



The Other End of the Leash

March 2020

Volume 1

Dogs Helping
Heroes

Annual Dog Walk and 5K Run

Upcoming Events:

Dog walk/5K run on
April 4th

Hooray for Heroes on
May 16th

Code EMS on May 23rd

Gold Star Riverboat
Cruise on June 7th

American Legion Auxil-
iary on June 20th

The Dogs Helping Heroes (DHH) Dog Walk and 5K Run was an inspiration of a philanthropy project through the Leadership Southern Indiana NEXGEN program. NEXGEN is a leadership program for juniors in high school primarily in Clark and Floyd counties in Indiana. They are taught about many aspects of leadership, one very important one is philanthropy where they understand that giving back is not just monetarily, but also through their time and talents. During the 2017-2018 program year a group of six students and an adult advisor were paired with Dogs Helping Heroes because of their love for dogs. In discussing opportunities it was decided upon to host a Dog Walk to raise money and awareness about this great organization. It was the hope of this group to provide enough money for at least one service dog, but equally important to convey the message and mission of DHH. An online pre-registration was established, we met with 103.1 for radio support and relied on the social media scene to provide additional communication. The first year about 62 walkers showed up with their 4 legged friends and we raised just under \$5,000 through corporate sponsors and participants. (The day of the event any corporate sponsors is offered an opportunity to set up a booth at the walk/run this helps to make it feel more like a community event.) Last year, per the request of the DHH Advisory Board, we incorporated a 5K run. Our numbers of attendees dou-

bled and we raised just under \$8,000. The DHH Walk / 5K Run is a large undertaking to organize, but teaches the students that through leadership, teamwork, communication, networking and many other skills they can make a very large impact on someone else's life. This year's 3rd Annual DHH Dog Walk / 5K Run will be held Saturday, April 4, 2020. We will have a pre-registration online or you can show up the day of the event between 8-9am to register. Each paid participant receives a t-shirt and their dog receives a bandana. A small opening ceremony will begin at 9am with the Jeffersonville High School color guard and the singing of our National Anthem. Please mark your calendars; we hope to see you there.



FIRST SAVINGS
A WALK

Dogs Helping Heroes
ANNUAL DOG WALK & 5K RUN

"Be at ease"

Raising awareness and funding to match veterans or first responders who suffer from PTSD, TBI or mobility impairments with a service dog.

April 4, 2020 @ 9am
Registration will begin at 8am

Jeffersonville Big Four Station

Pre-register at the link below for \$15 or \$20 day of walk.
<https://leadershipsi.org/event/nexgen-3rd-annual-dog-helping-heroes-walk-5k-run/>

Please visit Dogs Helping Heroes website www.dogshelpingheroes.org

All dogs must remain on a leash at all times during the event.
Each participant is required to clean up after their dog.

Donations can be made payable to: Leadership Southern Indiana
In the memo: Dogs Helping Heroes mail to: R204 Highway 311, Sellersburg, IN 47172

Heroes among Heroes

Being a budding member of the Dogs Helping Heroes organization, I haven't been acclimated to its history. When asked to help develop the newsletter, I reached out to long-standing members for help on a section in which we highlight board members and/or volunteers in the organization. One name seemed to



surface without hesitation and that was the name of Phyllis Wilkins. I received emails which enlightened me on a person who was determined, passionate, organized, and generous. While it would have been possible to dissect the information given and create my own version of who Phyllis Wilkins was, the words of both contributors evokes such feelings about this amazing person, stripping it down would taint the emotions behind the words. The following are the unedited words of two individuals, Tom Strohmeier and Amelia Goffinet, about their friend Phyllis Wilkins.

Phyllis Wilkins' life was focused on volunteer work and serving the Southern Indiana community in several different capacities. As a preacher's wife, she was a part of many different churches in her community and most recently a member of Eastern Heights Baptist Church. Dogs Helping Heroes has been a team effort since the beginning, just like a dog sled team for the Iditarod. Dickie and Phyllis Wilkins both served as leaders in the community and they were the team that led the team. Dickie served as a deputy with the

Clark County Sheriff's Office for 25 years and a pastor at a Salem church, and Phyllis served as executive director of the Clark County Red Cross for 15 years before spending four years as the director of development for Christian Academy of Indiana.

Thanksgiving weekend 2013 was the first meeting of what later

was named Dogs Helping Heroes. A gathering of people who loved dogs but did not know each other gathered in a conference room high above downtown Louisville, and I was on the phone from Frasier, CO. Next we all met at Duffy's Dogs Training Center, and we were off to the crawl of getting DHH up and running. Phyllis was our first board co-chair. All of her many years' experience in non-profit organizations made her a great leader of this fledgling non-profit board. Together we all discovered the challenges involved in starting a new nonprofit, and experienced many great accomplishments in a relatively short period of time. Most rewarding, of course, was seeing successful pairings of Hero and service dog. Mission accomplished!

Phyllis guided us to keep our executive director, Amelia Goffinet, Jay Baribeau, and myself on the rails as best she could, and she put us back there when we strayed. The glint in her eye as we were kindly pulled back onto the topic at hand was kind, and totally priceless. She kept an excel list which she relentlessly re-sorted

among her many callings (personal, mom, church, job, DHH...) and she certainly got a great deal of satisfaction in marking items off her list, to keep our DHH priorities in order. She made sure we all persevered.

Our organization has now placed over 40 dogs with veterans, some of whom were also first responders, and also a Gold Star Family. Phyllis was so proud, and full of joy for what she helped accomplish. We all love the friendships we have built through Dogs Helping Heroes, and many of them continue, for the benefit of those who have served our country and our communities! We were all so very blessed by the guidance of Phyllis and Dickie Wilkins. Respectfully and lovingly submitted by Tom Strohmeier on behalf of fellow startup board members Amelia Goffinet and Jay Baribeau, as well as all those hero teams past, present, and into the future. Tom Strohmeier

She had the gift of making whom-ever she was talking to, or working with, feel like THEY were the smart one, that THEY were the special one.

At her funeral her son said "if I were to ask Mom's best friend to raise their hand, there would be 20 people raising their hand." I had to laugh at that statement because it was so true.

Phyllis was a people gatherer, she had a gift of giving people responsibility, making sure things were being followed up and asking for your opinion. She knew it was a team effort. Her leadership was never about her, she truly cared about others.

I met Phyllis in 2006 when she was still the Director of The Red Cross in Jeffersonville. Together

we worked on many different types of projects.

With each and every one she lead with enthusiasm, intelligence and humor.

Dog Helping Heroes was a perfect opportunity for her to volunteer with an organization that spoke to her heart. Phyllis and her Golden-doodle, Newman started the Pet Therapy program through the Red Cross. She was the mother of two sons who served in the Marines and her husband was a Clark County Sheriff's Deputy. God puts you in the place you're meant to be and with the people who are there to love and support you. The trick is you have to be open to accepting God's guidance; man am I

glad we all listened and came together with DHH and our dear, dear friend.

Greatness doesn't die, Phyllis will live on with our Hero/Dog teams and their families. She will live on with policies that were put in place through her guidance helping DHH to grow and continue to change lives. And for those of us who call ourselves her "best friend" we will forever miss her, but relish the time and opportunity to have had with her.

Amelia Goffinet



Born to Serve

From the Beginning

Long ago, *Canis familiaris* was destined to bear witness to the rise of humankind. Somewhere between fifteen thousand and forty thousand years ago a primal bond was sparked between man and dog. Recent DNA research and archeological findings suggest a very complex/ambiguous origin for *Canis familiaris*, making it very difficult to pinpoint when and how the first domesticated animal came into the human realm. However, to the average dog-owner it really doesn't matter much whether our trusted four-legged friend was domesticated from *Canis lupus* or a smaller offshoot of the wolf who had already morphed into a scavenger of human midden piles. What should strike most of us dog-fanciers as significant, though, is the fact that "man's best friend" was recognizable as himself and intimately connected to the human-condition many millennia ago, hence familiar. Humans and dogs forged an undying relationship within the throes of survival and expansion. In some form of symbiotic association or another (commensalism, mutualism, or parasitism), we evolved side-by-side into our modern selves.

This intimate evolution within the context of a symbiotic association resulted in people and dogs coming to know each other unlike any other dissimilar species on earth. What that means for the Service-Dog Team is that the canine partner is uniquely wired or predisposed to focus on and accurately interpret his human counterpart's expressions of communication. By the same token, the handler is capable of understanding the emotional/ psychological workings of his dog and responding to such, much like if his canine companion were a human being.

This depth of mutual empathy and communication-potential affords the Service-Dog Team an opportunity to develop a potent, interactive camaraderie which can be expressed in many forms of utility or teamwork. It's no accident that the service-dog can read his handler like a book. It's also no accident that the modern canine can be so readily trained. Countless generations of animal-savvy people selectively bred countless generations of tractable canines that ultimately came to assist us as "Dog."

Try not to underestimate the working-

dog's passion to "do." Keen in intelligence, busy in energy, and determined in drive, the working-dog as we know him today was born to serve. In future articles we'll explore the motivational/compulsory training techniques that are necessary for service-dog development and management. We'll also cover the subtleties of behavior shaping through teaching, reinforcing and conditioning. Hopefully, the "Born to Serve" articles will have a positive impact on the Service-Team's proficiency and confidence. Through a deeper understanding of our trusted animal companions, I hope to foster in our handler-readership an ever deepening appreciation for the canine family-members, who have walked beside us through the pages of history. What a gift my personal dogs have been to me in this lifetime.

Until the next article, look after the special animal that looks after you!
02/29/2020 Matthew Duffy



Of Dogs and Heroes

Being designated a “hero” is always a difficult moniker to grasp. Many of us venture into service for a variety of reasons, however few have the sole intention of heroism. Some do not need a uniform and designation to be a hero, it is thrust upon them through perseverance in their personal lives. Whether it's overcoming tragedy, dealing with an affliction, or finding themselves opportunist in a contagious act. Oftentimes we find those who are most heroic in service, are those with the greatest strife thrust upon them in their personal lives.

Carlton “Curtis” Ashcraft, 69 years old is one of those people who dedicated a lifetime of service to his community and country, while overcoming compounded personal issues. A longtime resident of Louisville, Kentucky, Curtis has surrounded himself with a large family. His wife Sherrie, numerous children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, which are a source of this hero's pride.

Curtis is one of the most recent additions to the Dogs Helping Heroes family having received his battle-buddy, Tipton Lynn Ashcraft, 5 and a half months ago. Tippy Toes, as he is affectionately nicknamed, is an 8 ½ month old Yellow Labrador who is aptly named after his hometown of Tipton, Indiana. Tipton is still in the process of being certified with training from Kat Bosley of Duffy's Dog Training Center, the Training partner for Dogs Helping Heroes in Southern Indiana. Tipton is already showing promise as a successful service dog through his attentiveness on duty and in training. Curtis describes his battle-buddy as a “quick learner” who enjoys training. Tipton has become an ambassador for the Ashcraft family as he greets the family's guests with the friendliness

expected of a family member. When the vest is off, Tipton enjoys life as a normal canine. Described by Curtis as a 'foodie', Tipton enjoys his free time filling his stomach with a variety of peanut butter oriented treats and playing ball and with tug toys.

Curtis first served his country in the United States Air Force (USAF) in June of 1969 until March of 1973, working in Civil Engineer's Electric Shop as an E4 Sergeant specializing in FastFix Runway Repair. In 1970, the then Sgt. Ashcraft called Danang AFB in Vietnam home. Curtis would later continue to serve on the thin “gray” line in the Kentucky State Police as a trooper and Jefferson County Police Department in the Criminal Investigation Division and Traffic Unit. The time Curtis spent serving his country and community in these positions coupled with personal struggles, left Curtis with the byproduct of someone with such a resume. Curtis not only dealt with unconscionable nightmares of his past through mental angst, but physical disabilities associated with that same service by way of the notorious Agent Orange.

Curtis was introduced to Dogs Helping Heroes by a best friend who so a Curtis ly was of his with a vice but



Curtis

“Tippy Toes”

and

longed for the same success he observed in his friend. Like any man who had looked adversity in the face time and time again, Curtis, despite any fears, became vested in improving his life by way of a four-legged Labrador named Tipton.

While Curtis continues his training, and Tipton continues applying his quick learning to a variety of skills, Curtis is optimistic they will be certified by Duffy's and DHH soon. One such skill Tipton is mastering is a command which allows Tipton to assist Curtis in stabilization during standing. Another helpful command Tipton is learning is to watch Curtis's back in crowds. This is a popular command amongst many of us who deal with issues in crowded places.

Curtis has found his uniting with Tipton a positive experience. “He gives me purpose daily,” Curtis commented in a recent message. Tipton has been a tool of change for Curtis in every aspect of his life. “He makes me smile for a change,” he commented fondly about his battle-buddy. This positive force in Curtis' life has spread to his family, a phenomenon I can attest to myself. As Curtis says, his family is happier because he is happier and more motivated. Curtis has also enjoyed being invited into the Dogs Helping Heroes family, saying he is looking forward to many more experiences in the group.

Heroes are the backbone of not only what our country is built, but how it perseveres moving forward. Life without those who have sacrificed so much, those who sacrifice today, and our children who will sacrifice in the future, is a bleak life in deed. In the understanding that sometimes a hero needs a hero, Dogs Helping Heroes was born. Created by heroes to develop heroes to help the heroes

Dogs Helping Heroes

PO Box 2126
Clarksville, IN 47131

Phone: 812-329-0244

E-mail:

Dogshelpingheroes@gmail.com

We are on the web

Dogshelpingheroes.org

Restoring Freedom, Dignity and Independence to Our Wounded Heroes and Gold Star Families

Dogs Helping Heroes is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to helping our wounded heroes and the families of lost heroes within a 200 mile radius of Louisville, Kentucky. We provide specially trained and certified assistance dogs for injured military veterans and first responders to improve their lives, as well as Gold Star Families to help them cope with their loss.

that helped them.

We leave you with the words of Carlton "Curtis" Ashcraft on his hero and friend Tipton: "Tipton loves training and anything that involves the two of us. His loving personality is noted by everyone he meets. He doesn't have a mean bone in his body and has all the tools to be a great Service Dog. I only hope I can be half as good a buddy to him as he has already been to me."



Contributing Authors:

DJ Harrod

Tom Strohmeier

Amelia Goffinet

Matt Duffy

Beth Roberts

