



PAWS OF HONOR

TWO HEROES, ONE LEASH™



2025 IMPACT REPORT

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I reflect on 2025, I am filled with immense gratitude for the extraordinary community that makes our work at Paws of Honor possible. This past year, we have witnessed firsthand the powerful bond between handlers and their K9 partners, and the profound difference that compassionate care and dedicated support can make in their lives.

Thanks to your generosity, Paws of Honor has been able to provide critical veterinary care to hundreds of retired working dogs - military and first responders - who have given so much in service. In 2025 alone, we supported over 650 dogs, ensuring that no handler faces the impossible choice between their family's financial stability and the health of their loyal companion.

This Impact Report highlights not only the lives we've touched, K9 and handler alike, but also the vision that drives us forward. You'll read a story of courage, resilience, and unwavering support - proof that your support does far more than cover medical bills; it sustains the well-being of heroes who have given everything for our safety.

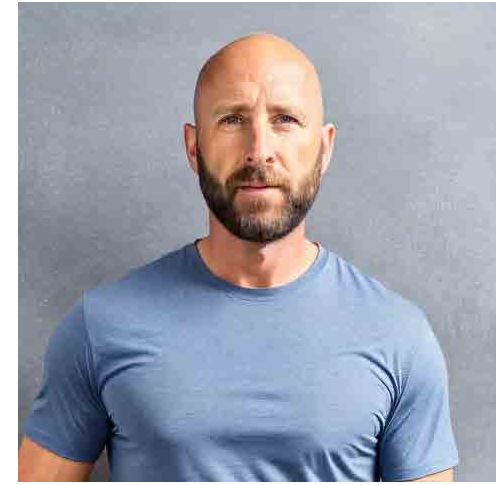
In 2026, our commitment remains clear: to serve K9 handlers (we call them heroes), honor the dogs who served alongside them, and to ensure no one faces the impossible choice between care and financial security. We are more committed than ever to expanding our reach, reducing waitlists, and ensuring every retired K9 receives the care they deserve. Your continued partnership is essential to making this mission a reality.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. Your support is the heartbeat of Paws of Honor, and it is because of you that these extraordinary bonds between handler and K9 continue to thrive.

With gratitude and unwavering belief in what is possible,



Timothy Fleming
Executive Director
Paws of Honor



**FROM THE EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

The Retirement Argos Earned

At nine years old, Argos may be officially retired - but don't tell him that.

The former explosive detection and patrol K9, a distinguished German Shepherd with an exceptional police career behind him, doesn't act a day over two. Equal parts hero and goofball, Argos still bounds through life with the enthusiasm of a puppy. But like so many working dogs, the wear and tear of service began to catch up with him.

When Argos' career came to an end, one thing became clear: retirement shouldn't mean uncertainty. Thanks to Paws of Honor, Argos was sponsored in his retirement for veterinary care not covered by his previous employer. "For the first time, I felt a huge weight lifted," his handler shared. "I knew my guy would be taken care of like he deserved."

That support proved life-changing.

After learning about K9 Hurricane's Heroes, Argos and his handler attended a summer event where they met founder Marshall Mirarchi - and even the legendary K9 Hurricane himself. It was there that Argos was introduced to Dr. Brunke.

His handler had noticed something wasn't right - lameness, stiffness, signs of discomfort in his hips and back. After an exam, Dr. Brunke offered words that would stick: "Old age is not a diagnosis." He suspected degenerative lumbosacral (LS) disease, a leading cause of retirement for working K9s in the U.S. and abroad, but an MRI was needed to confirm it - something Argos' regular vet couldn't provide.

With collaboration between Dr. Brunke and Paws of Honor, Argos was able to receive the MRI. The diagnosis was confirmed. That same day, he received his first epidural injection.

Over the following months, Argos returned for two additional treatments. The improvement was undeniable. By the time he arrived for his second injection, even Dr. Brunke noted how much stronger and more comfortable he seemed. A customized rehabilitation plan followed, focused on building strength and reducing pain. When an enlarged prostate was discovered, Dr. Brunke also recommended and performed a neuter and preventive stomach attack, further safeguarding Argos' health.

The care Argos received didn't just treat a diagnosis. It restored his quality of life.

"I have no doubt they saved Argos from unnecessary pain or worse," his handler says. "Thank you will never be enough to Paws of Honor for opening these doors." Argos thrives in retirement. His career may have shifted from big, bad patrol K9 (who was always sweet at heart) to full-time therapy dog, but he wears his new badge proudly.

After years of protecting others, he finally gets the comfort he earned. "Argos has without a doubt saved my life," his handler shares. "Thank you for making his quality of life better all the time."



“Paws of Honor changed my whole being and my mental health. I know Beethoven is going to be o.k. We worked for 9 1/2 years for the Sheriff's Office and I can say that I was very worried about what his retired life would look like. Y'all have taken care of Beethoven without hesitation and I feel welcomed into the Paws of Honor Family. Y'all are amazing!”



2025 BY THE NUMBERS

Total Cost of Services
Provided by Paws of Honor:

\$1,743,282.06

AVERAGE COST PER K9
IN THE PROGRAM IN 2025:

\$2,541.23

NUMBER OF VETERINARY
VISITS IN 2025:

2,374

NUMBER OF DOGS
SERVED IN 2025:

686

NUMBER OF MAJOR
SURGERIES IN 2025:

132

NUMBER OF
EMERGENCIES
IN 2025:

102

NUMBER OF DOGS
ACCEPTED OFF
THE WAITLIST:

219

NUMBER OF STATES WITH DOGS SERVED: **45**

PAWS OF HONOR: PRESERVING THE BOND

At **Paws of Honor**, preserving the bond between a retired K9 and their handler isn't just sentimental, it is foundational to who we are and why we exist.

Here's why it matters so deeply:

1. They Served as a Team

Military and first responder K9s don't work alone. They serve alongside their handler as a unit; trusting one another in life-or-death situations. That partnership is built on thousands of hours of training, shared risk, and unwavering loyalty.

When service ends, that bond doesn't. It deserves to be honored, not separated by financial hardship.

2. The Bond Is Emotional - and Often Life-Saving

As handlers tell us, everything travels up and down the leash. Handlers rely on their K9 not just operationally, but emotionally as well. These dogs are partners through trauma, danger, and high-stress environments. In many cases, they are the only witness to what a handler has endured.

Separation after retirement can compound stress, grief, and mental health challenges. Preserving the bond supports both ends of the leash.

3. Retirement Shouldn't Mean Abandonment

Unlike human service members, retired working dogs often receive little to no government-funded medical care after service.

Many retire with service-related injuries or chronic conditions.

Without support, handlers can face an impossible choice:

- Financial stability for their family
- Or medical care for the dog who protected them and others

Paws of Honor exists so that choice never has to be made.

4. Loyalty Deserves Loyalty

These K9s ran toward danger without hesitation. They detected explosives, apprehended suspects, searched disaster zones, and saved lives.

They were never asked to choose.

So we believe they shouldn't be left behind when the uniform comes off.

5. It Reflects Our Core Values

Preserving the K9-handler bond embodies:

- Honor
- Commitment
- Service after service
- Care for those who cannot advocate for themselves

At its heart, Paws of Honor isn't just funding veterinary bills.

We are protecting **partnerships**.

We are preserving **trust**.

We are ensuring that heroes on both ends of the leash get to come home together and stay together.

THE OTHER VETS: Critical Partners in Care

While we love our first responder and military Veterans, there is another type of Vet that we love. Since our founding in 2015 by Bob Youngblood of Old Dominion Animal Health Center, veterinarians have been central to the mission of Paws of Honor. Ours is an organization born from the recognition that retired military and first responder K9s were coming home with service-related injuries and little support for the medical care they would need. Bob witnessed first-hand handlers putting their K9's needs ahead of their own.

Working dogs retire after years of physically demanding and often dangerous work. Many face orthopedic injuries, chronic pain, cancer, and other complex conditions tied directly to their service. Veterinarians provide the expertise that transforms financial assistance into real healing: diagnosing, treating, operating, and managing long-term care so these heroes can live comfortably in retirement.

Today, veterinarians serve as trusted partners to Paws of Honor, helping document service-related injuries, providing in-kind support, and collaborating with Paws of Honor to ensure responsible stewardship of donor funds. In clinics across the country, veterinary teams treat these K9s not just as patients, but as veterans. We are also fortunate to have several veterinarians on our Board, who provide governance and advice regularly.

At Paws of Honor, we fund the care, but veterinarians deliver it. Because of them, the bond between K9 and handler remains intact, and retirement becomes a season of dignity, comfort, and continued partnership. As for Bob, he still serves as Founder and President of the Board of Paws of Honor, providing strategic oversight as to the direction and growth of our organization.

If you would like more information on being a veterinary affiliate or partner with Paws of Honor, please contact info@pawsofhonor.org



**Bob Youngblood, Founder and President of Paws of Honor
VP and CFO of Old Dominion Animal Health Center**



PawsOfHonor.org

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Paws of Honor is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

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