

Service Dogs for Veterans

Newsletter—January 2024

Fighting PTSD One Service Dog at a Time

Mission Statement: To complement traditional treatment for Veterans with PTSD, TBI and MST, by training Veteran and dog to become highly effective ADA Compliant Service Dog Teams.

www.sd4v.org



Fourth Quarter 2023 Graduates

"This newfound freedom is magical for me."—Chase Brown



Chase Brown & Rex

Chase served in the US Army from 2005 to 2010, including a deployment to Iraq in which he sustained a variety of injuries including a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Once home, he found himself struggling with many issues including intense anxiety. With the encouragement of his wife and others, he enrolled in SD4V's program. Soon after Chase's enrollment, SD4V rescued a hound mix named Rex. Once these two were introduced, the connection was immediate—a perfect match! Within a couple of weeks, classes began and this team got down to business. Chase liked watching the progress of his Veteran classmates and also found himself more and more empowered as he and Rex, as a team, mastered tasks.

Chase has trained Rex to perform tasks Center, Reverse Center, Cover and Block. All are grounding, comforting tasks with Reverse Center being one of the favorite, most effective tasks in public settings. With Rex by his side, Chase now finds himself out in public frequently, handling outings with confidence and comfort. This newfound

freedom has opened a whole new world to Chase and has even helped him to deal with massive crowds allowing him to do something he has wanted to do for a very long time—visit our country's national parks! Congratulations to SD4V's 133rd Service Dog Team!

Jamie Morgan & Duke

Jamie Morgan served in the US Army from 2000 to 2014 including 3 deployments. After years of struggling, Jamie heard about SD4V and reached out. Knowing he could bring his own dog into the program, he chose to begin looking at shelters on his own. He found what he hoped to be the perfect dog at the Newberry Animal Shelter—a hound mix who he would later name Duke. Next, SD4V trainers assessed Duke and much to Jamie's delight, he met all of the requirements to enroll. After having been in the shelter for 7 months, Duke was also very happy to have not just a home, but a job.

Jamie has trained Duke in tasks Center, Block, Push, Cover and Snuggle. Center and Block are often used in public settings to define and secure personal space. This allows Jamie to concentrate on what he is doing knowing Duke is watching out for him. Applying what has been learned in training and functioning as a team has completely changed both of their lives.

Knowing what's been needed to train Duke, Jamie looks forward to continuing training on his own. Congratulations to SD4V's 134th Service Dog Team!

"It was a nice surprise to find so many Veterans with issues like mine going through the program with me." - Jamie Morgan



"Sasha means the world to me. I cannot imagine doing anything without her." - Deshawn Grant

Deshawn Grant & Sasha

Deshawn served in the US Army from 2007 to 2011, participating in 2 wars— Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. After his discharge, he experienced major depression, anxiety and anger. Desperate for relief, he one day happened to see the SD4V sign and decided to initiate contact. Having never had a pet before, he was surprised to learn SD4V had recently adopted a Doberman who might be a good fit for him. After a few weekend visits, Deshawn kept the energetic dog and named her Sasha. Soon after, the two were in training and on their way to being SD4V's 135th Service Dog Team.

Deshawn has trained Sasha in tasks Cover, Front, Center and Push. These are very helpful in public settings as Sasha's watchful eye helps to clearly define the personal space Deshawn needs. Center and Push are constant reminders that he is not alone. Having Sasha has improved his life and brought him out into the community in ways Deshawn never thought possible.

Going forward, Deshawn looks forward to operating his food truck business and participating in community activities.



Trent Kinard & Sam

Trent served in the US Air Force which included 2 tours in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, he served 30 years as a SC State Trooper. After years of silently battling PTSD, isolating and filled with anxiety, Trent finally sought help from the VA. Although this was a difficult realization, reaching out for help was a turning point in Trent's life. Throughout the training period, Trent & Sam have traveled 2½ hours each way from their home in Bamberg to class each week. The sense of family and belonging made it worth the drive to become SD4V's 136th Service Dog Team!

Trent has trained Sam in tasks Snuggle, Center and Cover—all helpful in navigating normal daily life. Trent describes the SD4V experience as transformative. Family members have noted increased happiness, laughter and smiles as a testament to the SD4V program's impact.

In the future, Trent hopes to purchase an RV to travel and explore our national parks, of course, with Sam by his side.

"This has given me a chance to embrace a normal life." - Trent Kinard



Clay Sorenson & Luck

"It's not just a program, it's a family." - Clay Sorenson

Clay served with the US Navy 1960 to 1964 which included 2 Vietnam tours along with being part of the call up for the Cuban Missile Crisis. Through his association with Anderson Vets Helping Vets, Clay became friends with SD4V graduates Steve Hartington and Gary Grzelecki. Although his PTSD diagnosis did not come until 2018, he knew from his friendship with Gary and Steve the benefits of going through the SD4V program. With their encouragement, he decided to give it a try with his adopted dog, Lucky.

Lucky and his wife, Nancy had adopted Lucky from another Veteran friend from Vets Helping Vets. As a family, the three of them embarked upon the SD4V journey together. Clay has trained Lucky to do tasks Center, Cover and Snuggle. In public settings, Center (sitting between legs looking forward) has been very effective in crowds. Cover (facing backwards) watching his "six" when asked has also been extremely helpful. Lucky seems to do Snuggle automatically as needed.

Going forward, Clay and Nancy look forward to staying connected with SD4V and helping other Veterans. Congratulations to SD4V's 137th Service Dog Team!



Matt Rutter & Pippi

Matt served in the US Army (Military Intelligence) from 1998 to 2020 including numerous tours in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo. Although Matt found himself struggling with anxiety and public settings post retirement, he was determined to help other Veterans by creating an educational farming program. Securing funding would mean not only public speaking on behalf of Veterans, but also navigating immense crowds. He knew he needed help and decided to give SD4V a try. His enrollment coincided with SD4V's rescue of a Labradoodle Matt would later name Pippi. With both Matt and Pippi having experienced more than their share of anxiety, they rescued each other. The bond was immediate and classes began for them soon after their first meeting.

Matt has trained Pippi in a variety of tasks to aid in anxiety reduction and navigating public settings. A favorite is Anchor, where Pippi lays gently across Matt's feet—often while he is speaking. On a recent trip to Washington, DC this Team spoke to legislators, navigated the metro, an escalator and the capitol—all with no major anxiety!

Going forward, Matt looks forward to continuing his work with his Veterans educational farming program and continuing his education at Clemson, all with the help of his teammate, Pippi. Congratulations to SD4V's 138th Service Dog Team!

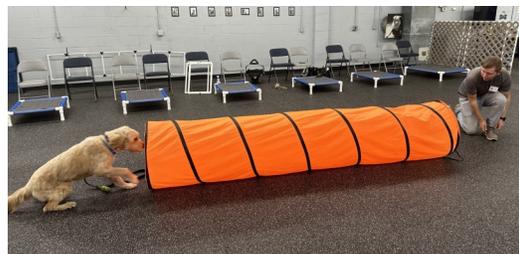
"The unique training environment forces Veterans to work on themselves too." - Matt Rutter



Agility Time!

Many of our classes at SD4V include time at the end of class on our agility equipment. This reinforces confidence and enhances a Service Team's ability to navigate new and challenging situations in the real world. As a bonus, the dogs love it!

Sometimes, we may even catch a Veteran family member sneaking in on the fun!





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Throughout the 8 month SD4V training program, Veterans are participating in class alongside other Veterans. In the above picture, recent graduates, Chase and Jamie, celebrate their accomplishment on graduation day.

Since 2014, SD4V has graduated 138 Service Dog Teams and 52 companion dog teams.

28 Teams in training as of December 2023

22 Veterans' applications in process

Thank you to our loyal donors who made this possible!

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