

COURAGEOUS K9





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Funded by the Government of Canada | Canada

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Message from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Courageous K9 2024 Magazine.

This is our sixth magazine. 2023 proved to be a really productive year for our charity.

Courageous Companions completed the following in 2023:

- 10 new trained service dogs with new handlers of which 3 were emergency replacements due to age or illness
- Graduated 14 new Owner Trainers
- Graduated 2 new Facility Dogs

In April of this year Courageous Companions received formal accreditation from the Canadian Accreditation Council of Canada making our organization one of only two Canadian accredited service dogs providers in Canada.

Courageous Companions has been a charity since 2016 with its sole mission to provide service dogs to veterans and first responders. A service dog can cost anywhere from \$20,000-\$30,000 depending on the type of disability the person has and their location. Training can take up to one year and often travel is required for training and testing. Donations are critical to the placement of our service dog teams.

Courageous Companions prides itself on minimizing its administrative costs to ensure approximately 90% of all its funding goes towards placing dogs with injured Canadian Veterans or First Responders. I would like to personally thank all those who participated in fundraising efforts to make 2023 a very successful year for our organization.



John Dugas (K9 Bailey)
Chairman
Courageous Companions



Dog Trainer Spotlight – Tracy Boldt

Meet Tracy Boldt, the owner, and head trainer for Intellectual K9 and a dedicated trainer for Courageous Companions and Holdfast K9.

Tracy Boldt is originally from Abbotsford, B.C., where she grew up in a family that had a lot of animals, especially dogs. From early childhood, she always had a natural ability to connect with animals and a gift for training them. Originally, Tracy did not set out to train dogs primarily, but rather pursued work with teenagers and young adults with developmental and cognitive disabilities through social services work. Throughout the twenty years Tracy worked with youth and young adults, she found that so many of the individuals also had trauma, mental illnesses and PTSD, so she frequently combined her well trained dogs into her work by providing therapy for those who could benefit from it.

Tracy's first adventure into medical service dog training was out of necessity. She was advised, due to her own medical situation, that she would likely benefit from having a service dog. However, after doing some research, she couldn't find a service dog agency in the Edmonton area who were able to help her on a timeline or budget that worked for her. So, since a love for dogs and training was something, she was passionate about, she bought a puppy and started training him from the day he came home from the breeder. She discovered that training her service dog was challenging, but extremely rewarding. Sadly, her first service dog sustained an injury that forced her to start over with a different puppy. The process of training two service dogs back-to-back ignited an even greater passion for training and an understanding of how beneficial a properly trained service dog can be in the life of a person with PTSD. Before too long, she had other people coming to her to ask about training their dogs and to enquire about getting their own service dogs. It also inspired her to pursue formal training where she completed her diploma in Dog Obedience Training with Honors from Ashworth College.

One of the contacts that came her way was a firefighter with the Edmonton Fire Department. He had PTSD, had been advised to get a service dog and Tracy was recommended because of her work with her own dog. She was excited for the opportunity because she wanted to help others with PTSD and knew how hard it was to train alone. The Worker's Compensation Board wound up establishing a budget for service dog training and hired Tracy to be the trainer. This was a landmark project. Up until that point, there had never been a firefighter in Alberta on active duty with a medical service dog. Tracy was asked to be directly involved in the writing of the policies that paved the way for fire department members to have service dogs. After a year of training, K9 Chief became the first medical service dog ever to go to work at a City of Edmonton firehall.

After her involvement with the Edmonton Fire Department, Tracy met John Dugas with Courageous Companions. It didn't take long before it became apparent that both she and John shared similar philosophies of dog training and could work very well together. Although she has never personally served in the military, Tracy's past work with social services, her experience with PTSD, her deep respect for military personnel and first responders had created a deeper desire to do more. So, when the opportunity to volunteer as a trainer with Courageous Companions came her way, she jumped in wholeheartedly. For the past three years she has worked alongside John Dugas by helping teach the Sunday morning service dog class, she also started an in-depth Thursday evening training class and has helped expand the local training group. She helps with assessments; she meets one on one with members and their dogs to fine tune the aspects of training that are specific to that member and their dog. Tracy also jumps in where and when she can to help with other areas of the Courageous Companions Charity to see it grow and succeed.

Tracy's love for our active military, retired veterans and first responders runs deep. She desires to continue to grow in her dog training knowledge and experience and plans to work on finishing her practicum with MSAR Service Dogs. She wants to use her past work experience, acquired skills, and on-going training to help the brave men and women who have served our country and communities find their way back to hope and healing.



Steve Dawe (Veteran) and K9 Boomer



My name is Stephen Dawe, and I am a retired Canadian Armed Forces veteran. I retired as a Warrant Officer in 2016 after 20 years of service as a Combat Engineer. During my service I completed two tours to the former Yugoslavia, and two tours to Afghanistan along with several domestic deployments for disaster relief during Red River Floods, Quebec Ice storm, and British Columbia forest fires. As a Combat Engineer, I specialized in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD).

While serving, I was diagnosed with PTSD and underwent years of treatment before being medically released, ending my career much earlier than planned. Following release from the Canadian Armed Forces, I completed my Bachelor of Commerce with a major in accounting before starting a new career as a legislative auditor. I then completed the requirements to become a chartered professional accountant, attaining the designation in 2020. To this day I continue to work as a legislative auditor project manager.

While still serving, I experienced significant complications from PTSD, which ultimately impacted my ability to function in many capacities. Five years of therapy helped get me back on track, but progress was limited. I was still isolating from many of my past friendships and avoided many social events as a result. Through a referral from friends, I found Courageous Companions and started training as a handler while waiting to be paired with a dog. In the last year, I have worked with a couple of dogs in training until being paired with K9 Boomer.

Since being paired with K9 Boomer, my situation has really turned around. I now work full time back at the office and have even started to venture out into the community accompanied only by K9 Boomer. The greatest benefit has been in how K9 Boomer is able to sense my increased stress levels and anxiety and interjects early enough to prevent full blown flashbacks and panic attacks. I attribute the success of working with K9 Boomer to the amazing training group in the Edmonton area. The group members are very understanding and non-judgemental as they have all gone through a similar experience. The welcoming nature of everyone has made this experience as stress free as possible for me.



Courageous Companions Inc.

NOTICE OF ACCREDITATION

After years of hard work, Courageous Companions is pleased to announce that effective April 22, 2023, we have received formal accreditation by the “Canadian Accreditation Council” (CAC) in Governance, Management and Training. This accreditation is based on the Canadian Accreditation Council of Human Services (CAC) 2019 Standards and is recognized internationally. CAC is a Canadian, Independent third party, accreditation body, currently, accrediting over 600 Canadian organizations with a waiting list of over 600 organizations in process.

WHO IS CAC

The Canadian Accreditation Council (CAC) is a non-profit organization that has itself been accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua) through the ISQua External Evaluation Association, the leading international health care evaluation program. We are knowledgeable, experienced, and truly committed to helping your organization succeed. With over 40 years of experience, CAC is proud to serve a broad range of health and human service programs throughout Canada. It is important to note that all CAC standards are reviewed and updated every 4 years.

NATIONAL EXPANSION AND ISQUA ACCREDITATION

CAC has entered onto the national stage by providing accreditation to organizations in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. During that period, CAC also expanded their services to include accreditation of health programs, adult programs, and the Calgary Homeless Foundation. In 2012 and 2013 CAC gained their first ISQua accreditations for their standards and their organization, respectively. Since that point, CAC has continued forward on an upwards trajectory, growing and expanding our services to continue to provide the best standards and processes to all organizations they accredit.

ACCREDITATION MISINFORMATION

There is much misinformation circulating in the service dog industry around accreditation which is further complicated by legislation outlining the requirement to obtain a service dog from certain accredited organizations. If you are thinking of going with an organization that states, they are accredited you should ask them to provide proof of their accreditation as well as ask for verification that the organization that accredited them is in fact themselves accredited. It is important to note that several organizations are being accredited by bodies that are self-accrediting and do not follow the stringent accreditation process administered by the Canadian Accreditation Council.

The work Courageous Companions does with its program participants requires the building of relationships, and good relationships are built on trust. Being an accredited organization means being a trusted organization – our program participants (persons served) can be confident that we are now an authority in the Service Dog Industry and Courageous Companions is working to the highest industry standards.

ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The Courageous Companions Accreditation process provided a complete evaluation of our charity and the service dog programs we deliver. Evaluations were conducted at three core levels to ensure congruency in the service delivery model:

1. GOVERNANCE

The accreditation process at this level ensures:

- A strong policy base to define and direct practices, as well as define and direct the operations of the organization.
- Clarity of leadership through the definition of roles and responsibilities.
- The presence of an established practice model.
- The presence of an ethical framework within which the organization operates.
- Acceptable accounting practices in financial management.
- The existence of organizational planning and risk management
- Effective quality improvement planning strategies.
- The existence of systems and structures to support and monitor the effectiveness of services within timelines.

2. PRACTICE

The accreditation process at this level will ensure:

- The implementation of practices defined in policies in the service delivery model.
- Case management is complete and reflective of services provided.
- The evidence-based nature of practice.
- The reflection of evidence-based practices is reflected in the experiences of the persons served.
- Persons served feel safe, with a positive sense of well-being, inclusion, accommodation for uniqueness, and are moving towards goal attainment.
- Congruency at all levels of service delivery.
- Cultures, rights, and the diversity of persons served are considered in the services provided.

3. OUTCOMES

The accreditation process at this level will ensure:

- Quality planning is in place to support the development of the program and services.
- Systems are in place to collect, aggregate, analyze, and report outcome data.
- Outcome reports presented are congruent with the observations and experiences reported by the person served and organization staff.
- Aggregated data is used in policy and program development.
- Services are measured for efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the goals established for the organization and programs.

Canadian Accreditation Council of Human Services

Having met the 2019 Edition of Standards,

Accreditation is granted to

Courageous Companions Inc.
for their program

Courageous Companions Inc.
(Training Program)

Granted on the 22nd of April, 2023



Canadian Accreditation Council of Human Services

Having met the 2019 Edition of Standards,

Governance and Management Accreditation is granted to

Courageous Companions Inc.

Granted on the 22nd of April, 2023



Joel Mousseau (Veteran) and K9-Luna



I joined the Canadian Military in 2001. I completed 2 combat tours to Afghanistan in 2006 and 2008. I was officially diagnosed with PTSD in 2008. I was medically released from the military in March of 2015.

K9 Luna came into my life in 2020 and began training with Courageous Companions in Dec 2021. After a year of training in the Courageous Companions owner trained program, we were officially certified in May of 2022.

K9 Luna is critical to mitigating my disability and helps me regulate during PTSD Triggers. One way of doing this is by providing spatial management in public by keeping a barrier between the public and myself. When I would take her to a store, she would put distance between myself and others by lying down, and without even knowing why she was doing that she was placing space between myself and strangers. I didn't think much about it at the time but when I got home, I googled what PTSD service dogs do. I started going down the various task lists online. It was there I discovered that she was already doing several of the medical tasks associated with a PTSD Service Dog. K9-Luna was never supposed to be a service dog, she was just going to be a family pet. Within three weeks of having this puppy at home she became very intuitive when I was having a bad day. At a very young age of approx. 7 months, she began waking me up during my night terrors and still does so to this day.

When I would have a panic attack, random breakdowns and hard cries, regardless of where I was K9-Luna would come place herself at my feet and nudge her face between my hands to make eye contact with me and with her ever goofy smile too just look at me with the "it's all going to be ok, I'm here with you right now" eyes. I am eternally grateful for my service dog K9-Luna as other brothers and sisters have fallen through the cracks of the grasp of PTSD.

Today K9-Luna is a tool that I use for my combat related PTSD. She keeps me calm and focused on the task at hand and her well-being. When things aren't great for me and we are out and about, she will begin to misbehave. As a medical task this is called directed disobedience. It isn't that she is being a bad service dog, her disruptive behavior is so that I must focus more attention on her and leave that environment. I cannot think of a time when she was disruptive for no reason. If she is being disruptive, it is her way of telling me that I am about to have a panic attack, possibly a full emotional breakdown without even knowing it. She is very intuitive to my mental health and well-being.

Jean Asselin (Veteran) and K9 Remy



I was brought up in Quebec, completed high school and joined the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) at 17 years of age. I was looking for an adventure. I spent 33 years in the CAF as a Combat Engineer and worked in both the east and west coasts with both 1 and 5 Combat Engineer Regiments (1 CER and 5 CER), the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering (CFSME), the Canadian Maneuver Training Center (CMTC), 1 Engineer Support Unit (1 ESU), 1 Canadian Division (1 Cdn Div) and various other units. I deployed 5 times overseas and to several aid to civil power operations. I was stationed in Kuwait/ Iraq and completed 3 tours in Afghanistan. I released from the CAF in 2016 due to my battle injuries, mainly PTSD. I completed a long journey through my rehabilitation program and treatments for my trauma. My civilian life was ok but I was still struggling. I felt I needed some help to maintain focus during daily tasks and to enjoy life post retirement. I had a very difficult time with my nightmares and hyper vigilance in public. A Sapper friend introduced me to a blog call "the Sapper Net " where I met John Dugas, a fellow Sapper and his charity, Courageous Companions. We talked for a while and decided to go ahead with the process of getting a service dog. After a year and half of training I was required to travel to Winnipeg to train with George Leanord and his staff at MSAR Service Dogs. I was introduced to K9 Rémy, a big happy parti poodle. We clicked right away, and the bonding went well. Right away, I sensed a connection and how calmly he took care of me when I was anxious. K9 Remy and myself have only been together a short time but he has already made a massive improvement in my life mitigating my disability and helping start my journey integrating back into society.



The Canadian Foundation for Animal Assisted Support Services

WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO, & WHY WE DO IT

The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CF4AASS) is an impartial national registered charity promoting the availability, credibility, and sustainability of excellence in Animal-Assisted Human Services (AAHS). The charity's programs and activities encompass but are not limited to stakeholder engagement, special events, advocacy, outreach and education, research, and voluntary co-creation of AAHS Industry Sector Standards. We aim to cultivate unity in diversity among multiple stakeholders, disciplines, and sectors to enhance public confidence, public safety, quality, Canadians' well-being, and the health and welfare of Human Services Assistance Animals (HSAAs) by promoting:

“One Health for People, Pets, and Partners™.”

Serving Canadians & Promoting the Health & Welfare of Human Services Assistance Animals since 1998!

Canada's First Voluntary National Standard of Canada (NSC) for Animal-Assisted Human Services

Animal-Assisted Human Services (AAHS), commonly referred to as Animal-Assisted Services, encompasses a variety of multi- and interdisciplinary practices, and Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAI) that include Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA), Animal-Assisted Learning (AAL), and Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) which support humans while safeguarding the welfare of the Human Service Assistance Animals (HSAA). AAHS is a self-regulated subcategory within Canada's human services industry, all-encompassing sector, and growing marketplace. This NSC outlines the requirements for developing a management system for an Animal-Assisted Human Service Provider (AAHSP).

It aims to:

- increase transparency and accountability of the delivery of AAHS;
- establish essential requirements and best practices for AAHS administration and governance; and
- promote a voluntary, third-party AAHS conformity assessment program to cultivate a credibility chain

Please visit our website for more detailed information <https://www.cf4aass.ca/>

Who We Are

Courageous Companions is a non-profit charitable organization which provides military service men and women, veterans, and first responders diagnosed with an operational stress injury to be trained with a service dog. These dogs minimize the individual's functional limitations resulting from their injury. Courageous Companions is volunteer run and governed by a board of directors, most of whom have ties to the Canadian Armed Forces or First Responder field.

Each Service Dog undertakes specialized training to provide for the needs of the individual for whom they are being trained. The two are then trained together to become a service dog team. Service dogs are an additional treatment option to psychiatric and social support. The dogs have been shown to have a calming effect on PTSD sufferers. Among other benefits or tasks, a service dog can provide the following:

- psychiatric support;
- interruptive behavior;
- deliberate disobedience to redirect the clients' behavior, then tactile stimulation to disrupt emotional overload;
- wakening the client from nightmares;
- deep pressure for a calming effect;
- crowd control and panic prevention in public;
- arousal from fear paralysis or a disassociation spell;
- prevention or combating of emotional overload;
- assisting a client to leave an area by finding an exit;
- home sweep checks;
- ability to warn the client of hazards they may not be aware of;
- allowing the client to feel calm enabling personal space expansion.

Veterans with additional disabilities can be helped by dogs trained to do the following:

- detect seizures, high blood pressure, diabetes etc.;
- compensate for mobility issues i.e. prosthetic limbs, balance or bracing;
- assistive tasks, including but not limited to:
- transition from chair to bed;
- balance to retrieve objects;
- helping a person to rise or steady themselves;
- backpacking medical supplies & information speech impairment tasks;
- alerting their partner to the cry of someone in distress;
- alerting partner to a ringing doorbell;
- alerting partner to a smoke alarm & assisting them to the exit;
- harness work for an ambulatory partner.

Courageous Companions provides all the funding related to acquisition, training, certification, equipment and transportation of the dog and person team.

Courageous Companions depends on sponsorship and donations to continue matching service dogs with Veterans and First Responders. The average cost of a service dog is between \$20,000-\$25,000 which includes veterinarian costs, training, certifying and maintaining the certification. The initial training takes approximately two years to complete. Participants who are paired with a service dog are responsible for veterinary care and food costs

As of 2020 Courageous Companions has provided over a 212 trained service dogs to service men and women, veterans, and first responders in need. These service dogs have helped to decrease depression, need for medication, aggression and suicidal thoughts, and increase confidence, sense of belonging, patience, and emotional stability.

All donations go directly to improving the individual's quality of life by providing them with specially trained service dogs, specifically chosen to help reduce the effects of post-traumatic stress injury.



MSAR



MSAR is the certifying authority for Courageous Companions. Upon request, MSAR trains dogs for Courageous Companions and then provides the training and guidance for service dog teams. As the trainer and certifying authority, MSAR addresses the potential conflict by having the training for its teams separated from all certification activities; that is, those involved in the certification of a specific team have not been involved with either the person with a disability, nor the partner Service Dog.

MSAR was started by George Leonard in partnership with Aboriginal elders, First Nation leadership, and dedicated volunteers to address the growing concern of missing Aboriginal persons. The Association is a non-governmental organization that is partnered with a registered charity in good standing. MSAR is the only agency directed by Aboriginal elders, advisors, and First Nation leadership. For the past 20 years, MSAR has been working on the research, development, and implementation of service dogs in all capacities—autism, dementia, PTSD, seizure dogs, therapy, bipolar, depression (and forms of), disability, and assistance. This practice has focused on the mental health service dogs, with over 500 dogs trained in over 200,000 hours of operational time. The program started with the Elite Therapy Dog program and expanded to service-dog status due to its dramatic positive results.

MSAR started the Courageous Companions program to start working specifically with PTSD soldiers after one of its members, a former Canadian Forces member, stepped forward and asked for assistance from the Association.

This innovative practice is provided by volunteer dog trainers and is not funded by Veterans Affairs Canada, Department of National Defense, or the Canadian Legion, although these bodies do endorse the program. Participants who are paired with a service dog are responsible for veterinary care and food costs.

MSAR started the first and largest service dog program for veterans and first responders as featured on W5 - K9 Comrades the most viewed show in W5 - CTV history, as well as Animal Planet (Collar of Duty), Canada Am, Good Morning America, Ice Road Truckers and all major news outlets broadcasting in Canada (including CNN).

MSAR Elite Service Dog program trains world class service dogs for any disability and even some one of a kind service dogs. MSAR was the first organization to have PTSD service dogs. And their founder was the first, first responder in Canada with a PTSD service dog. MSAR was the first service dog agency to advocate and push for a National Service Dog Standard. MSAR also has multiple dogs nominated and inducted into the Purina Animal Hall of Fame - K9 Stinky would be the best example as she was honored for saving 7 veterans lives suffering with PTSD.



MSAR Certified Master Dog Trainer George Leonard and his service dog K9 Bennie

Our Standards for Service Dog Training

All our service dogs are trained to MSAR Standards <http://courageouscompanions.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/Training-and-Certification-Standard.pdf> which has been recognized by the Canadian Armed Forces in DAOD 2005-0, Service Dogs and DAOD 2005-1, Service Dogs Access to Defense Establishments.

MSAR's standard was framed by a Standards Specialist in Ottawa who is the retired Director of Standards, Standards Council of Canada (SCC). The standard was prepared by eight members of a working group following public consultation.

The objectives of the MSAR standard are:

- Indicate the pre-requisites to be recognized as a team (that the person has a disability, and the service dog has special abilities [achieved through training] to help the person mitigate their challenges);
- Ensure the team is safe in public, and safe to the public;
- Ensure the ability of the team to function under normal conditions as well as unusual circumstances;
- Provide guidance to regulators on the factors to be considered and regulated; Promote the well-being of the service dog as well as the human-animal bond;
- give background (rationale) for the requirements provided;
- Be useful to trainers as a baseline to be achieved when training dogs as well as persons with a disability;
- Be useful as the basis for certification (of the team).

Our standard is composed of five sections covering various aspects of Persons with a Disability Teamed with a Service Dog; the five sections cover:

- Section 1 - General Requirements
- Section 2 - Performance in Public
- Section 3 - Performance (Enhanced)
- Section 4 - Requirements for Response to and Detection of Disability Related Incidents
- Section 5 - Requirements for the Care of the Service Dog

The MSAR standard was drafted in accordance with the rules of the International Organization for Standardization and the International Electrotechnical Commission, ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2, Rules for the structure and drafting of International Standards. It is written to present performance requirements to the greatest extent possible.

The MSAR Standard are public documents to ensure public safety when it comes to training and testing service dogs.

Our certification testing does not simply test obedience but ensures the dog will work for the handler during moments of duress, activation, etc., something most service dog testing with other organizations does not validate.

Our testing ranges between three and five days depending on the level of testing the team is doing and follows a minimum of one year of training together as a team. The dog also cannot be tested until it reaches a minimum of two years of age. Our certification test encompasses all aspect of assessment (obedience, task assessment, public access, etc. to ensure they are safe to operate in public.

Our testing is done over 3-5 days and in our professional opinion most other organizations comes no where near our assessment standard to effectively certify a dog and handler in the time frame it is administered.

Our test is based on feedback from the Department of National Defence in 2010 who wanted absolute assurance the team would be safe to the public while operating as a service dog team, knowing the condition of their PTSD disability and the specialized training soldiers undergo which could be result in a dangerous encounter when denied access or confronted.

Depending on the type of disability, triggers and activation associated with some of our program participants, Courageous Companions also conducts an off-leash certification.

- This certification requirement was verified after data analysis from an International PTSD Service Dog Study that MSAR Service Dogs was involved in.
- This study was done in 14 countries using 500 veteran and first responder service dog teams.
- Study data was reviewed by medical professionals who determined this type of certification is required in some circumstances.
- This certification test is five days long and done completely off leash where the dog must always remain within 6 feet of the handler throughout the test.

Public Education Program

The Courageous Companions website offers a free online sensitivity and awareness course for businesses in the hospitality, transportation and rail sectors to educate their staff on invisible disabilities. The Courageous Companions website also offers free public handouts for education purposes.

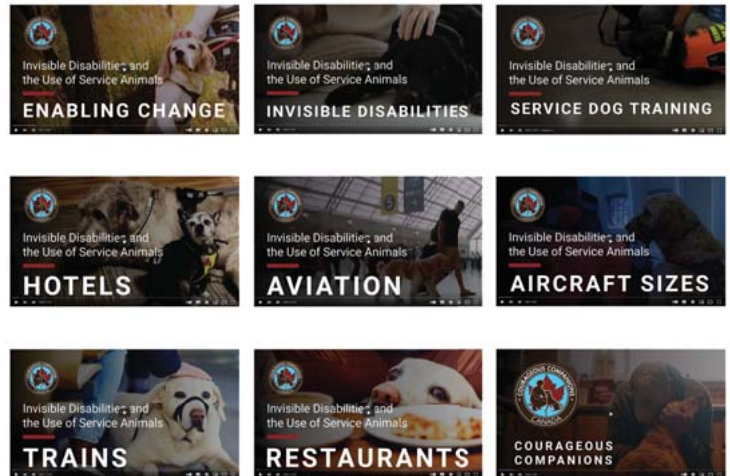
FREE DOWNLOADABLE HANDOUTS

- Service Dogs DO's and DON'Ts
- Travelling with a service animal
- How can I make my place of business a positive experience for a person with an invisible disability?
- Invisible Disabilities are Real.
- Can I stop a Service Dog from Coming into my Business?
- How do I know if a service dog or service animal is real?
- Service Dogs Come in All Shapes & Sizes.



Bonita Dykens (Veteran)
and K9 Nika

INFORMATIONAL VIDEOS DETAILING INVISIBLE DISABILITIES AND THE USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS IN CERTAIN CONTEXTS.



How does a Service Dog help “PTSD”?

There are a few different methods to help those who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder including: medication, counselling, and support groups. Though these methods can help they may not always help the person deal with day to day activities such as going to the store or going for a walk down the street, this is where a Service Dog can come into play.

A service dog trained for “PTSD” can do a multitude of helpful tasks to help a person get through their everyday life including, but not limited to:

- Grounding, distracting, or guiding their handler in an event such as dissociation or panic
- Provide tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
- Interrupting potential disruptive behavior toward self or others
- Find objects for handler
- Alert to oncoming panic
- Blocking handler in public when people are too close
- Wake handler during a night terror and keeping handler calm upon awakening

While these are only a few tasks that can be trained to help a person with “PTSD” there are also many other ways to help, such as getting the handler out of the house or simply providing companionship. Sometimes all it takes is knowing that someone has your back at all times to really start the healing process.

Courageous Companions Values

• Integrity

It is crucial that Courageous Companions remains beyond reproach in the service dog sector. Courageous Companions conducts business in a way that is honest, transparent, and ethical.

• Empowerment

Courageous Companions will endeavor to empower its program participants to live a better life by utilizing a fully trained service dog to assist them in daily living by mitigating their disability.

• Excellence

Courageous Companions will utilize the most up to date service dog training standards based on the "International Service Dog Study" and input from our certifying service dog authority "MSAR Service Dogs".

• Good Stewardship

Courageous Companions will strive to dedicate approximately 90% of all donations towards assessment, training and certification of all program service dogs. The remaining 10% will cover administrative costs to manage the organization. Every dollar spend must receive board approval in a formal motion. All administration costs will be disclosed annually in the Courageous Companions Annual Report in a transparent way to the community, which will help keep the organization accountable to this important value.

• Client Commitment

Courageous Companions will develop long-term relationships with program participants to make a positive difference in their lives. Courageous Companions will always provide high-quality training and services.

• Teamwork

Courageous Companions will work together to meet the needs of our program participants through a joint effort comprised of staff, volunteers, and supporters from the community. By training dogs and clients to work together as teams, we help forge bonds and skills that cannot be matched.

• Respect for People

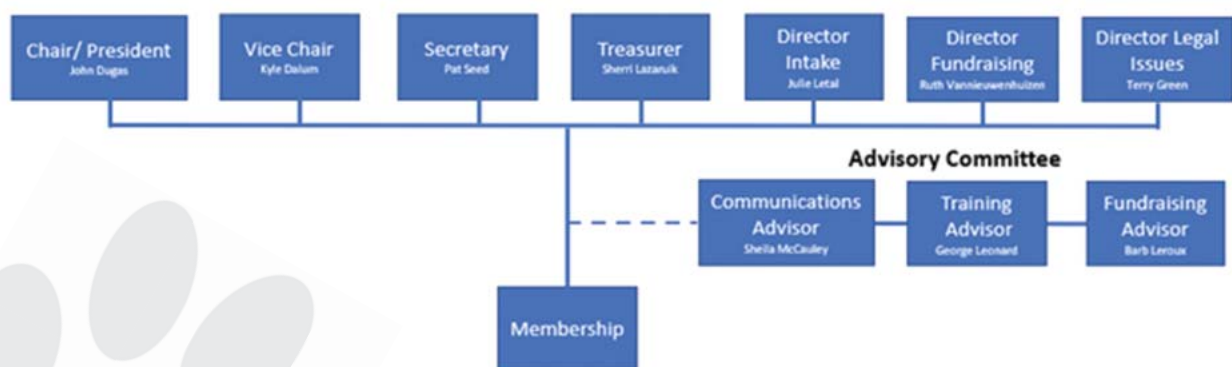
Courageous Companions will always treat everyone with dignity, care, and respect. We value differences in our employees, volunteers, program participants and the community. As Courageous Companions' primary client base are those impacted by disabilities, respect, empathy, and patience will be the forefront to developing trust.

• Respect for Animals

Courageous Companions believes in the safety of all its program dogs. A comprehensive and detailed approach will always be taken when managing the care and well-being of every one of our service dogs.



Courageous Companions Organizational Structure



Choosing a Service Dog Provider

INSURANCE / STANDARDS / CERTIFICATION / AFTER-CARE / SUPPORT (LEGAL, SCHOOL).

Choose the best organization that fits your needs, there has been a recent influx of service dog providers since MSAR spotlighted the need for veterans on W5 - Canine Comrades. Most are still in the beginning stages and have limited understanding of service dogs and especially PTSD. MSAR started and developed our PTSD service dog program from a study conducted from the turn of the century, modelled on our Therapy, Facility and Emotional support dogs. MSAR has a solid background and years of research and development of service dogs - so ask what experience they have and proof of this.

Ask if the company has liability insurance and how much, generally you are looking for at least \$2 million liability. It is not an easy process to get insurance for service dog providers and many are operating without insurance.

TALK TO THEIR CLIENTS - SEE THEIR DOGS.

We suggest that you go to their Facebook page and see what dogs they are promoting, many organizations only train a few dogs and some just purchase dogs and pass them along. See if they are promoting their dogs or stories from other people or organizations on the internet. Ask to see their dogs, talk to the people that have their dogs.

TRAINERS - CERTIFIED MASTER DOG TRAINER (CMDT).

What is their training system, their service dog standard? Who are their trainers and what is their background, do they have a trainer development course and require their trainers to be certified and insurance by their organization. What levels of service dog training do they have and what is required of you to become a certified service dog team. We recommend that you be skeptical if they offer you a dog already done, if there is limited training time and you are immediately certified. All our dogs are trained and placed with clients (times vary) from 1 year to 2 years of age and then the client must work and train with their dog for at least six months prior to challenging the certification test. Our tests take multiple days and really challenge the handler as a team to make sure the dog and handlers are working together to meet the needs of the disability and functioning in a safe public work environment.

LEVEL OF SERVICE DOG KNOWLEDGE.

Courageous Companions utilizes MSAR as its certifying authority and expertise encompassing service dogs and service

dog training. MSAR has extensive background in the development of service dogs and PTSD service dogs. MSAR was the first provider to deliver PTSD service dogs and worked extensively with the Winnipeg Foundation to build a PTSD training model starting the training of service and working dogs centered around military, first responders and the client base of civilians dedicated to the principle of providing highly skilled and effective Certified Service Dogs to those whose lives depend on them.

ARE THEY TRYING TO SELL YOU SOMETHING?

For anyone that has applied to Courageous Companions they know that the first thing we try to do is talk you out of getting a service dog. It is a big responsibility and we want to make sure that adequate thought has been put into getting a dog, many people are desperate and will try anything. We slow down the process for the safety of the person and the dog to confirm that a service dog is needed. We receive hundreds of phone calls and emails a month. Only a few turn into program participants and receive a service dog. Sometimes people just want to ask and see if it fits for them, because how many times do people go looking for a service dog.

An example would be a person with PTSD that wants no public interaction and wants to be a fly on the wall, this is virtually impossible because of the person having an invisible disability - some people think that they are the trainer and not the handler of the dog. So this person would have regular interaction and sometimes even challenged as to why do you need a service dog - you're not blind. Courageous Companions asks for a full family and medical team evaluation to confirm that this is what is best for all before getting service dog.

SUPPORT.

Discuss with the organization what kind of support that they offer for ongoing training and recertification. Do you have a point of contact that can be reached should an emergency arise, have questions regarding care of the dog, travelling, housing, or employer issues related to having a service dog. Is there legal support should you be refused access?

In conclusion, take your time and research (google) the organization to find the right one that meets your needs. Ask lots of questions, be skeptical and remember what a huge responsibility service dog ownership is.

Service Dog Harness

This is probably the most asked question....“Where did you get your harness, and how can I get one?”

The Courageous Companions harness is exclusive to our dogs and not available to the general public. Early on in the program government and military agencies from multiple countries asked MSAR to find an exclusive and adaptable dog harness that cannot be acquired by the public.

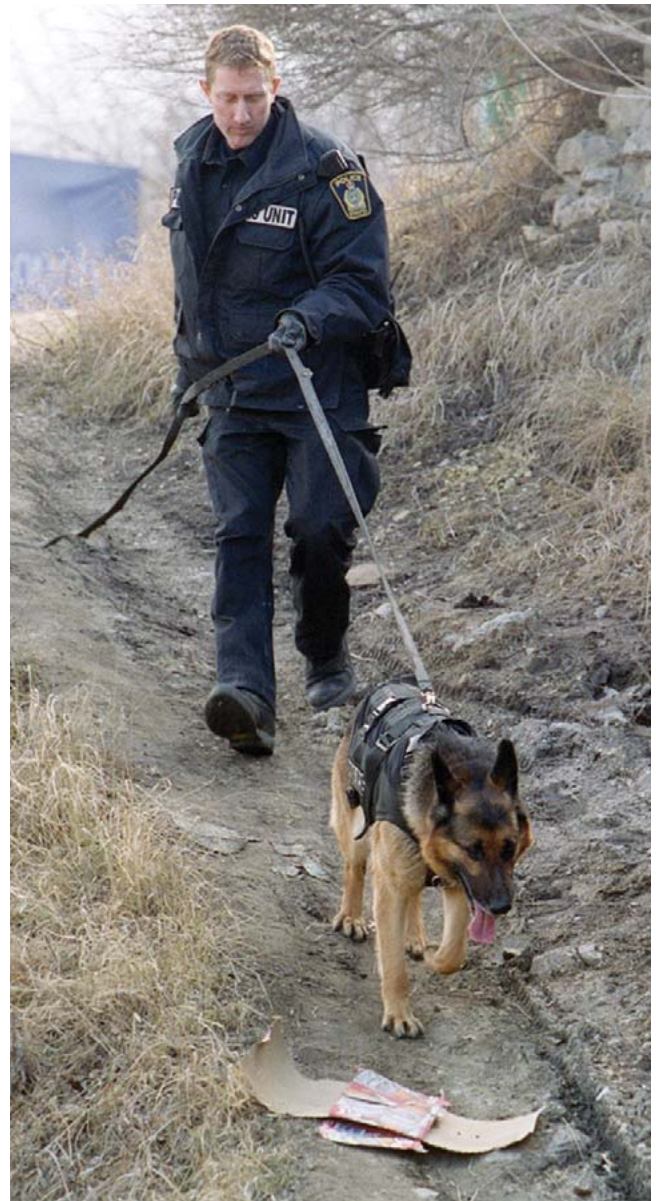
MSAR has a long history of working with K9 Storm through their working dogs and through this relationship Courageous Companions incorporated the use of K9 Storm as it Service Dog Harness ...



K9 Storm was founded in 1998 by former Winnipeg Police Canine Handler, Jim Slater, as a result of his work with his Police Service Dog, Olaf. What started as one man's need to protect his own police dog with a custom-fit ballistic vest, has turned into a mission to provide functional high-end dog gear to the world. K9 Storm Gear is currently being used by special forces teams, police agencies, and search & rescue groups in over 32 countries, and is proud to be the exclusive provider of Fully Certified Service Dog Harnesses to Courageous Companions.

Distinctly Canadian, every piece of K9 Storm Gear is made and manufactured in Winnipeg, MB. and comes with a lifetime warranty. If you have any questions about K9 Storm Gear, please contact them directly or stop by the factory and say hello!

#StormThroughAnything



Constable Jim Slater and K9 Olaf tracking a fleeing suspect in the first custom-fit K9 Storm Patrol Swat Vest.



Jim and his wife, Glori (VP of K9 Storm) giving an explanation of the K9 Storm Patrol Swat Vest to Winnipeg Mayor, Brian Bowman.



K9 Storm is proud to work closely with MSAR and Courageous Companions to provide equipment for their highly trained Elite Service K9s. Over the last 10 years, the K9 Storm Harness with MSAR stylings has become synonymous with trained service dogs throughout Canada.

Keeping the requests of the handlers and trainers in mind, in 2020, the K9 Storm Team began looking at a fresh design for this harness. We are excited to announce three major upgrades with this new look:

• **Adjustability**

The new MSAR Harness has easy adjustability to allow for greater success in sizing dogs so that their harnesses fit perfectly. Regardless of the dog’s weight fluctuation throughout the seasons, sizing is simply a breeze. This adjuster also centers the yoke so that it always remains balanced, regardless if the size is made tighter, or looser.

• **Identification**

Who doesn’t want more Velcro? With many MSAR members being retired veterans, it’s been noted that having the ability to display more patches would be a major bonus. Our new design allows for the accommodation of up to 10 standard size K9 Storm Patches on our large harness!

• **Pouches**

The new design features a hybrid composite nylon. This allows handlers the ability to attach several redesigned “Carry All” pouches to hold items such as phones, medication, or other necessary identifiers. These new pouches are designed in coordination with the new harness making it the perfect addition for the MSAR team.

K9 Storm is proud to offer these improvements and we look forward to seeing them rolled out on all new MSAR Certified Dogs.



Julie Letal - Owner of Kevlar Canine/Equine Health & Safety



I have been training service dogs for over a year. I instruct Canine and Equine First Aid and I instruct Equine Assisted Psychotherapy for First Responders, veterans and military. I am in Southern Alberta where I volunteer with the town of Claresholm Bylaw officer to assist with basic training of dogs in the Claresholm area. I have been a police officer for 20 years with the RCMP and have been diagnosed with an OSI. I have had Service Dog Chance for 4 years and she has changed my life in the way that I can now do things that I love to do. I thank Courageous Companions and MSAR every day for the freedom that Chance has given me and to get my life back. In order to give back I also sit on the Board of Directors for Courageous Companions.

Types of Support Dogs

The following are not considered service dogs and do not have the same access rights.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL - An emotional support animal (ESA) is a companion animal that does not have any specialized training, but provides comfort and support to a person with or without a disability. This type of dog does not have public access rights.

THERAPY DOG - Therapy dogs are personal pets who offer support and companionship to individuals or groups of individuals in long-term care facilities, hospitals, or even in schools. Many Therapy groups or facilities have their own therapy programs and acceptance is based on dog's temperament and the owner's ability to properly and safely handle their dog in a variety of situations. These dogs may or may not have training. This type of dog does not have public access rights, they are permitted at the assigned location.

FACILITY DOG - A specially trained dog that is working with a volunteer or professional. The work of a facility dog can include visitations or professional therapy in one or more locations. Public access is permitted only when the dog and handler, who is a trained volunteer or professional, is directly working with a client with a disability.

FAKE SERVICE DOGS - There are internet websites that offer registration to people for their "service dog". Unfortunately, people that are owner training or have a dog that may not qualify as a service dog (emotional support) purchase this gear and commence public access with their dog. Many without any formal training and assessment for the ability of the dog for public access or delivering on the tasks needed to be a service dog. The problem that arises is if something happens in public or to the public from one of these dogs; a legal case may be launched and then the problem will arise of the dog's training and if it is a real service dog. Most people and many agencies would not pass this type of audit and review. And for those that do not, they could be charged with having a fake service dog



MSAR K9 Stitch and Paige Noelck (Dog Trainer)

What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder -PTSD

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental illness. It often involves exposure to trauma from single events that involve death or the threat of death or serious injury. PTSD may also be linked to ongoing emotional trauma, such as abuse in a relationship. Something is traumatic when it is very frightening, overwhelming and causes a lot of distress. Trauma is often unexpected, and many people say that they felt powerless to stop or change the event. Traumatic events may include crimes, natural disasters, accidents, war or conflict, sexual violence or other threats to life or safety. It could be an event or situation that you experience yourself or something that happens to others, including loved ones. PTSD causes intrusive symptoms such as re-experiencing the traumatic event. Many people have vivid nightmares, flashbacks, or thoughts of the event that seem to come from nowhere. They often avoid things that remind them of the event—for example, someone who was hurt in a car crash might avoid driving. PTSD can make people feel very nervous or ‘on edge’ all the time. Many feel startled very easily, have a hard time concentrating, feel irritable, or have problems sleeping well. They may often feel like something terrible is about to happen, even when they are safe. Some people feel very numb and detached. They may feel like things around them aren’t real, feel disconnected from their body or thoughts, or have a hard time feeling emotions. People also experience a change in their thoughts and mood related to the traumatic event. For some people, alcohol or other drugs can be a way to cope with PTSD. (Source: Canadian Mental Health Association)

PTSD is marked by clear biological changes as well as psychological symptoms. PTSD is complicated by the fact that people with PTSD often may develop additional disorders such as depression, substance abuse, problems of memory and cognition, and other problems of physical and mental health. The disorder is also associated with impairment of the person’s ability to function in social or family life, including occupational instability, marital problems and divorces, family discord, and difficulties in parenting.

Courageous Companions Director Julie Letal (RCMP) and K9 Chance



Training

The initial training takes approximately two years to complete and is broken into four levels.

LEVEL 1 – DOG AND TRAINER

- Level 1 is where the dog is acquired and introduced to its trainer. For the next 8-12 months, the dog lives with its trainer in a family setting, becoming familiar with residential pets and a family lifestyle. Training is slowly introduced based on the dogs age. If the dog is a puppy, training does not normally start until six months of age. Foundation training begins with basic obedience;
 - Temperament testing.
 - Potty training.
 - Crate training.
 - Sit, stay, down, heel.
- As the dog matures the obedience training becomes more advanced and the puppy mental ability is challenged through a regulated training cycle by being exposed to increasingly more public settings.
 - Loading and unloading from a vehicle.
 - Sit, stay, down with distractions (dogs, food, etc).
 - Reaction to distracting sounds, cats, dogs, etc
 - Interaction with strangers
 - Heeling on and off leash.
 - Moving through doors, elevators, etc
- If there are any specific disability requirements the dog must learn for its future handler, task specific training begins at this level. During this level, the dog is normally spayed or neutered.

LEVEL 2 – PUBLIC ACCESS TESTING, HANDLER AND DOG TRAINING

- Level 2 is where the dog is paired with its handler and they undergo a Public Access Test (PAT) which is required to work in public spaces. The Service Dog team then undergoes five days of specific training where they learn to function as a team in a public setting. Upon completion of the Public Access Test and the five days of training they formally become a Service Dog Team in Training. Training done at this level includes, but is not limited to;
 - Loading and unloading from a vehicle.
 - Public access training (shopping, gym, transit).
 - Recall through areas with distractions, groups of

people, past dogs with handlers.

- Down/ stay with stationary and moving distractions.
- Functioning with distractions (strangers, dogs, children, etc).
- They then go home and are expected to continue to bond and train for an additional 8-12 months, to prepare for certification testing. Depending on their location the Service Dog Team in Training is provided guidance from MSAR via telephone or visits. Some locations have Peer Groups that train weekly and new teams can train with these groups. Training over the next year focuses not only on obedience, but bonding as well.

LEVEL 3 – HANDLER AND DOG CERTIFICATION

- Level 3 is where the service dog team completes the final test for full certification. This process takes several days and a score of 90% or greater is required to pass. During this phase, the dog must be at least 2 years of age (neutered / spayed) and the team must have worked at Level 2 for a minimum of 6 months.

LEVEL 4 – RECERTIFICATION

- All teams must complete recertification minimum every 3 years. As people's disabilities may have changed the need and tasks of the dog it may require upgrading or fine tuning.



MSAR Certified Master Dog Trainer shares a moment with K9 Earl.

Owner-Trainer Service Dog Program

Courageous Companions' signature service is a training program where certified dog trainers help identify, select, train and partner a suitable K9 with a Handler. Another method to enter the service dog program is where individuals train their own K9 (called Owner-Trainers). The following information is meant to clarify and outline our policy for Owner-Trainers, and to provide information for individuals who may be considering applying to our programs under the Owner-Trainer path.

It is very important for any person thinking about the Owner-Trainer path to understand that this is a very challenging undertaking. Over their decades of operations, MSAR (the CCI certifying body) has found the general failure rate of the owner-trained teams' that are evaluated by MSAR is 80 percent. Comparatively speaking, teams that work with us through our signature service consistently achieve full certification.

Seeing how much time, money and effort was being spent on unsuccessful teams, we wanted to know why. Our certifying body conducted an internal audit, so we could discover why the failure rate is so high. There were many reasons why there is only about a 20% success rate for Owner-Trainer teams.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Consider in the general population, people have difficulties obedience training their dogs themselves and often go to obedience schools. This level of training is much lower than the standards expected of service dogs to operate in the public. Some people that have PTSD, anxiety or depression are unable to deal with the stresses of selecting, socializing, and training a dog in various settings. Canines innately detect this negative energy, which results in unstable dogs.

DUAL-ROLE CHALLENGES

A certified service dog must be able to undertake a minimum of 3 tasks to mitigate the disability of their handler. Owner-Trainers have found it very difficult to train their K9 to respond to their conditions or symptoms as the training requires the individual to be actively experiencing the condition. For example, some participants with PTSD have their K9 trained for nightmare interruption; a skill

that is impossible to owner-train. The same is true for anxiety interruption, waking from medication induced sleep conditions, and many others K9 skills that are very helpful to a handler, but cannot be properly trained into the K9 by Owner-Trainers without a lot of help by a knowledgeable trainer.

TASK OVERLOAD

In order to imprint tasks, use treat training methods, and to know when to dole out affection in order to reinforce the proper and positive behaviours assistance is usually needed to foster learning and a safe environment. This is critical to producing stable and receptive working dogs. Further, working with end-users to establish realistic and responsible goal setting is an important part of the process.

COST

Many people think that the Owner-Trainer path will be more economical because they already have a K9. Unfortunately, this is not true. We have found that Owner-Trainer teams cost just as much, if not more than teams that enter through our signature service. Why is that? Because frequent training setbacks caused by the reasons mentioned above require additional resources to get the team back on track. Once a team joins the program we want to see them succeed, and that often means partnering them with a qualified trainer to make up the difference in skill set. This is costly, since we pay our trainers fair rates for their time and skill. (FYI – A service dog fully trained and partnered with their Handler under our signature service costs \$20,000-\$25,000 or more).

6 TYPES OF PTSD

Did you know that there are six types of PTSD? We specialize in training four of the six types of PTSD dogs to ensure the right fit for the handlers and their dogs. Owner-Trainers usually do not have the necessary trainer skills, have access to qualified mentors or a support system to help them train their dogs. A support network is also needed for ongoing success.

OUR OWNER-TRAINER PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

It is important individuals interested in undertaking the Owner-Trainer program understand that some breeds are more challenging to train as productive service dogs. This should be kept in mind, as the goal of undertaking this rigorous training program is to successfully graduate a productive and helpful service dog that will first and foremost help the Handler with their disability. Many individuals want to enter the program through the Owner-Trainer path because they have a pet that they already have a very strong bond with. An emotional bond with the K9 is a very important part of the trust relationship required for a successful service dog team. However, re-training and re-purposing the life of a pet into a service dog nearly always results in an unsatisfactory performing K9.

Research shows that there are ideal breeds to undertake the job of a service dog, and other breeds that are simply not suitable. Handlers' are free to enter our program with almost any type of dog; however, we have found the best breeds to work with are:

- Golden Retrievers
- Labrador Retrievers
- Poodles

Note: we will not allow any breed (or mixed breed) to enter the program that is banned in any Canadian jurisdiction

The dog must be a minimum of six months of age and not older than four years of age.

The dog must be spayed or neutered before working in public spaces prior to full certification being granted.

The initial assessment of the dog is done at pet friendly locations wherever pets are allowed. This assessment also includes the Public Access Test. Dogs exhibiting severe stress, fear or aggression are disqualified.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The next step in this process is that documentation is submitted to confirm that the individual has a disability. This information is protected under the province of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act along with any other relevant information on the application form.

Step three encompasses a mandatory probationary period whereby the service dog team works in public spaces with an MSAR / Courageous Companions trainer for 20 one-hour sessions with the dog in a training harness. The goal of these training sessions is to rule out any signs of dog aggression, fear, or severe stress. Handlers' typically commit to participating in these training sessions once or twice a week over a three-month period.

Once the team has made it through the probationary period, the team must then take a Public Access Test. This test assesses the dog's ability to remain stable and focused on its handler even when various stimuli are introduced. The dog cannot express any fear-based aggression. Successful teams are issued a harness. Next comes six months of intensive training with a local dog trainer who is willing to work collaboratively with MSAR. This whole process takes anywhere from one year to a year and half, before a final certification test is administered.

SERVICE DOG TEAM CERTIFICATION

Fully certified teams undergo a 3 to 5-day testing period depending upon the nature of their disability, life altering injury, or chronic illness. This span of time builds in flexibility so as not to overwork the team or cause unnecessary stress or hardship.

RECERTIFICATION

Re-certification of service dog teams depends on the type of disability. For example, a dog trained to work with a handler who takes seizures is assessed annually. Whereas a dog that works with a handler with PTSD is assessed every three years. Help is available when needed.

CERTIFICATION CHALLENGE TEST

Individuals that believe they are ready to be evaluated over a three to five-day period may do so. In this case, the dog must be a minimum of two years of age.

OUR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CLIENT SATISFACTION

Courageous Companions and our certifying body MSAR are dedicated to offering ongoing support. As a result, a virtual video series is being developed which will be comprised of over 150 comprehensive videos that walk people through this process one-step at a time. These resources will be particularly helpful for people who live in remote areas who cannot access a local trainer to assist them and/or those who cannot afford to pay a trainer.

We stand by our teams and truly want the Service Dog and Handler team to be successful.



Process of How to Get a Service Dog

1. Consult with your medical team and evaluate the needs and see if a service dog will fit into your long-term treatment plan. If this is a go, you need a letter from your doctor (treating your PTSD or other disabilities). At the request of the medical teams we have developed a standard form that we provide since some doctors may not know what to write.
2. Call and discuss a service dog and your needs with either the Courageous Companions Intake Director or the MSAR Master Dog Trainer. This is a simple conversation to answer questions and provide some basic program details.
3. Interview / Assessment for need of dog is then done (in person or phone). This conversation is to determine the category of PTSD the person falls into, the tasks needed for the service dog, the breed of the service dog required, how much the person can participate (or even able to) in the training. This interview is done by both the Courageous Companions Intake Director and the MSAR Master Dog Trainer.
4. The MSAR trainers discuss the appropriate breed related to tasks, category and allergies.
5. The next step is that paperwork is then sent out for reading, consulting (medical and legal) and after any questions are addressed signed and the commitment is made.
6. The training team develops the training plan and the transition plan - the process to match the handler and service dog, this process varies in times.
7. The handler then either comes to our training center or we send a trainer / dog to train with them. We then develop a training support plan to get the team ready for final certification and testing (generally takes six months of the team working together prior to final testing and certification).
8. Acquiring a service dog from any organization is a long process and you should be prepared for to wait up to a year (minimum). You must have patience through this process.



MSAR K9 Molley
and Sam Lubas (Dog trainer)

Bonita Dykens and K9 Nika

My name is Bonita Dykens, I join the West Nova Scotia Regiment in November 1993, I stayed in the infantry unit for 10 years, in 2003 I did a component transfer to the regular force as a Supply Technician. my first posting was with 14 wing Greenwood Nova Scotia where I would spend the next 13 years of my career with them.

In Dec 2006 I went on my first tour to Dubai as part of Op Athena, once I got back to Greenwood Nova Scotia, I volunteered to go on tour with the 5 GBMC Valcartier who were deploying to Afghanistan, I was so excited about going to Valcartier, I was hoping I would learn the French language, I spend 8 months in training with the Valcartier which was not the best experience. I knew I was on my own, but once in Af-

ghanistan I went to a Forward Operating Base (FOB) Op Kelly, where there was a lot of intense moments between suicide bombers, improvise explosive device (IED), body searches on the Afghan women without backup and loss of life.

After coming home to 14 wing Greenwood my husband (Bob) would tell me that I have changed after coming back from Afghanistan, I knew I was in trouble but didn't want anyone in the unit to know that there was something wrong, so I seek help outside of the military and was diagnosed with PTSD, but kept it secret because I knew once they found out I had PTSD I would be forced out of the military.

In 2015 I got a posting to Edmonton, at first things were going OK, but as time went on, I started falling apart, the night terrors were back, the mistrust and jumping over anything, I was falling apart and could not stop it. But there was a Sergeant at my unit who knew that something was wrong, she convinced me to get help through the mental health in the military and again I was diagnose with severe PTSD.

In 2019 got a new puppy from Second Chance Animal Rescue Service (SCARS) and named her Nika, she is a Siberian Husky with German shepherd mixed. When talking to a friend in Nova Scotia who suggested that I look up Courageous Companions in Edmonton who can help me train Nika to be my service dog. So, I did and that was when I met John Dugas.

At first I was not too sure if we would make it through the Courageous Companions training but with her at my side and the constant training we had started to created a bond, but again I had one obstacle in my way, when we started our training I was still a member of the Canadian Forces and I was so afraid of the criticism I would get from work if I had a service dog with me, so after awhile I decided to put the memo in to have a service dog in my office with me and was approved. At first it was touch and go but after awhile she was welcomed with open arms, and everybody looked forward to seeing her by my side every day.

Nika has literally saved my life, I don't worry about people around me, my focus is always on her and on those nights that I have night terror, she knows to lay on top of me which in turn wakes me up from her body weight and gives me lots of kisses. She can also open and close doors, and when I can't get up, she can retrieve items for me along with turning on and off lights, she is my shadow and my best friend.

Through Courageous Companions I have met many new friends and will always be grateful for all their help in the training we have received and hope for many more training.



Bonita Dykens and K9 Nika

International PTSD Service Dog Study

In 2016, MSAR announced the conclusion of an international study on training programs used for psychiatric service dogs. The study was conducted by an informal consortium of K9 trainers from thirteen different countries, including data from 500 service dog teams. The findings from this study will have a groundbreaking impact on MSAR's internationally recognized post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychiatric service dog program and will be reflected in MSAR's current and future discussions on developing a national standard for psychiatric service dogs.

PTSD is a complex condition and service dog training must reflect the different traumas and triggers that individuals may have. It has become clear that treating PTSD with a service dog requires a whole lifestyle change which must be reflected in the breed of service dog selected and the regimen used for pairing the service dog team. The consequences of failure are clear; poorly trained service dogs do significant damage to the handler relying on them as part of their treatment and represent a significant public liability risk through the possibility of dog on dog or dog on person violence.

MSAR continues to emphasize that a proper training and certification model is critical to the successful use of psychiatric service dogs as a therapeutic aid for our veterans and first responders dealing with PTSD in all its forms.

CATEGORIES OF PTSD

The PTSD Service Dog study determined that PTSD was broken into 6 categories.

1. Combat/ Operational – military
2. Visual/ Scents/Environmental (as seen by First Responders)
3. Complex PTSD – Childhood Trauma
4. Involuntary Muscle Agitation – Very rare
5. Forcible Confinement
6. Sexual/Psychological, Physical Abuse

PTSD SERVICE DOG MODELS

With these 6 categories in mind, the study determined the 4 Types of PTSD Service Dogs and PTSD Training Models.

1. Model 1 – Combat/ Operational
2. Model 2 – Visual/ Scents/Environmental
3. Model 3 – Involuntary Muscle Agitation
4. Model 4 – Complex PTSD, Forcible Confinement, Sexual / Physical Abuse and Self Harm/ Self Medication/ Addictions.

BREEDS SUITED FOR PTSD SERVICE DOGS

The study also concluded the best Breeds suited as PTSD Service dogs. This does not mean other breeds cannot be utilised. The study concluded the following breeds demonstrated the greatest amount of success for working in the field of PTSD.

1. Labradors
2. Golden Retrievers.
3. Poodles





Courageous Companions K9 Barney (PTSD Service Dog) - Golden Retriever



MSAR K9 Reddi (Guide Dog) - Standard Poodle



Courageous Companions K9 Chance (PTSD Service Dog) - Chocolate Labrador Retriever

Breed selection is determined by tasks, handler experience and work environment. What the study has determined is that dogs bred for guard work require confident handlers and are not recommended for psychiatric work - i.e. Shepherds, Mastiffs have a lead or follow mentality and can treat the handlers a resource or possession and protective traits become prevalent.

Examples:

- A person suffering from PTSD Sexual Assault will collapse upon themselves and the dog must be an anchor, provide compression and direct attention to the handler. Not protect the handler.
- A person suffering from PTSD from military conflict can be combative when approached, react in anger, and may bolt. Thus, the dog needs to interrupt and de-escalate the situation and redirect the handler’s attention. Not protect the handler.

The process of the study revealed that the best method for dealing with PTSD is a complete medical treatment plan. For the purpose of simplicity, we have broken it down into an eight-point program.

1. Detailed and quality psychiatric support,

2. The introduction of medications as a stabilizer with the gradual removal of these medications as the patient improves.
3. Regulation of sleeping. Minimum 7-10 hours per day with addition of a 20-40-minute nap during the day as needed.
4. Support from key groups like family, friends, and peers.
5. The introduction of a professionally trained service dog to match specific PTSD Categories which reflects the disability of the patient.
6. A Natural diet of fresh foods including fruits, vegetables, meats and dairies with limited processed foods and the elimination of added sugars from the diet.
7. Daily physical activity consisting of 20-30 minutes of walking and weight lifting, 2-4 times per week.
8. Activities should be included into daily routines to build structures and a pattern of positive behaviour and a sense of control.



Michelle Suess and K9 Bennie

My name is Michelle. And this Handsome fella is K9 Bennie. I am a mother of two beautiful blessings, a wife, a daughter, sister, auntie, niece, cousin, friend and used to be much more. For a long time, I couldn't be any of these things. I had a hard time thinking about the day to day, the future, even living at times. Childhood abuse at the hands of a family member and being raped at 15 had a lot to do with why I followed my calling to be a First Responder. I wanted to help others because I know what it is like to be both helped and left in the cross winds with no life jacket or paddle in a raging storm.

I moved to Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta when I was 18 years old and there is where I started my journey in Emergency services. I became a 911 dispatcher. I continued to work in dispatch full time while I went to school, completing my emergency medical responder and emergency medical technician training. I was also working on ground units and as a third hand on first responder flights. While home in Nova Scotia I volunteered with my local fire department. After a few months of what I thought were nightmares from childhood (I later learned I was having night terrors and flash backs), I started having seizures. 15+ seizures a day when they first started. When my seizures were diagnosed as PNES almost 2 years later is when I was told that this was PTSD. Get therapy. You can't be a medic anymore. Live the life you have now. Therapy, Medication, Shock treatment, Hospitalizations whatever I was told to do to try and beat this thing I did. I was existing not living. I heard of Courageous Companions through Antler Hill Veterinary Services. Our vet. Dr. Andrew put me in touch with a member and that started the whole process. They are so much more than a "vet" they are family.

I was partnered with K9 Bennie in September of 2020. I can't say it was love at first sight.....it was so much more. These deep brown eyes stared into mine and looked right into my soul. That first deep look from Bennie started the hard work of chipping away at all of those things. I didn't know the fortress of walls I had built around myself for protection. I am still working consistently with my team on chipping away at them with Bennies help. Bennie has positively changed all of that. Yes, I still have issues going out but with Bennie by my side I push myself to face these situations do not avoid them. At home he checks the house when we get home or when we get up. Wherever we are he alerts me if I become too heightened and we work together to bring it back down. He does so much more. I can't hide behind Bennie. He is my partner. He watches my 6 and I watch his. Yes, he is in the physical form of a K9. But believe me when I say these K9s are so much more. They truly are man's best friend. They are sent here to work side by side with us to help make life and I feel the world a better place.



Michelle Suess and K9 Bennie

Pat Fisher and K9 Sadie



Pat Fisher and K9 Sadie

I am a retired member of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) after serving for 27 years with the Military Police and a 3-year stint with the RCMP. During my police service, I was involved in serious incidents which have included suicides, domestic violence and fatal accidents. In 2013, I was diagnosed with PTSD and with the assistance of a retired military doctor, I was directed to and sought help with the OSI (Operational Stress Injury) Clinic in Calgary. After receiving 4 years of therapy, I started to investigate Courageous Companions about getting a service dog to help me cope with everyday life.

On May 20th 2017, I finally had the pleasure of being introduced to my K9 Sadie, a female German Shepherd. After working with her for 2 years and reading about Courageous Companions I reached out and inquired about receiving training for K9 Sadie. We were both welcomed to the Courageous Companions family and started the Owner Training Program with Courageous Companions. As of today, K9 Sadie and I are pretty much inseparable. She has helped me out of my shell and allowed me to go out in public once again. The two of us are always together whether in an ambulance, doctors office, training sessions, shopping or wherever.

Thank you, Courageous Companions, for our new life.

Ted Peacock and K9 Chase

My name is Ted Peacock, and I am a retired Combat Engineer. I am originally from St. Catharines, Ont and now live just outside of Edmonton AB. I am 52 years old and am paired with K9 Chase.

I started my career in 1990 and was posted to 2CER, CFB Petawawa, Ont. While there, I did my first tour in Kuwait/Iraq in 92-93 and then my second tour to Croatia in 94-95. Being young and "invincible" I did everything I was told to while there. After returning my wife and I were posted to CFB Suffield, AB. I then did my third tour to Bosnia in 01-02. Soon after returning, I was a new father and posted to 1CER, CFB Edmonton, AB. Being back in a Regiment and the war in Afghanistan being in full swing, my life became extremely fast paced and once again I was charging ahead full bore. I then did my fourth tour in Kabul, Afghanistan in 04-05. My second son was born while I was on tour. First time I met him he was two weeks old, and I didn't see him again until he was almost 5 months old. I did more career courses, exercises, and training before going on my fifth tour. I went to Kandahar, Afghanistan in 06-07, and yes, my son turned 2 while I was in theatre. All my tours were winter tours, and I spent all five Christmas' in theatre. Being a Combat Engineer, all my tours were always outside of the wire and in the thick of it. After my last tour I felt and knew there was something wrong and I had a breakdown. In 2010, after 20 years, I was medically released. This is when the latest chapters of my life came to be.

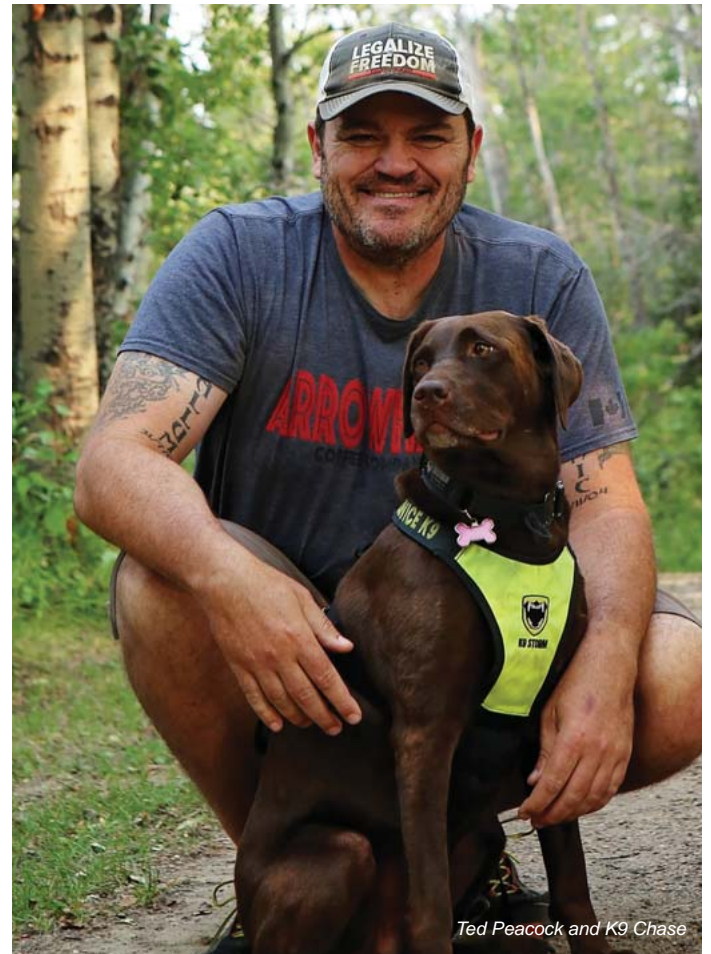
We always had dogs and know the value of their companionship. In '08 we got a Golden Retriever puppy and named him Bentley. Bentley quickly became my tag along wherever I could bring him. I knew nothing about service dogs and had no idea what was available. Bentley was not trained to the level of a service dog, but he was mine and we did everything together. When Bentley was about 10, I ran into John Dugas, and he had Mia with him. I started learning more and more about the service dog world and Courageous Companions. Talking with John, I soon learned how to get involved in the world of service dogs. I began to go to training sessions and learning what the dogs could do and how to interact with them. I wanted a dog but couldn't bring myself to have another bonded dog while I still had Bentley.

After I lost Bentley, I contacted John to see if I could get into the program and get a service dog. I continued to train with the group and used retired dogs. John then contacted me and told me that they had a service dog that was not working out with the handler she was paired with. On 25 October 2020, I met K9 Chase. We bonded right away, and she has been at my side every day since. Chase has been wonderful for me. She has given me confidence and the ability to function in society. Chase gets me out and active, so I don't waste

my time and have positive days. She is truly a cuddle bug that loves to be close to me and keeps me grounded. I have found that when we are out, the effect she has on others helps me. There are three basic responses I get, either smiles and admiration, total avoidance, or curiosity. The curiosity I find the hardest because I don't have any outward physical injuries that can be easily seen. I am asked quite often if I am training her for someone. I get many surprised looks when I tell people that she is mine. I do get asked lots of the time why I need her. I have found the best response I can give is, "I've been to war 5 times and don't fit into society too well." That statement is usually accepted and no more questions about my medical information is asked.

Chase has been and is a constant positive in my life. I continue to tell other veterans and first responders about Courageous Companions and the wonderful organization it is. Thank you, Courageous Companions, for pairing me with K9 Chase.

Sgt retired Ted Peacock and K9 Chase.



Ted Peacock and K9 Chase

Dog Trainer Spotlight – Quentin De Jager

Meet Quentin de Jager, the proud owner and head trainer for Jager-K9. Courageous Companions and MSAR Service dogs utilise Jager K9 for dog training services in the Southern Ontario region.

Quentin de Jager is originally from South Africa, where he grew up on his family's Game Farm. Being surrounded by domestic animals as well as wildlife from an early age instilled a love and respect for all species. Quentin started his dog training career at 19, when he joined one of the top military K9-Training Units in Southern Africa. During his time there, he earned the title of Dog Handler, Trainer and then Instructor at the facility.

Quentin was then sought out by the Executive Director of an International non-profit Conservation Organization based in Namibia, where he was tasked to take over their Scat Dog Program. This involved training dogs to roam the 70,000 hectare bushveld surrounding the Organization in search of the genetic material of endangered species. He went on to assist with numerous research projects and wildlife census' using these skills.

He was later approached by one of the largest Private Game Reserves in Namibia to help lead their Anti-Poaching Unit as well as assist in setting up their own K9 Unit. Quentin took this challenge in stride and the Game Reserve's Anti-Poaching K9 Unit has been successfully operating since its creation.

His next chapter took him to Canada where he has been working hard to integrate himself into the Canadian Dog Training community. Quentin has directed his vast K9 training knowledge towards Companion and Service Dogs. Understanding how important the human-animal bond is, as well as how vital service companions are for their handlers, Quentin facilitates excellent quality training with the goal of as many successful Handler-Service Dog pairings as possible.

Quentin's next big project is creating an Anti-Poaching initiative in partnership with MSAR Service Dog. This initiative will provide Namian Conservation Organizations and Game Reserves protecting wildlife with highly skilled Anti-Poaching dogs, furthering the momentum towards wildlife conservation.



Head Trainer for Jager-K9 - Quentin De Jager

Service Dog Information

The information expressed relates to Canada, we are not discussing The United States of America.

- A Service Dog is a canine specifically trained to minimize functional limitations of a person with a disability.
- Service dogs may also be referred to as assistance dogs.
- Includes but not limited to guide, mobility, medical alert, medical response, hearing, psychiatric, autism and PTSD.
- Does not include therapy, emotional support / companion, facility dogs.

ACCESS & RIGHTS

Service dogs have access to any public space that the public is allowed to go - example a service dog is allowed in the restaurant with its handler but not in the kitchen where food is prepared. Dogs are allowed in any public transit, building - basically anywhere that the handler can go the dog can go, and many are allowed with the handler in the ambulance or hospital. Access in any condo no matter what the pet policy is, and employers must also allow the dog at work - with a few exceptions where the dog may be in danger or at risk of harm due to a harsh or dangerous work environment. An example would be a service dog is allowed with a veteran on base and at work but with a developed SOP (standard operating procedure) the dog would not be allowed in a metal fabrication shop or heavy vehicle repairs due to the dangers.

VISIBLE VS INVISIBLE.

One issue that people that are looking for a service dog must understand that with having an invisible disability such as PTSD - people will ask what the dog is for, not sure if it is for the handler or someone else and many of the questions can be intrusive and handlers must be taught how to handle this type of interaction with the public.

PUBLIC MAGNET

People have a natural draw to dogs and being in public with a dog has its challenges as people feel compelled to talk to you about their dog or your dog or even pat and engage with the service dog. This is also something that people have to be trained to handle and deal with being in public.



Appolo Belisle (Veteran)
and K9 Venus

MCpl Rob Cobb (Retired) and K9 Bear

My name is MCpl Rob Cobb, CD, retired. I'm 56 years old and from Newmarket, ON. I have PTSD and I have a service dog.

I started my career in the military in 1984 with the Navy as a Boatswain out of Halifax under a government work program. After a year, I transferred to the Army as a Vehicle Technician and was posted to Chilliwack, BC.

I left the military in 1988 to pursue a civilian career.

In 1997, I rejoined the military, picking up my former trade as a Vehicle Technician. I was posted to Petawawa, ON and served on two tours of duty, Golan Heights under the UN and Afghanistan under NATO. I was with the first rotation of soldiers to go to Afghanistan as part of the advance party.

In 2006, I was posted to Moose Jaw, SK with the Snowbirds, 431 SQN.

In 2010, I was posted to the EME school in Borden, ON, where I taught brakes and steering to new and senior Craftsmen. I medically released from the military in 2011 and moved back to Saskatchewan where I worked as a heavy-duty mechanic.

I currently reside in Regina, SK with my wife, Lisa, our dog, Ping, and my Service Dog, K9 Bear.

My PTSD presented shortly after returning from Afghanistan in early 2004. It changed the way I did everything. Previously unlocked doors were locked, people were not encouraged to visit and outings became fewer and fewer. There was rage and depression and self-medication, confusion, self-doubt and paranoia. I poured all my energy into overworking, to try to stop my thoughts from racing. There were nightmares and hallucinations and flashbacks. There were multiple hospitalizations, both voluntarily and not.

I asked for help the day after I put my fist through the living room wall. I received inconsistent psychological help for more than nine years, due to staffing problems or postings, until 2014 when I found a Psychiatrist who, as a military veteran himself, understood what I was dealing with daily, who didn't judge or belittle my situation. Unfortunately, that doctor retired in 2015, leaving me, once again, without adequate mental healthcare. It wasn't until 2016, after spending more than 7 months total on the Mental Health ward, that I finally found both a psychologist and a psychiatrist to help me.

Around 2012-2013, I went to a Resiliency Seminar in Moose Jaw, SK. There I met George Leonard, Master Trainer, who was representing MSAR and Courageous Companions. He was there to give a presentation about service dogs and some of his dogs were there. It was remarkable how quiet and obedient they were. Up to

that point in my life, I only knew dogs to be noisy and boisterous creatures that loved to fetch thrown balls. Impressed with the presentation and the proof of such trained dogs, I got George's contact information and had my doctor help me file an application for a service dog of my own. On December 12, 2015, I received a small black puppy, K9 Bear, that I would train with the assistance of my mentor, Shirley Jew, to be my service dog.

K9 Bear is a black Australian Labradoodle. He is my constant companion. With him, I feel more confidence and security in dealing with every day. I find that I am able to go to crowded places like the mall or the Farmers Market. He grounds me with his presence. He uses compression upon me when I'm highly stressed and becomes a physical barrier between me and other people, keeping me safe. He is a distraction from my PTSD symptoms and helps me sleep better at night.

Training him is an ongoing thing and I regularly go out to the mall or other public places to work on his public access skills. This keeps me busy and out into the real world.

Courageous Companions has been instrumental in how I deal with my PTSD and everyday challenges. I am able to do things that others take for granted, like going out to dinner or buying shoes or groceries. They have been supportive throughout this process of training and testing Bear with their knowledge and understanding.

My life has been renewed because of Bear.



Katherine Freeman and K9 Rory



I am a First Responder, Inter-faith Chaplain, Counsellor, and Disaster Management Supervisor. I have been involved at many International Disaster Responses in Nicaragua, El-Salvador and other Central American countries. I have responded to earthquakes, landslides, droughts, floods, wildfires, tornado's and other natural disasters. I have also been present during various political and civil uprisings/theatres of operation/para-military coups in other countries.

I was present in El-Salvador in the 1980's when over 70,000 civilians were tortured, assassinated, or went missing, known as the *desaparesio* (disappeared). This included Canadians who were doctors, Red Cross workers, priests, nuns and NGO charity workers who were tortured and murdered. A good friend was assassinated in his driveway in front of his small children on the way to school, because he was the head of the Human Rights Commission.

I was the Founder of a group providing counselling to Torture Survivors who met at the Calgary Children's Hospital for years. I have also tried to give back to my community by being involved in Disaster Management with the Red Cross.

I was a First Responder in New York City at 9/11 after the towers fell. My lungs were injured from inhaling all of the poisonous toxins at ground zero and other toxic sites, and my immune system was permanently compromised from trying to fight off the toxins in my body. I worked with the various fire fighters who had lost a comrade during the collapse of the towers offering grief counselling and Critical Incident Stress Management.

I have given workshops for schools and daycares on safety procedures during disasters, bombings and school shootings, and been a keynote speaker and presenter for those working with Victims of Violence.

I have worked with the emergency evacuation of communities in Northern Saskatchewan to Cold Lake AB during the Saskatchewan Wildfires, and provided assistance with the Red Cross Disaster Management team during the entire evacuation of Fort McMurray after the fire that devastated the city. I worked with the Canadian Red Cross in their role of helping to integrate refugee children from Refugee Camps in Turkey. Most of these children witnessed the complete destruction of their homes as they were bombed in Aleppo. Some still carry the scars on their tiny bodies from the bombs, bullets and shrapnel.

I was a member of the Fire and First Responder Team in a small community in Alberta and I still provide specialized pastoral counselling for severe trauma and torture survivors. Last year, I attended the United Nations Sponsored Centre for Torture Survivors in Europe.

Needless to say, I don't leave my house or spend a minute alone without the vigilant support of my Service Dog, Rory-Michael. Because of physical injuries as a first responder, my hearing is failing, and I have severe lung complications. Rory is trained in sign language, alerts me to noises, brings life saving medicine for my lungs to prevent complete respiratory arrest, alerts me to silent asthma attacks, wakes me up from nightmares and turns the lights on, alerts me if I am shaking, performs deep compression and performs many other tasks to mitigate the horrors of PTSD.

Courageous Companions has helped in the on-going training of my Service Dog, Rory, and in helping me personally with their continued friendship, camaraderie and emotional support.

Katherine Freeman

Barb Leroux and K9 Charlie



My name is Barb Leroux. I live in Ottawa, Ontario – our Nation's capital.

I currently work on Parliament Hill for the Senate of Canada. Prior to my work on parliament Hill I worked with the New West Minster Police Department, Victim Services and Penitentiary systems. My work on Parliament Hill however is where my life felt like it came tumbling down. There was a shooting on Parliament Hill back in 2014. Seems like yesterday. I heard sounds, gun shots echoing from the area of the Centre Block rotunda. My office was close enough to hear the voices of certain commands. The shots parroted - I didn't know what was happening.

Minutes later there was pounding on my office door. Was it the bad guy? Who was it? He was yelling – “open the door.” Should I? Then, I heard a voice yelling my name. I must know him. I opened the door. Facing me was one of our Parliament Hill Security Team, and two sharpshooters with their guns. Our Security team started asking... no – he was yelling at me, yelling questions for me to answer. (I found out since then, they yell in the case the shooter was hiding in the office. Security would know if he was, by the way I answered the questions, and my body language.) I was shaking inside, and stuttering my words. They surrounded me, and shuffled me away from my office to three different places for security.

Things became a maze of questions in my mind. Does my family know I am okay? Is the shooter still out there? Am I really safe?

After 10 long hours of waiting, I was taken from the safety room and escorted to transportation, to go home. I'm alive. The shooter died. Life continued.

A long while later, I started having trouble walking up

Parliament Hill, to my office. I was now more conscience of all the police with their guns visible.

All the control I thought I had over my life was slowly starting to dissolve. There were times I couldn't walk up the Hill to my office without calling my friend George from MSAR (www.msar.ca) to talk to me while I walked. There were times I would make by myself to my office, and then burst into tears. Many times I was reliving the fear from the shooting.

I felt broken. What's happening? Much later I was diagnosed with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Injury) I felt like my life was falling apart – yet I continued to do my daily routine and work – my mind always seemed preoccupied with other thoughts.

Now I would like you to meet my best friend Charlie. He is dedicated to me. He's like a shadow. He's there to comfort me when I am feeling down, he quietens me when I feel anxious, he brings a smile to me when I feel frustrated. He just seems to know what to do, at the right time. In case you haven't already guessed Charlie is my Service Dog. Through Courageous Companions he is being trained for certification. He services to my emotions, helps me slow down on my rollercoaster ride thoughts, depression, and my day to day life. He brings a peace in my, whirlwind world.

Charlie's in depth and continuous training is helping me see life more on the brighter side. We are dedicated to be together. I now realize the light at the end of the tunnel is not a train. If it weren't for Courageous Companions, and their dedication to quality training of Service Dogs, and raising funds to help broken people like myself, I don't want to say where I sadly think I would be right now.

Training for Charlie will be on-going because Courageous Companions is about quality, not quantity. With all the training for Charlie and passing tests constantly, Charlie will prove to be highly skilled in what he is being trained to do. A top notch service dog.

Here's something you might find interesting. Charlie is the very first working service dog on Parliament Hill. Yup, he made history, and I feel balanced.

Courageous Companions..... thank you for helping me, through Charlie, be able to have my life back. Thank you for the dedication, and care you have for our Veterans and First Responders. Thank you for the quality and high standards of training you stand by.

Barb Leroux

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