

Something to Howl About

JULY 2021

# PATRIOT PUPPY PRESS



L-R Susan Randall, Laura Porter, Heather Wilkerson, Darrell Wilkerson, Cassie Krause  
Blaze Duncan Slate H.A.L.O. Duke

### What's Inside

- Hondo and Ray
- Jewell and Tim
- Volunteer Spotlight
- Puppy Press News
- Meet our Staff
- SMSD License Plate Update
- Golf Challenge

*We appreciate all of the submissions to Name our Newsletter*

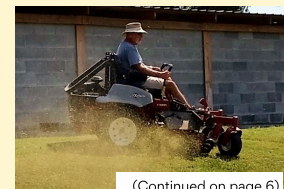
*We chose a mashup of several responses and we think it's "pawfect"!*

## Volunteer Spotlight

### The Green Team

In this edition we recognize the dedicated team who take care of our (almost) 10 acres of property. Under the able leadership of Larry Denny and Jim Goyert, they keep the grassy areas mowed and the kennel property looking good. There are four teams of two, plus three backup mowers. The lawn gets cut once a week and the team assigned to that week coordinates the time each will show up, with one member mowing the front and the other mowing the back. Most have been with the team for many years and embody the volunteer spirit which has made our mission so successful. Part of the allure to join the team must be the chance to operate "The Beast" - an Exmark Lazer, 60" cut commercial grade zero turn mower. - vroom!

Larry Denny mowing on the predecessor to "The Beast"



(Continued on page 6)



Ray and SMSD Hondo  
April 16, 2016



Timmy and SMSD Jewell  
June 14, 2021

See page 3 for the stories and links to learn more about our latest teams.



Cisco



Seymour\_



Maverick



Peyton

## MEET THE NEWCOMERS

**Maverick -Hero Labs  
(Cowley Family)**

**Goose - Hero Labs  
(Marti Family)**

**Cisco - Project 2 Heal  
(Raker Family)**

**Jax - Project 2 Heal  
(Hecht/Barnet) (Co-Raising)**

**Peyton - Mtn. View Kennels  
(Adams Family)**

**Seymour - Mtn. View Kennels  
(Gale Frana)**



Goose



Jax



Click [HERE](#) for highlights of the first puppy swim party of 2021



# Puppy Press News



Jumper



Kola



Wiggles



Glory

**Week 4  
Kola  
Jumper**

**Week 16  
Duncan  
Grizzly  
Jazz**



STAR Puppy

Bentley

**Level One  
Duncan  
Grizzly  
Kola  
Jazz  
Jumper**

**Level Two  
Glory  
Wiggles  
Duncan  
Blaze**



Jazz



Blaze



Grizzly



Duncan

## From Puppy to Partner

Our puppies arrive from the breeder at approx. 8 weeks old and they immediately go to live in a puppy raiser home and attend lessons weekly or more often. Around year one, they transition to living in the kennel and working daily with our professional trainers where they begin to learn their more advanced skills and mobility tasks. When the training staff determine they are ready to move on to the next step, most dogs will then leave the kennel and go to an advanced foster home. They continue with weekly lessons at the kennel with our trainers until a match with their veteran is made. At that point, preparation for training camp begins and, upon completion, we celebrate with a Passing of the Leash ceremony where the volunteers, canine, trainers and veteran are recognized and honored.

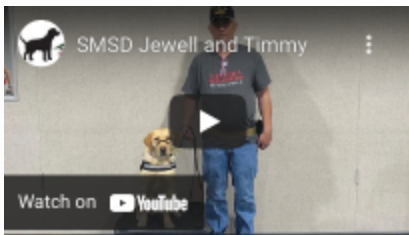
**Each dog is on an individual training plan and are assessed at periodic intervals to determine their progress and suitability for service dog work and so adjustments can be made to their individualized training program.**

**Please share our joy in graduating two new teams in this quarter!**

Ray and SMSD Hondo were celebrated on April 16th with our first public Passing of the leash since February 2020. Ray is a 30-year Air Force Veteran, an Afghanistan combat veteran and a 9/11 survivor while stationed at the Pentagon. His training camp video can be found by clicking here and the recording of the Passing of the Leash [HERE](#)



<https://youtu.be/VD4pmNGTeOY>



<https://youtu.be/rOPdANdqHeg>

Timmy and SMSD Jewell were honored on June 14th at their Passing of the Leash Ceremony. Timmy served his nation for 26 years, with six combat deployments to Iraq, Kosovo, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya. Click here for the training camp video. The recording of the Passing of the Leash is found [HERE](#)

**Catching up with a few of our SMSDs and their recipients**



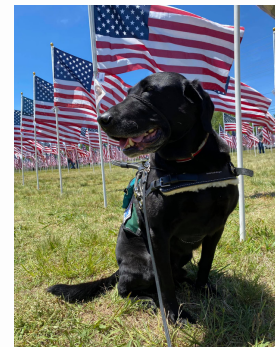
SMSD Freedom and her veteran getting a jump on Summer



SMSD Bella and Brad enjoying a beach vacation



SMSD Gunner went to Wyoming



SMSD Chance observing Memorial Day

***It is with a heavy heart we announce that our beloved "Copper" passed recently at UT Vet Hospital with inoperable canine cancer. "Copper" has crossed the Rainbow Bridge to be with his Army Veteran Richard and also "Lucy", and "Jet". RIP sweet boy.***



# MEET OUR STAFF

We are happy to introduce our wonderful staff who do such an excellent job carrying out our mission. Please meet: Heather Wilkerson, Canine Program Manager; Susan Randall, Lead Trainer; Cassie Krause, Staff Trainer; Laura Porter, Staff Trainer; and Darrell Wilkerson, Facilities Manager/Auxillary Trainer.



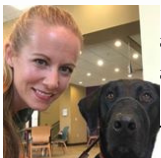
As Canine Program Manager, Heather is responsible for all aspects of the kennel operations, including instructing and training support for our Service Dog Teams, ADI compliance, breeder selection/relations, and dog recruitment and retention. She develops all program curricula and continuing education for volunteers and training staff. Heather truly does it all and then some!

After many years of training dogs for search and rescue and autism support, Heather wanted to shift her focus to mobility support dogs. Along with her husband Darrell, they decided to focus entirely on veterans and they, along with many others, co-founded SMSD. Together they donated the very first dog to begin the program and then donated their training time in the early years.

Heather says the most rewarding part of her job is the relationships with volunteers and veterans, "teaching people to effectively communicate with the dogs." Her best tip? "Learn to live life more like a dog. Eat, sleep and have fun doing things you enjoy most."

When she is not working, Heather enjoys camping and riding motorcycles with family and friends. She continues to train her personal dogs for search and rescue to create and cement their bond and allow her dogs to channel their energy in a purposeful way.

When asked what she would like people to know about her work with SMSD, she replied, "The work that I do for SMSD is driven solely by the motivation and passion I feel from our volunteers and veterans receiving our dogs." She adds, "I want every volunteer who has ever contributed their time to know that what they do matters. They are my heroes helping our nation's heroes! I feel grateful and privileged to be a small part of their individual journeys. No matter how big or how small, I want every person and every dog to feel some sense of success and happiness from their involvement with SMSD."



Susan has been with SMSD since 2013 and is our Lead Trainer. She is responsible for preparing all service dogs in the training program for certification. She also provides instruction to veterans and volunteers, and assists with demonstrations and public education as needed. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Animal Behavior, Certified Dog Trainer and Certified Canine Fitness Trainer (CFFT).

She is a veteran of many canine sports, including competing in U.S. Canine Biathlon, Flyball, Dock Diving, and Agility. She is a former MTSU Equestrian Team member, both as a student and alumna, as well as a former performer at Dolly Parton's Stampede. Susan currently shows Tennessee Walking Horses.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family, outdoor activities, and coaching and cheering on her son in his many activities. Susan also likes to ride horses and cheer on the Tennessee Volunteers in all sports.

Some of her favorite parts of the job include seeing the client and their dog coming together as a team during training camp and continuing their partnership after training. She also enjoys watching the dogs learn their skills, especially when a certain skill has been difficult. "I still get excited for the dogs when they are learning and we overcome a challenge!!"



Cassie grew up in Virginia and after earning her degree in Wildlife Sciences with a minor in Biology, started her career interning with various zoos and aquariums which led to a job with Gulf World Marine Park in Panama, Florida. She started with SMSD in 2016 and is now leading our puppy program. She became a CCFT in 2019 through the University of Tennessee.

Cassie has always appreciated the bond between humans and animals, but says that SMSD took her interest a step further.

"SMSD provides opportunities for volunteers to learn new skills or use their current talents to better the organization."

The "light bulb" moment is one of Cassie's favorite parts of her job. She says the puppy may take a few days or weeks to get to that moment, but it's the best feeling when you know the pup has figured it out.

(continued)

Cassie Krause (Cont.)

Cassie compares her role to that of an elementary school teacher, "it lays the foundation for the puppy's future career." She coaches the puppy foster families through the developmental and learning stages of their puppy. Each puppy has their own personality and sometimes their own learning style.

When not at the kennel, Cassie spends her time fostering cats and kittens for Young Williams Animal Center, kayaking with her fiance Will, and enjoying new and different cuisines. She would like to add that "communication is welcomed by all SMSD staff, never be afraid to talk to us."



Our newest staff member, Laura first became acquainted with SMSD as a volunteer while she was a student at the UT. As a Staff Trainer, Laura works with the dogs who have transitioned from their puppy raiser to live in the kennel. She teaches the dogs their core mobility skills and follows them when they leave the kennel for an advanced foster home. Laura and Susan work together in advanced foster lessons to ensure the dogs remain graduation ready.

Laura's passion for working dogs led to her career goal to work as a veterinarian with military working dogs.

Upon graduation with a degree in Animal Science with a minor in Psychology, her experience as a SMSD volunteer, including raising SMSD-in-Training Duncan, led to a change in career plans and a job offer to join our staff.

Laura's top tip for volunteers would be to, "have fun with the dogs, go adventuring with them." When not working, Laura enjoys spending time outdoors, paddleboarding, horseback riding, flying her RC airplane and spending time with friends. Laying in a hammock, reading or watching Netflix are also on her list.

When asked what she would like people to know about her work, she responded, "The work that the dogs do is hard, sometimes they are slower to learn a skill or we both will hit a wall. It can be frustrating at times but we always get through it. I am always happy to give updates on how the dogs are doing in training, but don't be disappointed if the dog you love the most isn't progressing as fast as you'd like. I love what I do, it makes me happy and it gives me purpose."



Darrell is a U.S. Navy Veteran and career firefighter. He began his mission of training working dogs as an extension of his fire and rescue career and has remained dedicated to recruiting, training, and deploying highly skilled canine teams for various working dog programs throughout the United States and abroad. Along with his wife Heather, Darrell is among the co-founders of SMSD, donated the first dog and spent the early years volunteering his training expertise before joining Smoky Mountain Service Dogs' team full time in 2019. In his current role, he serves as the facilities manager and auxiliary trainer and conducts physical conditioning for the dogs in the kennel.

He is passionate about injury prevention and maintaining working dogs in peak performance. He would like people to understand the importance of conditioning dogs and keeping them conditioned for the work that they perform. Darrel says, "I've worked in the dog industry for 30 years and hands down I think that we have the best team at SMSD. This includes our great trainers and extraordinary volunteers."

He continues to serve as a volunteer firefighter and when not working enjoys riding motorcycles, lounging on the lake and camping with good friends.

**Golf 2021 Challenge**  
**Four Person Scramble**

Sponsored by: **MORTGAGE INVESTORS GROUP**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2021**  
**Togus Golf Course, Tellico Village, Loudon TN**

Proceeds Benefiting Smoky Mountain Service Dogs  
90192-02-000000000000

**7:AM** Registration & Breakfast  
**8:AM** Shotgun Start  
**\$25 per Player** Registration Fee (\$250 per Team)  
Four Person Men or Women or Mixed Teams (2 Max, 2 Women)  
Individual Registrations Welcome - Teams Will Be Assigned  
Max 120 Players

Please call or email at the venue & reception center(s)  
Field of the Togus Facilities with buffet lunch (included, CASH BAR)

**Advantages of Challenge Golf**  
You don't have to be a great player to win. (Planning, effort and just games skills may help)  
Multiple options to Golf this weekend in central TN to drink & social for a small donation.  
(Only your 3 golf, Beer & cigar carts will be on the course.

**\* SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE (contact Romano Sims @ 671-251-1646) \***  
All donations graciously accepted. Please visit our website: [www.smokymountain servicedogs.org](http://www.smokymountain servicedogs.org)

# CHALLENGE GOLF IS BACK



**Golf 2021 Challenge**  
**Four Person Scramble**

Sponsored by: **MORTGAGE INVESTORS GROUP**

Please call or email at the venue & reception center(s)  
Field of the Togus Facilities with buffet lunch (included, CASH BAR)

**Registration Form**

Player 1 (First Name, Last Name)  
Address  
City, State, Zip  
Phone  
Email  
Team Members (including yourself)  
1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Total Fees Estimated \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Challenge for registration form and details on what to bring to the venue:  
Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Venue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Loudon, TN 37774 Loudon, TN 37774

Need to advertise, donate or just don't want to play?  
Contact Romano Sims at 671-251-1646 to see how you can support Smoky Mountain Service Dogs or visit the website at [www.smokymountain servicedogs.org](http://www.smokymountain servicedogs.org)

**Important!**  
Please use this [link](#) to download the registration form.

(Volunteer Spotlight - continued from page 1)



Not pictured: Stef Smigiel, Bob Winslow

Hooligan recently caught up with most of the team at an early morning meeting. If you see any of these guys, please give them a shout out for a job well done! Larry Denny, Bob Barber, Larry Fox, Dave Gallaway, Jim Goyert, Warren Hancock, Thomas Maher, Sean Meehan, Gary Peltzer, Stef Smigiel, Jim Sprague, John Winslow. We thank you all and appreciate all you do for us - and stay safe out there!

### **Welcome New 2021 Volunteers:**

- Cindy & Patrick Calhoun - Clean Team
- Jason & Julia Caudill - Respite
- Neil & Sharyn Cowley - Puppy Foster
- Bob & Linda Eddins - Respite
- Barbara & Michael Miesmer - Respite
- Bert & Becky Emmerson - Respite
- Joe & Sally Tursi - Clean Team
- Larry Fox - Green Team
- Chuck Stewart - BOD
- Mary Brown - Transport
- Stewart Welcher - Transport

### **FIVE years of volunteer service!**

- Barb Haning - A
- Bob Martin - G
- Karen & Joe Michniacki - R, S, T
- Robin Richards - VC, CE
- Jan Sampson - R
- Jim Sprague - G
- John Winslow - G,
- Romano Sims - BOD

CE-Community Events, S-Socializer, A-Applications, VC-Volunteer Coordinator, G-Green Team, R-Respite, B-Board of Directors, T-Transport Team



**Our volunteers are at the core of our business model for SMSD. We couldn't do what we do without all of your help and dedication to our mission. Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation go out to each and every one of you. Thank you. We appreciate you and are honored by your service.**



**WE HAVE ALMOST REACHED OUR GOAL WITH YOUR HELP, WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN IN JULY! 860 sold with just 140 left to go!!! Please share with family and friends in TN and urge them to help us get to 1,000. Visit [www.smokymountain servicedogs.org](http://www.smokymountain servicedogs.org) for FAQs and order forms**



[HTTP://SMOKYMOUNTAINSERVICEDOGS.ORG/](http://smokymountain servicedogs.org/)