

## AASBCR® Sponsors a Grant Request

As addressed in previous Newsletters, AASBCR® periodically provides grant requests to non-profit organizations that support worthy causes important to our members.

In March of 2020, AASBCR® presented \$2000 to Lisa Fendrich of **Vets Helping Heroes**, an organization that provides many different types of service dogs to veterans.

**Vets Helping Heroes**, a **501(c)3** charity, was formed in 2007 by 2nd Lt. Army Air Corp, Irwin Stovroff, a highly decorated WWII POW, who spent 13 months in Nazi Stalag Luft I Prisoner-of-War camp after being shot down on his 35th combat mission as a Bombardier with the 44th Bomb Group. Irwin Stovroff discarded his dog tags before his capture, to hide the fact that he was Jewish. He thought all was lost when a Nazi interrogator recognized him. Irwin had been the interrogator's family newspaper boy in Buffalo, NY. The interrogator told Irwin that he wanted to help him, so he put a "?" on Irwin's records next to religion, effectively saving his life. He survived for thirteen months in that POW camp, before being liberated by Russian Cossacks. His life story has been made into a book, *An Extraordinary Life Gone to the Dogs* and a movie, **The Gift of Life**.

The current President of Vets Helping Heroes, Lt. Col. Mel Pollack USAF (Ret.), was shot down on his 78th combat mission in his F-4 Phantom over North Vietnam. Nearly breaking his back on ejection and landing, he was captured immediately and held by the North Vietnamese in the infamous Prison Camp, the *Hanoi Hilton* for 5 years, 8 months, before being liberated.

**Vets Helping Heroes** has raised over \$8 million and sponsored over 450 specially trained Guide Dogs, Service Dogs and Facility Dogs for disabled Veterans and Active-Duty Military personnel.

## Some Background Information Provided by Vets Helping Heroes

We provide many different types of service dogs for our veterans.

- **Guide Dogs for the Blind**. The cost of a Guide Dog is \$60,000 each and it can take more than two years to train one of these dogs to perform all of the tasks necessary to serve as the eyes for a Veteran who has lost his or her sight. Only 40% of the dogs that start out being trained actually make it all the way through the training and serve in that capacity. The training and screening is THAT rigorous.

- **Service Dogs for Vets with visible injuries**, such as traumatic amputations, burns, shrapnel injuries, and other badges of their sacrifices for our Country. These dogs cost \$20,000 - \$25,000 each and take more than a year to train. In the case of some specialized injuries, it can take nearly two years.

- **Service Dogs for Vets with the *invisible injuries*** of Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injuries (PTSD/TBI). These invisible injuries affect Veterans from all wars, but have become the hallmark of our wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Again, these dogs cost \$20,000 - \$25,000 each, and take an average of 12 -18 months

to train.

**- Facility Therapy Dogs.** These dogs help Veterans who are in hospitals. These dogs work at the facilities such as the Palm Beach Veterans Administration Medical Center, Joint Base Andrews and Camp Lejeune. The cost of each of these Facility Therapy Dogs is \$10,000 - \$15,000.

We are losing over 22 Veterans each day to suicide. We know that properly-trained Guide Dogs and Service Dogs can and do give veterans confidence and a sense of independence and actually save the lives of those veterans having suicidal thoughts as a result of the depression from blindness, PTSD and TBI. We have seen it first-hand.

### **How Will the AASBCR® Donation Be Used?**

The donation will go toward training a Service Dog, **Murray**. Murray started his training as a puppy in mid-January and was later introduced to **U.S. Navy Veteran, Alberto O'Neil** on February 28, 2020. When Navy Veteran Alberto and Murray met at the Pawsitive Action Foundation facility in St. Cloud, Florida, it was love at first sight. They are very happy together. Murray was officially placed with Alberto on March 19, 2020. They will continue to train together as a team for another 6 -8 months until Murray officially graduates as a Certified Service Dog. Murray was 7 months old in late April and is getting bigger and smarter every day. Attached are some pictures and a diagram from one of the certified training facilities, Golden PAWS Assistance Dogs in Naples, Florida, which shows the steps required in the breeding and training of a service dog.

If you know of a non-profit organization that would benefit from a grant and you are willing to act as the coordinator, please contact us at [info@asbcr.org](mailto:info@asbcr.org) or call our virtual office at 312-962- 2770. Information about applying for a grant is available on the website at [asbcr.org](http://asbcr.org). Look for *Grant Requests* under the heading **About AASBCR®** .

**Lisa Fendrich of Vets Helping Heroes accepts the check from AASBCR®. Murray is ready to start training.**





**Alberto O'Neil with Murray.**