

Editor's Note

And so a new year begins ... many of us make New Year's resolutions to clean our house more regularly, to read more books, to save more money



Matt Burlingame

for retirement and, of course, the ever popular resolution to lose weight and get "in shape." Some are against making resolutions, feeling they are merely setting themselves up for failure. But as a new year brings a chance for outer changes, it also brings a chance for inner changes. Make resolutions this year to be kinder; to stop being so angry; to stop judging our self-worth by how we measure up to others; to look into the eyes of the less fortunate and see them as real people and not simply a statistic. These are the resolutions that will truly change your life. We welcome your feedback at editor@pridemedia.net.

Alpha K9 'Saves Lives One Dog At A Time'

by **Melissa Martinez**

"Saving Lives One Dog at a Time" is the motto of an up-and-coming canine training facility tucked away in a square of warehouses off of 14th Avenue Alpha K9 is an innovative, relatively new company that is making strides to make the world a better place by providing and training service dogs for individuals with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in a fast and affordable manner.

Started in 2011, Alpha K9 was put into motion by Kevin Cameron, a veteran who was assisting his brother in finding a service dog. Upon applying and searching for a service dog, Cameron found the bureaucracy and the cost made one difficult to obtain. Having a background in handling and training working dogs in the military, Cameron finally decided to train a service dog for his brother himself — thus sparking the idea behind the business. Now utilizing the talents of some highly skilled trainers, Cameron and his staff have a combined 25 years of experience

in professional dog handling and training, allowing the nonprofit to provide services to people in need of a service dog ... and a friend.

Many wrongly assume that veterans are the only ones affected by PTSD, but in reality it can affect anyone exposed to traumatic events that cause them to have continuous or long-term anxiety. Alpha K9 has dogs that service not just




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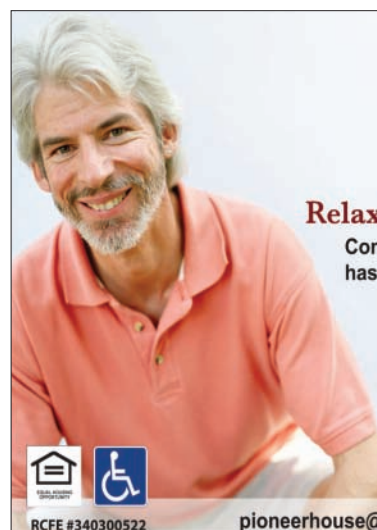


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military personnel and their families, but also a vast array of those suffering from trauma as well as first responders, youth groups and average community members who would like to have a highly trained service dog.

With the high rate of PTSD related suicides, obtaining a service dog can often lead to better mental and physical well-being for those affected. Currently, veterans are having to wait up to four years and are charged up to \$25,000 for a trained PTSD dog. With the average disability check barely covering the cost of basic needs, obtaining a service dog is nearly impossible. For those who do manage to obtain a service dog, if they are determined to be functionally cured, they must return the animal without any type of refund or compensation.

Alpha K9 works with several different organizations to ensure that each individual client's needs are met and that upon receiving their service dog, they are guaranteed to have long-term support of not only their new life companion, but also the Alpha K9 community. They have several sponsors such as Homeward Bound, Sacramento County Animal Shelter, Western Feed & Pet Supply, Tuscan Natural, and a number of others to make this happen.

Alpha K9 works with those in need who cannot afford the fees of obtaining a service animal, helping to find

them sponsorship through fundraising and donations. After applying for a service canine, the trainers find an animal matching the needs of the applicant, sometimes this includes finding a preferred breed that is requested. They then match the dog to the person and weekly training occurs over a period of 2-6 months. After training sessions are complete, owners and their companions are welcome to come back to the facility to "brush up" on training or support, making it a place of comfort for past and present clients.

The organization has been well received, not just by the Sacramento region, but also nationally. It currently serves more than 300 clients, including many throughout the U.S. and Canada. With the help of a dedicated staff of four, dozens of volunteers, its landlord, clients and friends, its current facility is under renovation to expand even more. In the short amount of time it has been operating, it has received many awards, including KCRA's A-List award for Canine Training, and media recognition for its veteran based work.

The nonprofit has come a long way and will continue to do so with its down-to-earth good-service attitude. Along with the support of volunteers and neighborhood sponsors, it has been raising money through all means possible, holding fundraisers,

selling coins and pushing its products online. Although receiving much praise, it is evident that its focus is still on its initial cause, and that it continues to remain dedicated, with the staff spending out of their own pockets at times just to get the dogs to their owners.

It has hosted and aided in fundraisers to help organizations such as the Sacramento County Animal Shelter. Alpha K9 is continuously looking for supporters of its cause. Come show your support for this great organization at www.alphak9.biz or stop by the facility at 7500 14th Ave., and have your faith in humanity restored.

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