



5520 E M-36, Pinckney, MI 48169
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January 19, 2024

Dear Motor City POI,

We are writing to express our heartfelt gratitude for your recent and immensely generous donation of \$500 to Blue Star Service Dogs.

Your support plays a pivotal role in our mission to serve military veterans & first responders facing the challenges of PTSD and TBI. Blue Star is more than just an organization; it is a lifeline for those who have served our country, providing healing through the extraordinary bond between veterans & first responders and specially trained service dogs.

Nestled in the heart of Michigan, we actively rescue dogs from local shelters, giving these animals a second chance while undertaking a mission to heal the visible and invisible wounds of those who have served our country. Your contribution directly contributes to this impactful work, making a lasting difference in the lives of both humans and canines.

At the core of our mission are our unique Prison Programs at Lapeer Thumb Correctional Facility and Freeland Correctional Facility. Here, dogs find not only shelter but purpose as they are paired with inmate handlers. It is not just training; it is a profound journey of change for both dogs and inmates. With 22 slots for dogs and over 40 handlers, each dog becomes an integral part of the daily lives of two inmates for 24/7 companionship and training.

The stories from the inmate handlers are nothing short of incredible. They speak of an amazing connection with the dogs, describing an experience of love they never knew existed. Many share that through the eyes of a dog, they have discovered the true meaning of love and have learned life is about helping others. It is a realization that comes with regret for not having learned it sooner.

Our ability to train dogs in over 30 different tasks, some tasks include being an alarm clock, alerting to a scent as in panic attacks/nightmares or night terrors, blocking people out of their personal space, finding an exit in case of a panic attack at a store, deep pressure stimulation, finding/notifying a family member in case of a fall or need medical attention, medication reminder, opening doors, perimeter check, picking up dropped items, bracing, turning on lights, watching their backs by alerting them if someone comes up behind them, and so much more. This is made possible by contributions like yours.

The dogs, when not working, are regular goofy and spoiled dogs, understanding the difference between when the vest is on and off.

While the dogs are being trained, we work closely with our veterans & first responders to understand their unique needs and challenges. Your generous contribution supports this vital aspect of our program, creating lasting connections and providing a lifeline to those in need.



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A week before the veteran or first responder and the dog are officially paired as a team, we send them home with a special pairing kit, costing around \$1,000, including a crate, bed, toys, chewies, food, collar, leash, and everything needed as if they have never had a dog before. This thoughtful gesture helps with a smooth transition for both the human and the dog, and your support ensures that these kits are available to every deserving individual entering our program.

Once paired, we work with each team at our training center weekly for about a year or longer until they are prepared and confident to graduate. Each dog is specially trained for each veteran or first responder that comes into our program. We go out to the community with the team and ensure they feel confident to go out on their own. They pass AKC Canine Good Citizen, Community, Urban, and public access testing, along with all the tasks needed for them. Once the team is confident, we celebrate a heartwarming graduation twice a year.

Watching our veterans & first responders from the moment they walk in our doors to the moment they graduate is incredible. To watch them as a cocoon protecting themselves from fear, anxiety, depression, PTSD, TBI, not able to go out in public to watch them blossom into a beautiful butterfly, is truly inspiring. They regain the ability to attend their children's sports events, family gatherings, go to the store alone, and enjoying life again.

Each dog in our program costs roughly around \$15,000. We can keep that cost down because we do not pay a boarding facility fee, as we use the prison. We have 6 dogs going into our prison program the first week of February, and the next 2-3 months, we plan to add 3 more dogs to our program, expanding our reach and making a difference in more lives.

We successfully pair about 18 teams each year, a number that continues to grow. Importantly, all of our services are provided free of charge to veterans & first responders. We operate on the principle of "Rescuing one to heal another," acknowledging the profound impact on both veterans & first responders and dogs alike.

We at Blue Star Service Dogs are not just rescuing dogs; we are rescuing souls, creating a family that extends far beyond training sessions and graduation ceremonies. They become part of the Blue Star family, knowing they can call us any time of day or night if they need us. Once again, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your kindness and generosity.

Your support is a beacon of hope for those we serve, and we are truly grateful to have you as a cherished member of the Blue Star family.

With sincere appreciation,

Tricia Barnes and the Blue Star Service Dogs Family
Dog Trainer

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