



Monica Sereda and
Service Dog Biscuit

Canines & COURAGE

Angus joins the Navy

Ready paws, listening ears

Shifting gears

Smokey saves the night

contents



6

3 From our CEO

4 From our Chairman of the Board



12

6 Beyond his Wildest Dreams

12 From Broken to Outspoken



18

18 Big Heart, Big Dog

24 The Heroes Challenge



26

26 For the Love of Bruno

32 Timely Ways to Give

34 You Can Make An Impact Today



from our CEO

Dear Friend,

Welcome to *Life Unleashed*. In this issue, we celebrate the courageous veterans and families we serve and the heroic dogs by their sides.

I hope you enjoy reading these heartwarming stories of resiliency, recovery, perseverance, and hope. Isn't it inspiring how dogs can make such a difference?

In this issue, you'll read how our dogs help veterans overcome the pain of PTSD, soothe the heartbreak of losing a child, and heal invisible wounds.

Thank you so much for the part you play in the success of our veterans programs and the fulfillment of our mission. With you by our side, we are unleashing the power of your kindness and generosity to transform lives every day.



Warm regards,

Titus Herman

Titus Herman
Chief Executive Officer

from our chairman of the board

Dear Friend,

“Service” is a word with depth of meaning. Serving others is an essential part of the American culture. It’s something ingrained in the very fabric of our society. It’s something we teach our children.

The volunteers who serve at Southeastern Guide Dogs and at the hospital where I work give us their most precious commodity: their time. The donors who make possible the work of Southeastern Guide Dogs selflessly share their treasure.

U.S. Armed Forces personnel serve with the highest commitment: to lay down their lives, if called upon to do so.

I speak for the entire Board of Directors when I say it is with honor that we give back to veterans through the dogs that give them back their lives. It’s our way of bringing the following words to life: “Thank you for your service.”

Warm regards,



Bob Meade
Board Chair, Southeastern Guide Dogs
Chief Executive Officer, Doctors Hospital of Sarasota

board of directors

Robert Meade Chairman, Sarasota, FL
Tim Griffy Vice Chairman, Richardson, TX
Drew Asher Treasurer, Tampa, FL
Andy Taylor Secretary, Lakeland, FL
John Compton Member, Siesta Key, FL
Kenneth Folkman Member, Tampa, FL
Gary Johnson Member, Tampa, FL
Vice Admiral Joseph Maguire, USN (Ret.) Member, Tampa, FL
Bobby Newman Lifetime Member, Tampa, FL
Kathy Saunders Member, St. Petersburg, FL
Harris Silverman, M.D. Lifetime Member, Sarasota, FL
Dulce Weisenborn Member, Portland, OR



Life UNLEASHED MAGAZINE

A publication of
Southeastern Guide Dogs

Southeastern Guide Dogs transforms lives by creating and nurturing extraordinary partnerships between people and dogs. We breed, raise, and train elite guide dogs, service dogs, and skilled companion dogs and provide life-changing services for people with vision loss, veterans with disabilities, and children with significant challenges. We offer our premier dogs and lifetime follow-up services at no cost. Since 1982, we have successfully created thousands of guide and service dog teams throughout the U.S. and currently oversee the well-being of over 1,200 puppies and dogs. GuideDogs.org

Writer & Editor-in-Chief

Leslie Rowe

Contributing Writers

Jen Noble

Ruth Lando

Art Director

Anne Meskey Elhajoui

Photographer

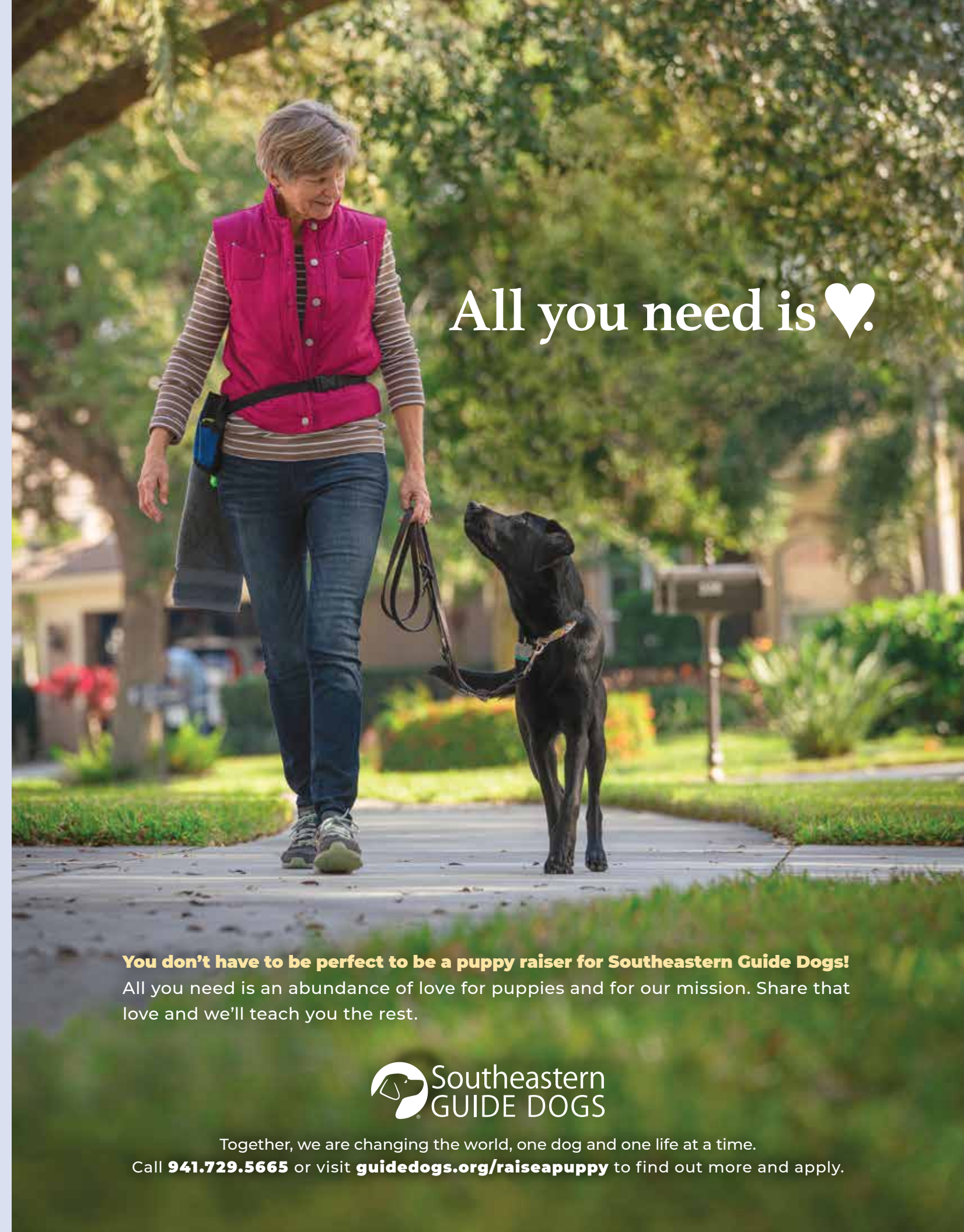
Chris Lake

Personal snapshots provided by
puppy raisers and graduates.

Cover photo by Chris Lake



4210 77th St E, Palmetto, FL 34221
guidedogs.org | 941.729.5665



All you need is ♥.

You don't have to be perfect to be a puppy raiser for Southeastern Guide Dogs!

All you need is an abundance of love for puppies and for our mission. Share that love and we'll teach you the rest.



Together, we are changing the world, one dog and one life at a time.
Call **941.729.5665** or visit guidedogs.org/raiseapuppy to find out more and apply.

Beyond HIS Wildest Dreams



The day he got Smokey was the night Matt Fugett finally slept all night.

“For five years, I didn’t sleep in a bed,” shares the Navy veteran. “I couldn’t feel safe or comfortable because of the night terrors, so I would sleep everywhere else in the house. I would sleep maybe two hours a night, and sometimes I’d go a day or two when I didn’t sleep at all.”

The Terrors Begin

The night terrors started while Matt served as a Navy corpsman and advanced radiographer (X-ray technician) in the emergency room at the Naval Medical Center at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. Here, life and death swing through the doors at any hour, and people come and go after humanity’s worst moments: car accidents, gunshot wounds, heart attacks, suicide attempts, and horrific abuse. As the victims come and go, so do the memories.

Matt enlisted in the Navy right after high school in 2013. He rose to the rank of petty officer third class, and in 2018 he was honorably discharged. But by that time, the nightmares were relentless.

“I would wake up and see people that I’d seen die in the ER,” he shares, his voice quieting. “Or morgue cases; I’d see these people standing in my room. I was paralyzed—I couldn’t move—then the paralysis would wear off, but I’d still see them. I would scream, flip on the lights, get out of bed, but it would take a while for that hallucination to go away.”

MATTHEW FUGETT AND SERVICE DOG SMOKEY

Photos by Chris Lake

Saving Sarah

matt's wife, Sarah, suffered too. "I would wake up and see something there," Matt recalls, "and for her safety, I would try to push her out of bed. I'd freak out, screaming, 'My god, he's there!' as I was throwing pillows at the wall. So, then I would just sleep on the couch, afraid, because I didn't want to do this to her."

Daytime had its triggers, too. A simple shopping trip could turn into an anxiety attack when a baby's cries reminded him of severely abused infants in the ER.



Saving Matt

After a long struggle with depression, anxiety, and chronic sleep deprivation—including one desperate suicide attempt—Matt finally received the diagnosis he'd been missing: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) stemming from the haunting memories. After getting help from mental health professionals and trying eight different prescription sleep medications, Matt turned to Southeastern Guide Dogs for another type of treatment: a service dog named Smokey, who bounded into his life on December 7, 2020.

Hello and Goodnight

"match Day" is the day veterans receive their new dogs during on-campus training. As usual, Matt didn't sleep the night before, and his mind raced with excitement and nervous questions. "What dog will I get?" "What do I need to learn?" and "Oh god, what if this dog doesn't like me?"

He also felt unsure about accepting a service dog. "I wasn't in combat," he explains. "Did I deserve a dog when there are all those people having combat experiences that I haven't? But everyone has been so supportive, and I have to tell myself that the 'D' in 'PTSD' doesn't stand for deployment."

When Matt met Smokey, she leapt into his arms. Then she calmed down, and the two just looked at each other. Matt felt unsure of what to do next. "I just sat there, petting her, and she was wagging a million miles a minute," he said. "She just sat there, rubbing her side on me—which I now know means she wants me to scratch her back."

The team may have had a hesitant start, but it didn't take long for the magic to happen. That first night together, Matt invited Smokey onto the bed, where her secure presence flipped a switch in Matt's brain. "I kept telling myself, this is going to work," he shares. "But when I slept that night, it was an extreme surprise. It blew my mind!"

"From then on, I've mostly been able to sleep just fine," he says. "I've only had one sleep paralysis since Smokey, where the 'person' in the room wouldn't go away. Smokey was licking me, and having her there, grounding me, was reassuring. She's woken me up when I'm having nightmares. I don't know how she does it, but she army-crawls onto my chest, licking my face, interrupting the cycle." ▶



Daytime

had its triggers, too. A simple shopping trip could turn into an anxiety attack when a baby's cries reminded him of severely abused infants in the ER.

DID YOU KNOW?

- According to some sources, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) rooted in workplace trauma can affect 15-25% of emergency workers.
- Among symptoms used to diagnose PTSD, two are sleep related: hyperarousal and intrusion, which can show up as insomnia and nightmares. Researchers speak of a complex relationship between PTSD and sleep problems, unsure of which precedes the other.
- Chronic sleep deprivation can create severe risks to physical and mental health.

↓
The majority of our veterans report improved sleep after receiving a service dog.





Smokey's Got Skills

Matt soon learned that this intuitive girl alerts him to his emotions even before he realizes he needs her. "I was in a Walmart, and she was nudging my hand, licking me," he says. "And I thought, why is she doing this? She's so well behaved, and she doesn't always nudge me. And then I realized I'd been grinding my teeth; all my muscles were clenched, and my stress was at a 10. At that point, I needed to take a step back, take deep breaths, and pet her ears—they're my 'worry stone.' That's how she helps my anxiety in public."

Today, Smokey and Matt go everywhere together. It's been over a year since this team started their journey, and he's still in awe of her talents. "She is mind-boggling smart," he says. Some of his favorite Smokey skills are the *close* and *cover* cues, where Smokey reassuringly presses her body against his. "When I tell her 'close,' she covers on her own. I'll

notice my foot going fast and she'll put a paw on it or lay her head on my feet."

There's something else about Smokey that Matt wants you to know. "I don't mean to brag, but she's the cutest dog you all have ever raised," he says with a grin.

And there are a few things he wants puppy raisers, volunteers, and

Smokey

was nudging my hand, licking me . . . then I realized I'd been grinding my teeth; all my muscles were clenched . . . At that point, I needed to take a step back, take deep breaths, and pet her ears. That's how she helps my anxiety in public."



donors to know, too. "It feels like nothing I can say really conveys what I want to tell them. How do you say thank you—that I can sleep again; for giving me my life back? I don't know how to thank someone with just words. She's definitely changed my life, and I don't know where I would be without her." ●

When veterans like Matt need a dog like Smokey, your caring support makes all the difference.

Thank you!

PUPPY REWIND



Where There's Smokey, There's Love

"Smokey loved everything," says her puppy raiser, Kelly Wiechart. As a puppy, Smokey was a little spitfire who—on day one—fell in love with Kelly's swimming pool. "She was fearless and had unending stores of energy," she recalls. "The world was a major adventure zone for our little Smokey girl!" Athletic and joyful, Smokey was happy to learn and train, and she loved going to work at the VA Hospital with Kelly. "She was so proud to lead me down the hallways, navigating all the various things on wheels," Kelly adds.

It was no surprise to the Wiechart family that Smokey became a service dog because she had a knack for tuning in to people emotionally. She was an excellent hugger who could always tell when someone needed love. Smokey's resilience and drive made her very special, and Kelly is proud that she now shares her patience and devotion with a veteran who is crazy about her.



FROM Broken TO Outspoken



Monica Sereda and
Service Dog Biscuit

When paracyclist Monica Sereda rides, she and the bike become one. Her piston-like legs harness energy into every muscle, every revolution.

And when Monica is off the bike, she and her service dog, Biscuit, become one. His four legs, floppy ears, and piston-like tail revolve around the whereabouts of his favorite human. Where Monica is, there is Biscuit.

Cycling is part physical, part mental. Monica's left brain visualizes the course, the technical turns and strategies where she can gain speed on her opponents. Her right brain takes her to another place, back to childhood days, flying down the street on her yellow Schwinn bike with the wind in her hair and not a care in the world.

"I love to ride," says Monica. "I always felt that need for speed, even as a kid."

PUPPY REWIND



Sweet Biscuit

The late Marie Hoover and puppy Biscuit were well matched in every way. Both puppy raiser and dog were sweet, sociable, and full of smiles, bringing delight wherever they went. Marie nicknamed her furry friend “Wigglebutt,” and he’s still wagging that happy tail to this day. Biscuit was one of three puppies Marie raised before passing away in 2018.

Biscuit lived with Marie in Ocala, Florida. They met other puppy raisers in the Villages community, and Biscuit accompanied the retiree to social events, restaurants, stores, and more. Every outing was an opportunity for Biscuit to practice his skills, and his efforts paid off. As a Walkathon fundraiser, Marie believed in the Southeastern Guide Dogs mission and was proud to learn that Biscuit found his forever home as a service dog. His warm personality, intelligence, and empathy made the perfect combination for a veteran who needs comfort and support to face physical, emotional, and mental challenges every day. It takes the kindness of puppy raisers like Marie to teach dogs like Biscuit how to become superheroes!

Road to Adventure

An adventurous kid, Monica grew up in a military family in Western Springs, Illinois, outside of Chicago. “We would ride our bikes everywhere and play tag, King of the Hill, all that stuff,” she reminisces. As a youngster, she competed in BMX racing, the bike always part of her. At the University of Kansas, her bike became transportation. In the latter years of military service, while managing injuries, she rode a bike for her Army physical fitness tests. After retirement, when new injuries traumatized her brain and nearly cost her mobility, she found her groove again through competitive cycling, reaching her ultimate goal: competing in the 2020 Summer Paralympics in Tokyo.

And when she wasn’t cycling, she found her groove through Biscuit.

The bike and Biscuit are Monica’s twin defenses against the depression, anxiety,

isolation, hypervigilance, jitters, and general funk caused by post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries.

Army Strong

Thirsty for adventure and travel, Monica joined the Army at

age 20 and spent the next 24 years advancing in rank and responsibility, retiring as a master sergeant in 2011. She gravitated to Airborne, completing Army jump school and serving in psychological operations. “Right away, boom, I was thrust into Pan-

ama and Gulf War One,” she says. “And to me, it was, ‘Hey, this is fun; I’m enjoying life.’ I was a lucky person to be able to deploy. Although, you grow up real quick when bullets are flying by, whizzing by you. I enjoyed the camaraderie—I’m very much a team player.”



During deployments to Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Monica’s unit participated in leaflet bombings, encouraging Saddam Hussein’s army to surrender. She witnessed oil fields burning and today cannot stomach the smell of burning hair, even the chemical smell in hair salons. She survived as bullets struck her helicopter and injured team members. And she endured various shoulder and back injuries as a jumpmaster, whether from wind conditions, bad landings, or ill-fitting rucksacks that once resulted in a torn muscle. In addition to her combat experience, Monica taught senior leadership school and worked in operations and logistics.

The Broken Road

After retiring from the Army, symptoms of PTSD began to plague Monica. “I had gotten depressed,” she explains. “I didn’t have that camaraderie. I didn’t have that daily routine. I was very hypervigilant; I had a lot of problems going into different

places. I was always nervous; I couldn’t sit still and relax.”

Meanwhile, an auto accident and a separate cycling accident resulted in traumatic brain injuries, and Monica underwent physical therapy and surgery. “I couldn’t do anything,” she explains. “I was in pain. I couldn’t speak. I couldn’t communicate; I reclused from everybody. I pulled away.”

A fellow cyclist with a guide dog told her about Southeastern Guide Dogs. “You know, they have service dogs for veterans too,” her friend said, and Monica thought about the sheer comfort she felt from her pet dog, Lynch. Her Veterans Affairs therapist encouraged her to apply, and in December 2014, Monica was matched with Biscuit, an eager goldador who rarely leaves her side.

Best Friend Biscuit

“When I received Biscuit, it was a blessing,” she says. “He helped me get back into a regimen and a routine. It forced me to get ▶



“I couldn’t do anything. I was in pain.”

I COULDN’T SPEAK. I RECLUSED FROM EVERYBODY. I PULLED AWAY.”

AND THEN MONICA WAS MATCHED WITH BISCUIT, WHO RARELY LEAVES HER SIDE.



up every day to feed him. It forced me to take him out for a walk and do all these things. I realized that the best thing that could have happened was this wonderful gift.”

Eventually, Monica was able to ride again. She adapted her cycling to accommodate her balance issues and now competes on an upright tricycle, a two-wheeled bike modified with an adaptive rear axle. When she leaves for a ride, Biscuit gets a treat. And when she returns, he goes crazy with delight on seeing her again.

When Monica traveled to the Tokyo Paralympics to compete in the time trial and road race, she left Biscuit behind, for his sake. The lengthy flight just wasn't fair to her sweet boy. "My best friend had Biscuit," she explains. "When I came back from Tokyo, she brought him to the airport. I came off the tram and out into the terminal area, and I saw him, and I just ran. She let go of his leash, and he jumped all over, whining and kissing me like, 'Mom, where have you been?' It was a wonderful reunion, and it brought tears to my eyes because I really, really missed him. And I struggled over there a little bit.

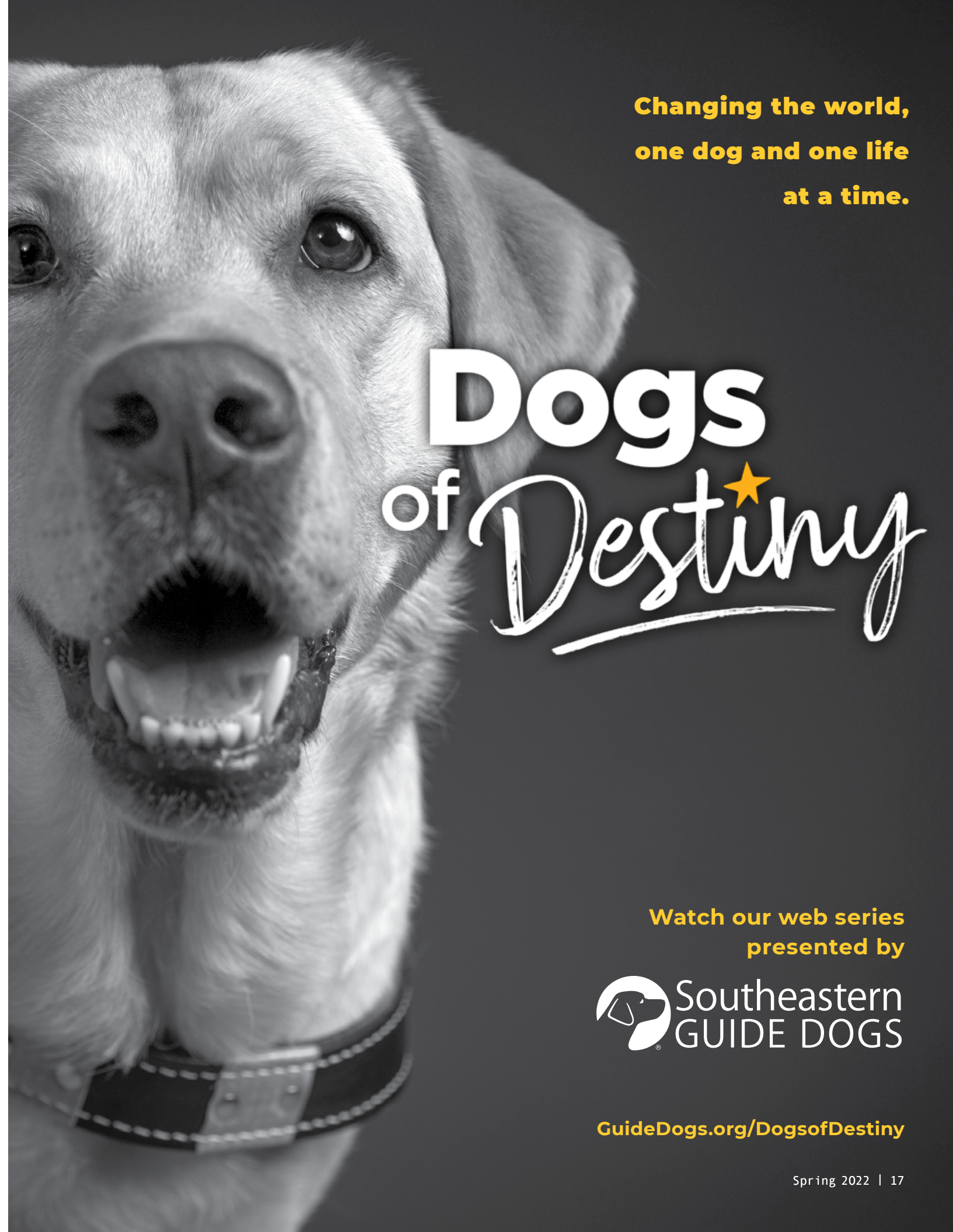
It's tough to be away from him because he really keeps me grounded and keeps me sane."

"Biscuit has been a blessing to me, and getting him was worth every step of the way," she adds. "He has helped me get out of my funk. He keeps me calm. He's my best friend, and we go everywhere together. I can say, 'Alright, we're going to work,' and he jumps up into the truck. And we have talks, or if he can tell I'm stressed, he'll come over and lick me on the side and say, 'It's okay, mom,'—so he's always there. He goes with me to my races, and I bring him up on the podium because if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be where I am today."

From Broken to Outspoken

If you ever meet Monica, you'll experience this veteran's energy and outspoken personality. She's traveled a long and hard road, yet she's always ready for the next adventure. And you'll also meet Biscuit, the calming, lovable, loyal dog by her side—and the one who makes the next adventure possible. Together, this winning team is unstoppable. ●

**DOGS LIKE BISCUIT MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR VETERANS LIKE MONICA.
AND YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR DONATIONS, SO THANK YOU!**



**Changing the world,
one dog and one life
at a time.**

Dogs of *Destiny*

**Watch our web series
presented by**



GuideDogs.org/DogsofDestiny

BIG HEART, BIG DOG

CAPT Julie Darling and Facility Therapy Dog Angus





FACILITY THERAPY DOG ANGUS IS ON A MISSION: TO DELIVER SMILES AND RELIEVE STRESS IN THE PRESSURE COOKER THAT IS MILITARY HEALTHCARE.

Navy CAPT Julie A. Darling represents how a woman with intelligence, drive, and purpose can rise in rank and leadership in our nation's military.

She also represents how a nurse with a big heart and a big dog can help people get better and live better. The people she helps are Navy sailors, Marines, their families, and many staff members within her sphere of influence. And the dog? That's Angus.

Facility therapy dog Angus is on a mission: to deliver smiles and relieve stress in the pressure cooker that is military healthcare. With unconditional love and a quirky personality, Angus does a terrific job.

WE NEED A DOG

Julie and Angus first met in 2018 when Julie served as Department Head for Critical Care at the U.S. Naval Hospital in San Diego, one of the Navy's busiest intensive care units (ICUs). With its main, neonatal, and pediatric ICUs, staff members faced a steady stream of human suffering.

"We need a dog," Julie recalls thinking as her staff coped with the pressures faced by any acute care facility. After seeing the difference our dogs make at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Julie reached out to Southeastern Guide Dogs.

ANGUS DOES HIS THING

Before Angus arrived, some were skeptical. "When I presented the idea to the leadership chain of command, there was some eye rolling in the room—I know people thought I was crazy," Julie admits. But Angus didn't disappoint. When this loving pupper enters a room

LEADERSHIP UNLEASHED



CAPT Julie Darling's career includes a lengthy list of accolades. She's pursuing her Doctorate in Nursing Practice from Duke University and has achieved board certifications as an acute care nurse practitioner, certified clinical nurse specialist, and certified critical care nurse. She's advanced through the ranks from Navy ensign to captain. Behind the achievements, there's a kind and caring human who has witnessed plenty of trauma. And that's where Angus comes in. Because of Julie's leadership in establishing the therapy dog program at her previous hospital, Angus and his successor, LC, have brought emotional support to hundreds of military personnel.

with his inviting eyes and wagging tail, he often senses who's having a hard time.

"There is a high staff burnout and caregiver fatigue associate with critical care nursing," Julie explains. "But after the staff interacted with our dogs, the mood among them did a 180-degree shift for the better. Everyone is so much happier when they have a visit from Angus. Sometimes—especially with COVID now—caregivers are tired. They're not just physically tired; they're emotionally tired; they're exhausted. Anyone that's a dog lover knows that it just changes you. I feel strongly that these dogs are a huge resource in the hospital—in any workspace—for the staff."

MILITARY MOVES

Angus made such an impression that when Julie received her next assignment, people said, "Well, you can't take Angus with you!"

"These are the same people that were like, 'Crazy dog lady, she just wants to bring a dog to work,' but that wasn't the case at all," Julie says. Teams stick together, so Angus would be moving to northern Virginia, too.

To help with the transition, Julie and her "partner in crime," Lisa Arnold, applied for another therapy dog to replace Angus. As special assistant for the hospital's Healthcare Resolutions Program, Lisa now works with a cheerful yellow Lab named LC, who happens to be Angus's sister. LC supports Lisa's work in helping hospital staff to talk after traumatic events.

Julie and Angus transitioned to the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Falls Church, where Angus now spreads joy among military colleagues.

"Angus's job is very similar to what it was in San Diego, except we're not in a hospital; we're in an administrative building," Julie explains. "We do ▶

morning and afternoon rounds . . . he's in their workspace, interacting with them, relaxing with them, and giving them that therapeutic touch that they need. The mood's lighter. People are down on the floor, petting him—he brings down the stress in the room."

LEADERSHIP & PUPPY LOVE

In her new role as Assistant Director for Nurse Corps Career Plans, Julie strives to improve Navy healthcare. Meanwhile, one of her best ideas never leaves her side: Angus. And Angus's best idea? Just being himself. "Angus is an old soul, but he's got a very goofy personality," Julie says. "He just loves people more than anything. My life—and many others' lives—are truly better because of Southeastern Guide Dogs and Angus." ●



**YOUR GENEROSITY HELPS VETERANS
WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST.
THANK YOU!**

PUPPY ◀ REWIND



From Puppy Love to Hero

Teenager Anthony Marantino was looking for a meaningful project for his high school volunteer service requirements. After hearing others talk about their exceptional experiences with Southeastern Guide Dogs, he chose to raise a puppy. The whole Marantino family dove into caring for Angus, including 11-year-old Chewbacca, their pet Lab, who became the puppy's best buddy. Angus's curiosity and playfulness gave the aging Chewbacca a new lease on life. Despite their mismatched big and little sizes, they played and napped together, happily sharing toys, beds, and cuddles.



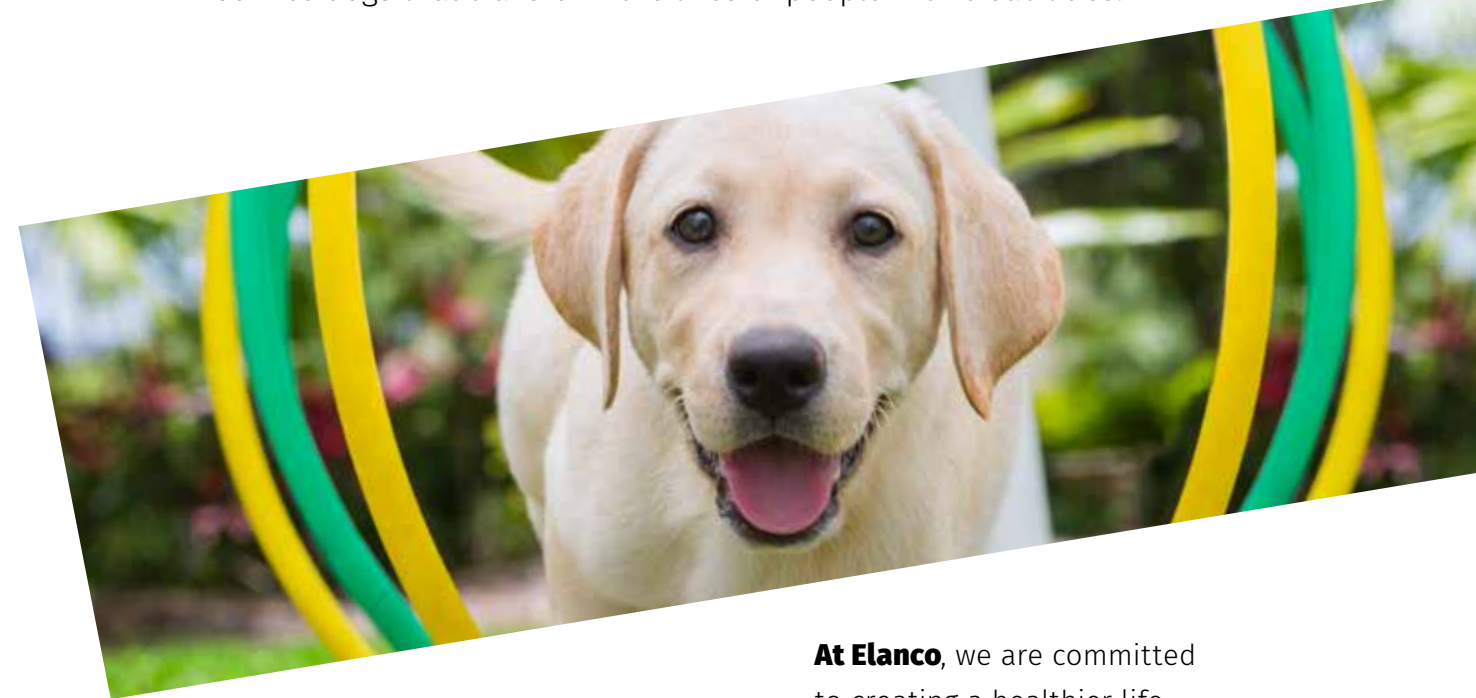
Angus showed excellent behavior traveling in the car and was patient, empathetic, and sweet with small children. On walks around the neighborhood, he always made friends.

"With how friendly and loving he was growing up, it's no surprise that he became a facility therapy dog," says Anthony's father, Jason. "I am confident that Angus does a very good job bringing love and comfort to everyone he meets." Good job, Angus!



Elanco is proud to be the Official Sponsor of Preventative Health Products for Southeastern Guide Dogs

We support long and healthy lives for the incredible guide dogs and service dogs that transform the lives of people with disabilities.



At Elanco, we are committed to creating a healthier life for animals everywhere. That means a more comprehensive portfolio of products along with unparalleled service and support for the health of animals, and for the good of people and the planet. **Elanco Healthy Purpose™**



HEROES Challenge

How to Thank Veterans

A letter from Vice Admiral Joe Maguire

Dear Friend,

When I was assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base, I met some people who were deeply involved in the mission of Southeastern Guide Dogs. Then when I served as Commander of SEALs worldwide during various conflicts, my team members suffered a lot of casualties—and Southeastern Guide Dogs always came through with dogs that gave them back their independence. My own ambassador dog, Darley, has been my shadow for years, and I've received a great deal of comfort from having her by my side.

Now I'm standing together with another team—the Southeastern Guide Dogs **Heroes Council**. I'm honored and proud to serve on the council with these individuals who have joined forces to help veterans get the dogs they need.

The Heroes Council is asking you to support veterans and the dogs that love them with this commitment: for every dollar you donate, the **Council will match your gift, up to \$575,000**. This Heroes Challenge is your opportunity to give veterans who've sacrificed so much the help and companionship that only a dog can give.

As I travel this nation, I often hear: "Thank you for your service." And while saying "thank you" is always nice, if you really want to thank veterans, please donate to help them get their lives back. I can assure you that you're investing in a mission that not only changes—but saves—lives.

Respectfully,



Joseph Maguire
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy, Retired
Chairman, Heroes Council

**Be a Hero
for a Hero—
Double Your
Gift Today**

Rise to Meet the \$575,000 Heroes Challenge Double Your Donation Today



THE HEROES COUNCIL

Special appreciation goes to our Heroes Council, a group of friends who care about veterans and have pooled their resources to create our **\$575,000 Heroes Challenge**. Because of their helpful compassion, your gift will go twice as far.

Heroes Council Chairman: Vice Admiral Joseph Maguire, USN (Ret.)

Heroes Council Members:

Jim Barge & Dawn McKnight

G. S. Brooks

The Davis Elkins Charitable Foundation

Nancy & Bill Gacioch

Marcia Gosline

George & Mary Graner

Ryan & Stephanie Jensen

Maria Kenny & Bob Macpherson

E. Liberty Foundation

John & Susan Rapp

Carol & Ed Sanders

The Sam M. Scituro Family Foundation

Lester & Diana Shapiro

Brian & Sherry Soucy

About Joe Maguire

Retired Navy Vice Admiral Joseph Maguire possesses a resumé of accolades and service awards as big as a Labrador's heart and far too long to list. Before retiring in 2010 from a 36 year career with the U.S. Navy, he served as Deputy Director for Strategic Operational Planning at the National Counterterrorism Center. In 2019, he was appointed by the President as acting Director of National Intelligence. Previously, Maguire served as Commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, and his first flag assignment was in U.S. Special Operations Command. He is now a member of the Southeastern Guide Dogs Board of Directors and the **Chairman of our Heroes Council**. Highly revered within the U.S. Navy SEAL community, Joe has connected numerous Special Operators with our service dogs.



Joe Maguire and
Ambassador Dog Darley

Be a Hero for a Hero—Double Your Gift Today | [GuideDogs.org/heroes](https://www.GuideDogs.org/heroes)





Jeanette Nazario
and Gold Star
Family Dog Bruno

For the Love of Bruno



WHEN JEANETTE NAZARIO NEEDS EXTRA motivation to get out of bed, Bruno is there beside her, ready to bound through another dog-day of eager affection.

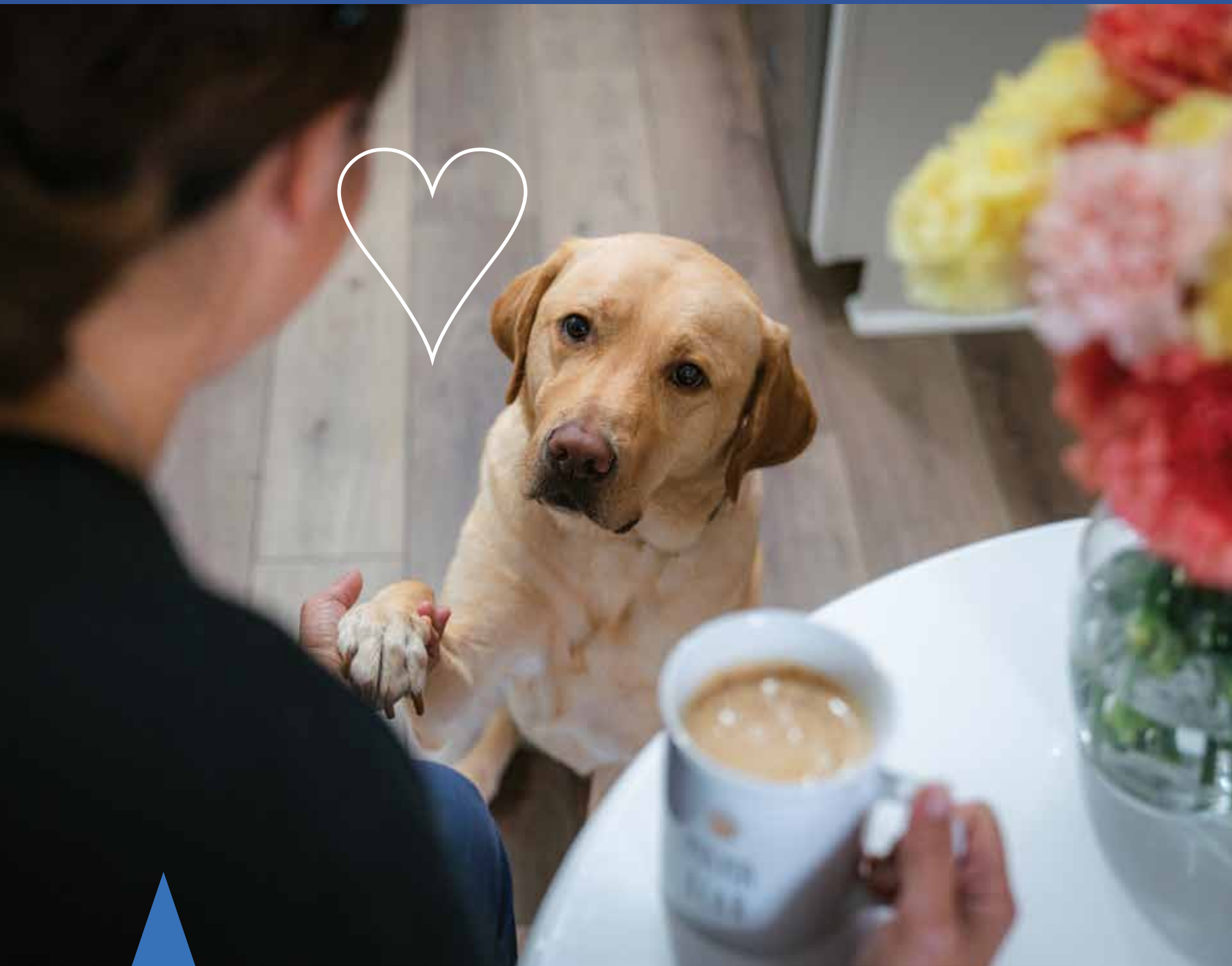
When she needs a soft place to land her tears, Bruno is there, warm and accepting.



And when this military mom needs to talk about SPC. Zachary C. Moore, the son she lost when he was only 23, Bruno is all ears, soft, floppy, and ready.

“I love talking about my son,” Jeanette says, her eyes misting.

“I can get nose-to-nose with Bruno and just talk to him. He just sits there and listens to me. If I’m having a good day or a down day, I talk to him. He always leans on me, like a big hug—he gives me the biggest hugs. He’s my big, huggable bear.”



“I can get nose-to-nose with Bruno and just talk to him. He just sits there and listens to me. If I’m having a good day or a down day, I talk to him.”

BRUNO 2.0

As a Gold Star Family Dog, Bruno surpasses his job description: *providing comfort to military families who have lost a loved one in active service.* Jeanette received him as a gift from Southeastern Guide Dogs in late 2021 and sometimes calls him “Bruno 2.0.” That’s because there’s another Gold Star Family Dog named Bruno, a gift to Jeanette’s friend, mentor, and fellow Gold Star Mother, Annette Kirk.

No one chooses to join the American Gold Star Mothers, but once you’re in, you’re surrounded by friends. They lend each other strength while keeping the memory of their sons and daughters alive. It was here among her “sisters” that Jeanette gravitated to the other Bruno. “Every time we went to events, I was loving and hugging Bruno,” Jeanette recalls. “He always gave me comfort in my heart. For a whole year, Annette would say, ‘You can have one, too.’”

By the time her own Bruno arrived, his name felt familiar and right.

JUST IN TIME

Jeanette waited that year to apply for a dog because she knew that Zachary would have wanted her to take care of the dog he left behind. Toby, the old Boston terrier, passed away three months before Bruno arrived.

And Bruno came just in time, when Jeanette was on the verge of being an empty nester, a hard passage for any mom.

Jeanette has three children, including Zachary. Her youngest, Diego, is preparing to join the Air Force. Her oldest, Mariah, served in the Navy for nine years. Middle son Zachary chose the Army, enlisting in 2014 as a signal support systems specialist. It was no surprise when her children followed the family career, as Jeanette is the daughter of a career Air Force veteran and her two brothers served in Iraq. ▶



**Our dogs are a gift.
Life is a gift, too.**



PUPPY REWIND



Puppy Raiser Alexis Kopp (right) with her sister, Amelia

Best-Friend Bruno

From the moment they met, puppy raiser Alexis Kopp could tell that Bruno was full of love, kisses, and energy. He could be calm and content napping at her feet, but when she returned after leaving the house, Bruno greeted her with total excitement and enthusiasm.

This dog's cuddly affection for people stood out as he grew. "Bruno had a special talent for knowing when someone needed some puppy love," Alexis says. People around her said that he was the best behaved and well-mannered dog they had ever seen. But even more, he displayed true empathy. When one of Alexis' school friends had a panic attack while she was taking an exam, Bruno noticed immediately and put his head on the woman's lap. Moments like this revealed to Alexis that someday, Bruno would make a huge difference in someone's life—someone who truly needed a friend.

"With his personality, Bruno showed a special ability to make the worst day possible into a better, somewhat happy day . . . and the okay days into good ones," Alexis adds. "We thought he would become a service dog for a veteran or a Gold Star Family Dog for sure, because of his love for giving love." It's been a happy ending for Bruno, and Alexis couldn't be prouder.

FAR, FAR AWAY

But for Zachary, life in the Army coincided with a personal struggle with mental health. Stationed in Fort Hood, Texas, he was being treated for depression when he deployed to Camp Hovey, South Korea. Within a month of arriving at this remote outpost near the demilitarized zone at the North Korean border, Zachary was gone.

After reading thousands of pages of official reports, Jeanette knows deep in her soul that Zachary never meant to die by suicide. In a moment of despair, he took too much medication—and then immediately sought help. "Call my mom," he kept insisting, and when Jeanette received a call from a translator, she was told he was stable.

Springing into action, she called the Red Cross to get help with her passport. But just when she hung up the phone, the knock on the door interrupted life as Jeanette knew it. Gold Star Mothers never forget the official military death notification. "I went from, 'I'll take care of my son' to 'What are you talking about?!' Jeanette says. "He really tried to live. I know he tried to live."

It was August 2, 2017, a day she'll never forget. That's the day her own despair set in, with its relentless wellsprings of sorrow. The Gold Star Mothers rallied beside her, and now Bruno joins her journey, always at the ready with his big, boundless love. And Jeanette relies on that love, every day. "He's all that joy into one," she says, "so precious and innocent; he's gentle and a giant at the same time."

PRESSING ON WITH BRUNO

Today, Jeanette strives to keep Zachary's memory alive. She volunteers tirelessly with the Gold Star Mothers, serving other veterans, comforting other moms, and sharing about Zach while serving as the Tampa Bay chapter's 2nd



vice president and chaplain. The two Brunos get together at some of these events, where other moms borrow their big puppy-hugs. She also volunteers at suicide prevention events while juggling her full-time job at Walt Disney World.

But she always has time for Bruno because Bruno gives meaning to her time. "He brings purpose into a life of grieving and sadness," she says. "He's always there for me, no matter what. And he needs me, too—he gives me this feeling that, 'I've got to take care of you, Bruno.' To all the trainers and puppy raisers that instilled that love into him, I get that love every day of my life. All that they taught Bruno—all the love they've given—it's passed on to me every single day. I can't thank them enough for what they've given me. He's priceless." ●



YOUR GIFTS SHOW COMPASSION TO THE PEOPLE WHO NEED OUR DOGS. THANK YOU!



Timely Ways to Give

We're grateful for your caring and kindness

No matter how you give, every gift supports the timeless mission of Southeastern Guide Dogs, creating extraordinary dogs that transform lives.

ONLINE

You love the convenience, where just a few clicks make it happen. Give online at:

[GuideDogs.org/heroes](https://www.guidedogs.org/heroes)

BY CHECK

You're a traditionalist, where good solid paper gets the job done. Mail your gift to:

Southeastern Guide Dogs
4210 77th Street East
Palmetto, FL 34221

CRYPTOCURRENCY

You live on the cutting edge of technology. We've got you covered, whether you choose Bitcoin, Dogecoin, Ethereum, or another. If you've held your cryptocurrency over a year, you may avoid capital gains tax that you would have paid if you sold it. Donate cryptocurrency at:

[GuideDogs.org/crypto](https://www.guidedogs.org/crypto)

IRA DISTRIBUTION

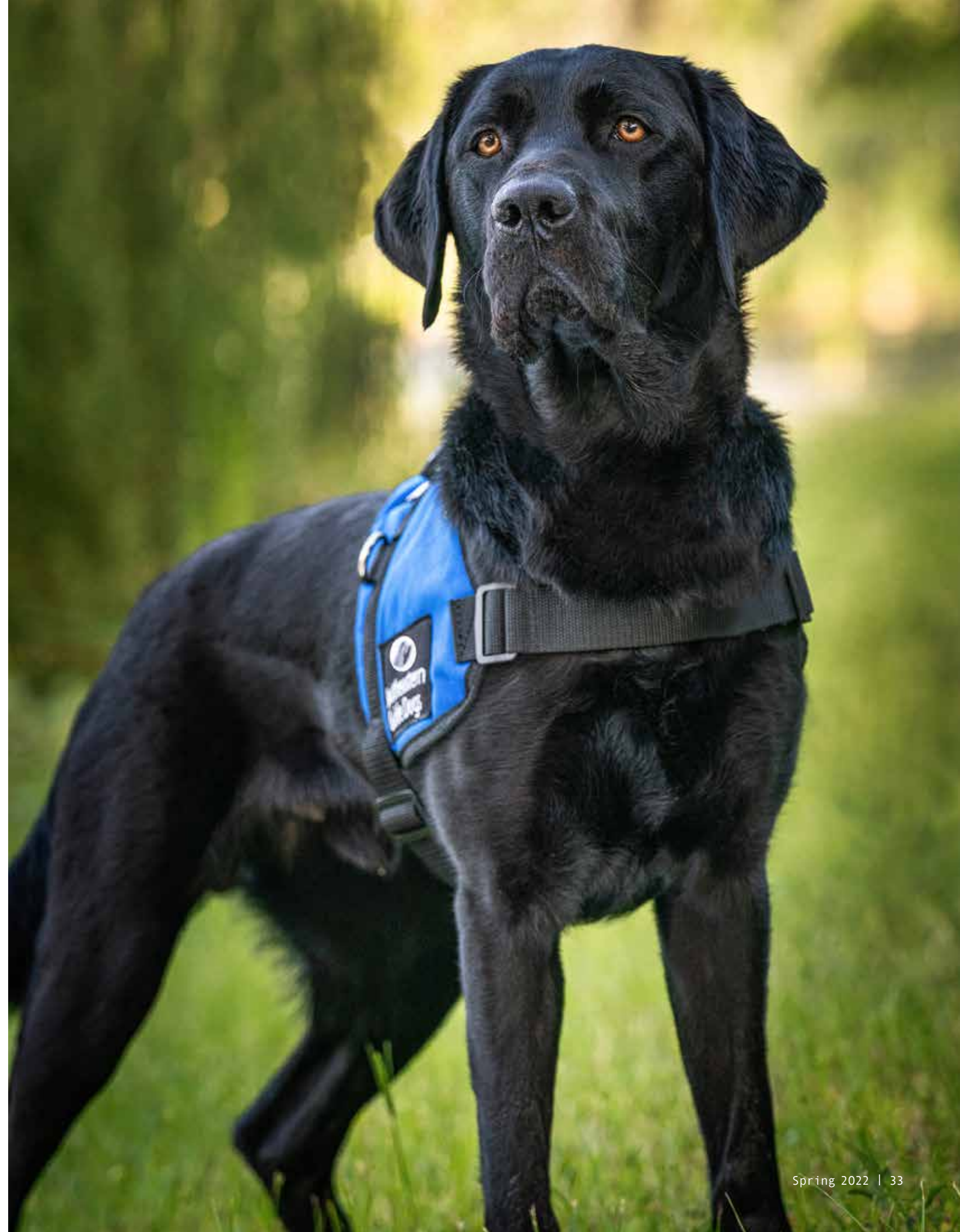
You look for ways to give—and give smart. You can make your tax-free, qualified charitable distribution while supporting our mission. Get started by visiting our website at [GuideDogs.org/IRA](https://www.guidedogs.org/IRA)

Or, contact Gloria Manzenberger, VP Finance & Risk Management at Gloria.Manzenberger@guidedogs.org or 941-845-1870.

APPRECIATED STOCK

You keep your pulse on the market, while qualifying for an income tax charitable deduction and avoiding paying taxes on appreciated value. Get started by contacting Gloria Manzenberger, VP Finance & Risk Management at Gloria.Manzenberger@guidedogs.org or 941-845-1870.

Thank you for your generosity!



YOU CAN MAKE AN IMPACT TODAY



Sustaining dollars are the bedrock of our financial strength, and our **Cornerstone Society** is an important program for like-minded members of our community who believe in our mission. Your commitment to make a lasting difference ensures that we can provide our extraordinary dogs to the people we serve.



We invite you to join the Cornerstone Society, an exceptional group of donors who pledge a recurring gift. With your multi-year commitment, you will receive the following benefits:

- Exclusive invitation to our Cornerstone Society events
- An engraved name tag identifying you as a member
- Special listing on our donor recognition wall and in our donor honor roll

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

Partner | \$1,200–\$4,999 per year

Benefactor | \$5,000–\$9,999 per year

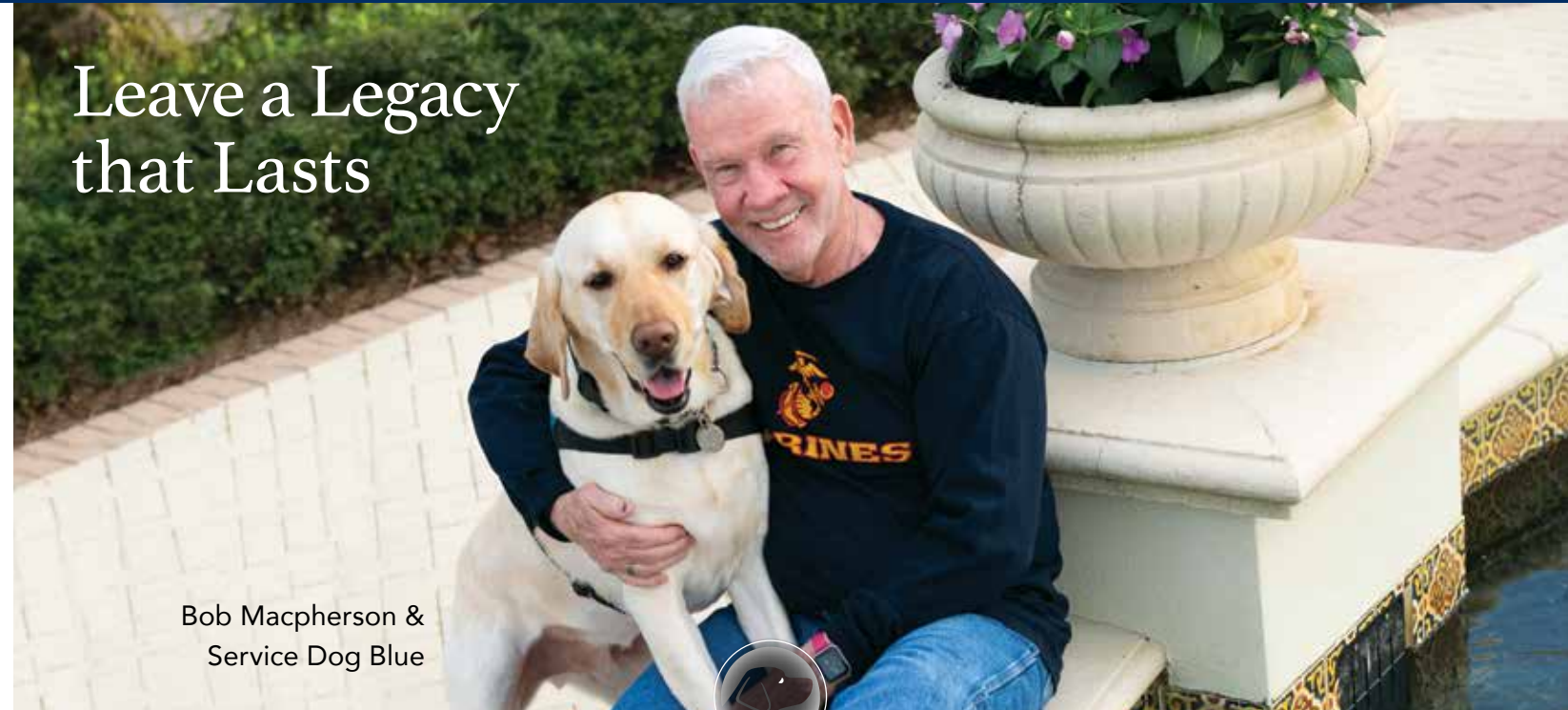
Visionary | \$10,000–\$49,999 per year

Guardian | \$50,000–\$99,999 per year

Founder | \$100,000+ per year

Join by filling out our easy, online commitment form at [GuideDogs.org/CS](https://www.GuideDogs.org/CS) or call **941.729.5665**.

Leave a Legacy
that Lasts



Bob Macpherson &
Service Dog Blue

HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Heritage Society is a group of caring individuals committed to ensuring the long term stability of our school through wills and bequests. To join, simply notify us that you have included Southeastern Guide Dogs in your will by **emailing heritagesociety@guidedogs.org**, and find out more at **[GuideDogs.org/HS](https://www.GuideDogs.org/HS)**.

Remembering Southeastern Guide Dogs in your will creates a legacy of kindness, and gifts of any size impact our extraordinary dogs. Don't have a will? We've partnered with **Freewill.com** to give you a simple, convenient way to write a legally valid will, at no cost. Get started on your will today by visiting **[GuideDogs.org/will](https://www.GuideDogs.org/will)**.

Consult your tax professional for advice, and thanks for giving!



Fromm is proud to support Southeastern Guide Dogs

At Fromm Family Foods, we pride ourselves on offering a wide variety of premium dog and cat foods produced using the finest ingredients. Countless families across the country trust us with feeding their four-legged family members. We are honored to be selected as the Official Dog Food of Southeastern Guide Dogs, providing nutritional excellence to their extraordinary dogs throughout the United States.



To find a retailer near you, visit
frommfamily.com/retailers