

Smoky Mountain Service Dogs Year End 2020 Newsletter

WHAT A YEAR!!!!!!!!!!!!

Groundbreaking for new SMSD Veteran/Canine Training Center was held on May 11th, 2019 and on November 11th, 2020 we held a Grand Opening with our recipient teams, Bradley/Bella, Charlie/Dagger, Chuck/Sadie, Chad/Brice, and Daniel/Stryker. Our wonderful staff Heather, Darrell, Cassie, Laura, and Susan also joined in. The Center encompasses a 7600 square foot climate controlled Morton building, a 2600 square foot training room, med/exam room, grooming room, a multi purpose training room with kitchenette, and a conference room in addition to offices for staff. Due to Covid-19 we could not hold a public event. If you have not had an opportunity to see the new facility, you may do so on this link. A huge “thank you” to Jim Goyert, Facilities Development Coordinator; Bill Taylor, Board Architect; and Darrell Wilkerson, for delivering a world class SMSD Veteran/Canine Training Center.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDy9BRpx9D4>



Applicants/Recipients

After placing our first 2020 team in February, we had additional placements in September, October, and December for a total of seven placements for the year. Placements were:

Army Veteran Tom with “Sandy”

TN VA Health Care System (serves 110,000 Veterans) with facility dog “Tucker”

Army Veteran Bryan with “Hunter”

Army Veteran John with “Gunner”

Army Veteran Mike with “Crockett”

Marine Veteran Paul with “Cowboy”

Replaced Bryan’s dog “Hunter” with “York” – better fit with family dynamics

Our Canine Program Manager Heather Wilkerson, along with Veterans Family Liaison Suzy Kitchens, worked diligently to develop a SMSD Remote Learning Center that allows the Veteran Recipient to complete an online educational program prior to coming for Training Camp for 5-6 days. Unfortunately, we have had to limit attendance at our "Passing of the Leash" ceremonies to comply with Covid-19 guidelines. Our recipient teams still receive their Quilt of Valor, Eagle Cane, Christian Nail Cross, and dog food for the life of their dog. We have training camps already scheduled for 1Q-2Q 2021.

Our Canines

We currently have 22 wonderful canines in training, and of course our Ambassador "Hooligan". Several puppies will be arriving in the first half of 2021.



SMSD Specialty Plates



To date, we have pre-sold around 650 of the required 1,000 before they will be manufactured. We are working hard on this project so we plead for your help. If you have not ordered one, you can go to our website www.smokymountain servicedogs.org where all the information is available. We have been running radio and TV spots. You might see them on WBIR with John Becker. Please tell your friends.

ADI Reaccreditation

SMSD ADI Five Year Reaccreditation was due in October. We had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Sally Irvin of ADI on site for two days as the ADI assessor. In her review comments, Dr. Irvin recognized SMSD as one of the premier service dog organizations in the nation. The reaccreditation is valid through Dec. 31, 2025. A huge shout out to all who worked so diligently to make this such a successful occasion.

Volunteers

It would be impossible for us to carry out our mission to serve our wounded Veterans without the volunteer spirit of our community. As of year end, SMSD had 191 volunteers led by Board Member Deb Sciarretta.

- 108 Canine Handlers in 80 households
- 20 Community Events personnel
- 11 Grounds keepers
- 6 Canine Transporters for UT Program
- 8 UT Students – socializers and respite care
- 11 members of the Board of Directors
- 27 others including grant writer, bookkeeping

Donors

A huge thank you to so many that have supported SMSD financially. At this point, I would like to highlight Sustaining Partner Weigel's, who supports us each year in a significant way.



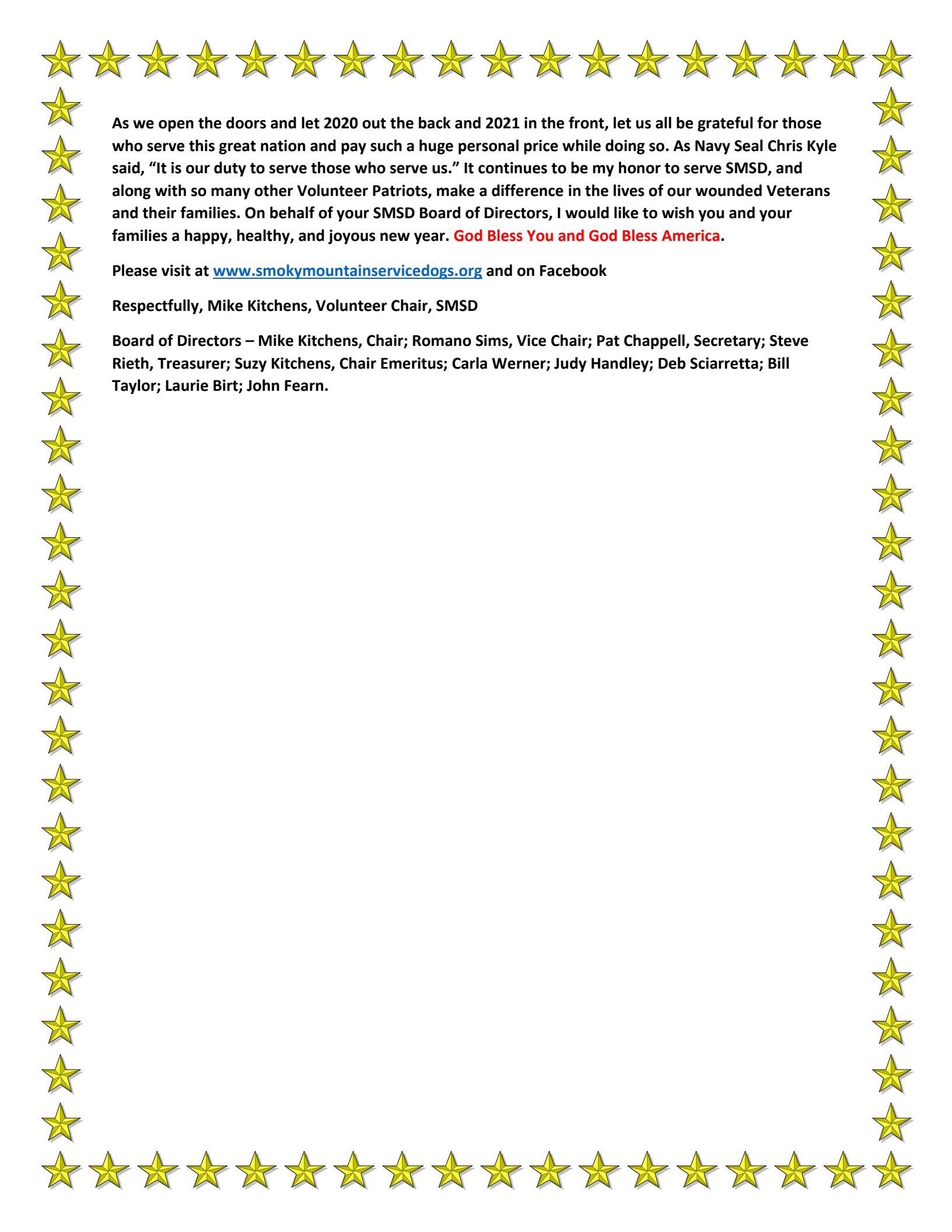
In addition, SMSD is Blessed to have many other Sustaining Partners – Altar'd State, Choice Spine, Gary Lindsey Foundation, PawTree, Natural Pet Supply, Good Neighbor Shoppe, Head Investment Partners, Isotek, Tennessee State Bank, Smoky Mountain Jeep Club, TN Wine Trail, Remax-Hendersonville TN, Pull for Our Veterans, Fishing for Soldiers, UT Federal Credit Union, and more recently Benchmark Home Loans. My apologies to any that I may have missed. A significant amount of donations in support of our mission come from individual donors, way too many to list, but a huge thanks to all for supporting our wounded Veterans.

In December, SMSD was honored to announce a Sustaining Partnership with Don and Hayden Quattlebaum of Pawleys Island, SC. In conjunction with the Andy Quattlebaum and Blackwell Family Foundation, a substantial charitable gift was presented to SMSD in memory of their son Donald Anderson Quattlebaum, Jr. A portion of the gift will be used to establish the Andy Quattlebaum Endowment Fund which will provide an annual distribution towards operating expenses. SMSD is proud to honor Andy's memory (and his yellow lab "Oak") and legacy by naming a portion of the new SMSD Veteran/Canine Training Center property the Andy Quattlebaum Complex and each year we will present a mobility assistance service dog to a wounded Veteran in memory of Alex and "Oak." A recent SMSD lab puppy was named "Oak" in honor of Andy's canine buddy.

Personnel

In May we had the pleasure of hiring Laura Porter as a Staff Trainer. Laura grew up in North Carolina, riding horses and playing with her pet labs. She graduated from the University of Tennessee in 2020 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Animal Science and a minor in Psychology. While at UT, Laura started a student organization dedicated to educating the public about service animals and also worked with the H.A.B.I.T therapy animal program. In her free time, she enjoys fly fishing, downhill skiing, and other outdoor activities. Laura has been a most wonderful addition to our training staff. Laura also volunteered with SMSD prior to graduation. A belated welcome to Laura, shown with SMSD in training "Duncan"





As we open the doors and let 2020 out the back and 2021 in the front, let us all be grateful for those who serve this great nation and pay such a huge personal price while doing so. As Navy Seal Chris Kyle said, "It is our duty to serve those who serve us." It continues to be my honor to serve SMSD, and along with so many other Volunteer Patriots, make a difference in the lives of our wounded Veterans and their families. On behalf of your SMSD Board of Directors, I would like to wish you and your families a happy, healthy, and joyous new year. **God Bless You and God Bless America.**

Please visit at www.smokymountainservicedogs.org and on Facebook

Respectfully, Mike Kitchens, Volunteer Chair, SMSD

Board of Directors – Mike Kitchens, Chair; Romano Sims, Vice Chair; Pat Chappell, Secretary; Steve Rieth, Treasurer; Suzy Kitchens, Chair Emeritus; Carla Werner; Judy Handley; Deb Sciarretta; Bill Taylor; Laurie Birt; John Fearn.