



## New Puppies on the Way!



### Message from the President

Welcome to 2017 and the January 2017 edition of our Newsletter!

Thank you to all our supporters, donors, staff and volunteers for a terrific 2016! We are building on these successes with great ideas and initiatives planned for 2017 - and we are looking forward to some new puppies! **Check out *What's Ahead in 2017*** below for a look ahead into the coming year.



We continue to seek dog lovers who want to join our team. **If you are a dog lover and interested in raising a puppy, or know someone who is, please contact Michele Khol, Director of Canine Operations at [mkhol@vetsfwd.org](mailto:mkhol@vetsfwd.org).**

**Ken Dowd**  
**President/CEO**  
**Major General (R)**

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### What's Ahead in 2017

**Service Dog Eagle** and his Veteran, Jon, completed their Veteran-SD training on Saturday, January 7th and are now settled in Jon's home in Massachusetts. Jon reports that "Eagle never leaves my side and is very attentive to me....he is an awesome dog!" During his first few days in his new home, Eagle awoke Jon on two occasions from recurring nightmares. **A big thank you to Dana and Matt Richardson for raising Eagle and to Suzanne Ager and Mike Turner**, who conducted Eagle and Jon's Veteran-SD training. Right before Eagle left he, spent some time touring the USS Nautilus in Connecticut, practicing his various skills with lead trainer, Michele.

On Feb 1st **Service Dog in Training Finn** will begin his Veteran-SD training with his

Veteran, Bob, who lives in Rhode Island. Upon completion of this training, Finn will be accompanying Bob on his flight back to Rhode Island - his first "official" task as a Service Dog. During his final advanced skill training at VMF, Finn has been sporting his new Trek boots to help protect his feet



**Finn in his Trek boots**

during the sometimes harsh winter environment in Rhode Island. **A big VMF thank you to Meg Forman for raising Finn, and for her tireless dedication to helping Finn complete his Veteran specific training.**



**Eagle on the USS Nautilus**

In mid-March **Service Dog in Training Vincent** will begin his Veteran-SD training with his Veteran John, who lives in Texas. Upon completion of this training, Vincent will accompany John on his flight back to Texas to begin his service dog career. As part of his Veteran-specific training, Vincent has been participating in weekly therapy treatment sessions with a local licensed clinical social worker. Vincent's veteran, John, does therapy work with hospice and will be working with Vincent to obtain his therapy certification upon their return to Texas. Upon Vincent earning his therapy dog certification, he will be able to support John in this amazing secondary role. **A huge thank you to Donna Dorula for her dedication in raising and training Vincent.** During the recent holidays Vincent was out and about with Donna, spreading the word about VMF.



**Donna Dorula with Vincent**

**Guide Dogs of America has generously agreed to donate 2 Labrador retrievers to VMF** - both puppies were born on December 5, 2016. Michele Khol, Director of Canine Operations, will be starting one of the puppies for current VMF puppy raiser Meg Forman. The second puppy will be raised by Pete and Terri Hill, canine trainers who worked with VMF service dog King and his Veteran, Jessie, in Maryland. Welcome aboard! **More information (and pictures!) coming in the February newsletter.**



**In 2017 we are re-instituting quarterly training and orientation sessions for our volunteers and staff**, both new and 'experienced' members. These informative and fun sessions will focus on educating and informing participants on:

- VMF as an organization and its history, its current objectives and priorities, and its future.
- VMF's volunteer program to include organization/structure, volunteer opportunities, and volunteer tools and resources.
- VMF communication channels.
- Special topics.
- Volunteer feedback, suggestions and recommendations.

These VMF training and orientation sessions will be conducted at VMF's Canine Training and Veteran Support Center in Dulles, Virginia. Tentative dates (or planning purposes) are 26 February, 11 June, 27 August and 29 October. Specific information for each session will be provided no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled session.

We are also planning for an Open House at our Dulles Center in 2017, and to make this an annual event. The tentative date for our 2017 Open House is 15 July - stay tuned for additional information as our Open House plan matures!

**We will be launching a focused puppy raiser recruitment campaign in 2017** with the goal of connecting with local area 'dog groups', finding dog lovers who are interested in raising puppies and/or have experience raising service dogs and recruiting them to join our team. **If you are interested in learning more about raising a VMF puppy, or know someone is, or if you are interested in helping with our recruitment campaign let us hear from you.**

[Download Puppy Raiser Application.](#)

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## VMF Needs Puppy Raisers!

***If you are a dog lover and are interested in raising a puppy, VMF has the perfect opportunity for you that will positively change the life of a veteran!***

Come join our team of dog loving, service oriented, fun loving puppy raisers. Our highly motivated puppy raisers play a significant role in the development and training of our service dogs.



Our puppy raisers will be the first to tell you that **the time, attention, and love they give to these future service dogs is incredibly rewarding, and that the opportunity to make a significant impact in the life of the veteran is extremely powerful.** The matching and placing of the puppy you raise with their veteran brings a tremendous sense of pride, knowing you have given a part of yourself to significantly help another person.

### **No experience raising a service dog is required.**

New puppy raisers join VMF's extremely collaborative and supportive Canine Team of raisers, sitters and trainers- effective service dog puppy raising is truly a team effort and VMF's is one of the best! Advice, help and assistance from VMF's Canine Team leaders and members are only a text message, email or phone call away.

The first step in becoming a VMF puppy raiser is to [complete and submit a Puppy Raiser Application](#). Upon submission of a completed application, you will be contacted by our puppy raiser coordinator to schedule a follow-up interview. This interview includes providing you information about VMF, our puppy raising methodology and service dog training process, our training team and our typical schedule, as well as answering questions you may have.



***Come join us and make a difference in the lives of a service dog and a veteran!  
Change your life. Change theirs!***

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## Volunteer Highlight: Matt and Dana Richardson

### *Teaching Eagle to Fly* - Dana Richardson

Matt and I first learned about puppy raising through our friends, Curt and Michele Khol. Michele introduced us to VMF and described the process of raising a service dog within a family framework based upon her own personal experience. My son, Matt, was twelve at the time. He agreed to be the primary raiser for Eagle and was so excited to get his very own puppy to raise!

I would be lying if I didn't say that raising a pre-teen while also raising and training a service dog wasn't a challenge. The similarities were significant and sometimes I thought I was raising two teenagers. Matt and Eagle bonded in a special way that can only happen between a boy and a dog. They were perfect companions.

When Matt turned 13 Eagle seemed to follow his lead being eager to please, yet rebelling for no reason every now and again. Seeing a unique training opportunity in this, Suzanne Ager and Michele being both true 'dog whisperers' were able to help Matt hone his skills and worked with Eagle to become a most responsive and balanced service dog.

The beginning of high school for Matt also meant graduate school for Eagle. So many new experiences for both and limited time Matt to train with Eagle allowed me to step in a little more. Opportunities to explore new things and places allowed both Eagle and Matt to grow individually and together.

Mixing and mingling with military groups, living in the city, riding the metro, volunteering at homeless shelters were just a few things that Matt and Eagle shared. It was a loving relationship built upon trust with the added benefit of simply enjoying each other's company.

The realization that Eagle's graduation and placement with a veteran was on the horizon brought home the sobering thought that all good things must come to an end.

Fortunately, meeting Eagle's veteran, Jon, gave both Matt and I a clearer perspective on what VMF is all about. When Jon learned who was responsible for raising Eagle he tearfully thanked Matt telling him how much this meant to him and his family. I saw Matt and Eagle stand taller that day and couldn't have been more proud.

From the beginning, learning the basics of how to hold the leash properly to the final moment learning how to then let go has been an amazing journey. As a proud mother, I can say that this opportunity of service has taught my son well and both the benefits and knowledge he has acquired far outweigh the space in our hearts Eagle has left behind.



**Matt with Service Dog Eagle**



**Dana Out & About with Eagle**

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Veterans Moving Forward (VMF) is a veteran-centric, non-profit foundation and 501(c)(3) charity dedicated to providing trained service dogs and canine therapy services to veterans with physical and mental health challenges across the full spectrum of needs. Your **tax-deductible donation** to VMF will help us with this mission.

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