that their needs will be respected.

A BOND WORTH PROTECTING

For rescued dogs, a second chance represents more than finding a new home. It offers the opportunity to experience dependable care, patience, and relationships built on trust.

Some dogs adjust quickly to unfamiliar situations, while others need additional time and understanding. Age, health, temperament, and previous experiences can influence those differences. A compassionate approach recognizes that progress does not look the same for every dog.

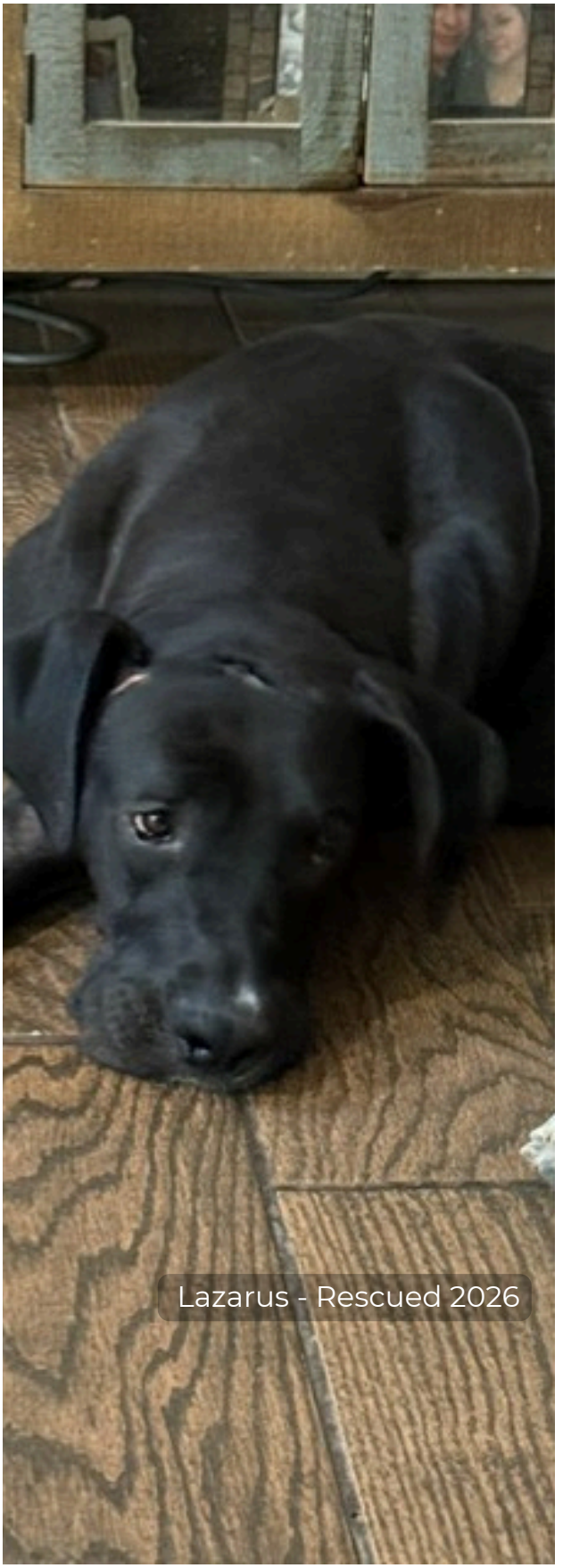
At Wounded Paw Project®, this understanding reflects a responsibility that extends beyond rescue itself. Giving dogs a second chance means considering their


Sadie - Rescued 2016

their individual needs and creating opportunities for lives filled with safety, dignity, and appropriate companionship.

As we recognize Human–Animal Relationship Awareness Week, we are reminded that the strongest bonds are built through mutual understanding. Our dogs offer us companionship in countless everyday moments. In return, we owe them the patience to listen, the willingness to learn, and the commitment to protect their well-being throughout their lives.

Be The Voice For The Voiceless® begins with listening.


Lazarus - Rescued 2026

BE PART OF SOMETHING BIG

WOUNDED PAW PROJECT

BE THE VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS®

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SCAN TO SIGN UP!

WHY JOIN THE PACK?

THE PAW® MAGAZINE
Monthly inspiration, rescued dog stories, tips, and updates.

MAKE AN IMPACT
See how your support helps rescue, heal, and give dogs a Second Tail in Life®.

STAY CONNECTED
Be the first to hear about events, volunteer opportunities, and ways to help.

CELEBRATE THE PACK
Heartwarming stories, program highlights, and happy tails from our community.

VETERAN FOCUSED
Supporting veterans and their healing companions every step of the way.

PROTECT. ADVOCATE. WAGPLOYMENT®. WE CHANGE LIVES.

Together, we give them a Second Tail in Life®.

JOIN US. FOLLOW US. BE THE VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS®
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WWW.WPP.DOG

This is what a second chance looks like.

The ride that changes everything.

Kane didn't always know what freedom felt like.
He came to Wounded Paw Project from Washington, D.C.,
having survived a life no dog should know.
Today, what you see in the mirror isn't his past-it's his future.
Vehicle donations help make journeys like this possible.
They support rescue, rehabilitation, and the road forward
for dogs like Kane - and the people who walk beside them.
Turn your vehicle into a second chance.
woundedpawproject.org/vehicle-donations

From shelter to riding shotgun.