

U.S. WAR DOGS ASSOCIATION NEEDS ASSISTANCE

Lifetime PHS member Gail Snyder (Von Aspern) is a Civilian Liaison Officer for the United States War Dogs Association (USWDA), a non-profit organization of former and current U.S. military dog handlers and supporting members committed to promoting the long history of military service dogs, establishing permanent war-dog memorials, and educating the public about the invaluable service of these canines to our country.

Thousands of trained dogs are deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan and other undisclosed locations. They hold rank and have served in all branches of our military.

USWDA objectives include:

- Establishing a U.S. War Dog Memorial.
- Having the U.S. Postal Service issue a commemorative stamp honoring military dogs.
- Finding homes for retiring military canines.

HISTORY OF MILITARY WAR DOGS

Several countries in Europe used dogs for military work during World War I (1914-1918).



Team of U.S. Marine combat trackers and war dogs in Afghanistan.

The United States military didn't allow dogs, but soldiers began smuggling their pet dogs aboard ship when shipped overseas.

One dog smuggled aboard a troop ship headed for France—a pit bull named Stubby—became a true hero. Stubby saved our troops from poison gas, caught enemy soldiers, was injured many times. When he returned home in 1924, he was presented with many medals at the White House.

Dogs were officially allowed in the U.S. military during World War II (1941-1945). They were called "Dogs of Defense." Americans were asked to donate their pets. Nine-

teen thousand dogs were given, and 10,000 were successfully trained to become war dogs.

During World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and Operation Freedom, these dogs made wonderful soldiers—sentry, scout, Explosive Ordinance Device dog (EOD), search and rescue, and Secret Service to protect the president.

In 1998, Lackland AFB in San Antonio, TX, began breeding Belgian Malinois, German Shepherds and Dutch Shepherds specifically for military service.

Military War Dogs (MWDs) work for 8-10 years and, until recently, were euthanized when their active duty ended.

In 2000, Congress established a law to allow handlers of MWDs to adopt them when they retire. Now, civilians may also adopt these military heroes.

The USWDA mails out care packages to U.S. military K9s and handlers deployed overseas, some in extremely remote locations with no supplies or medications. All packages are packed half with K9 care and half with handler needs.

To help the USWDA, contact Gail Snyder at (510) 724-6619 (office), (510) 417-1794 (cell), or at thebushwoman@comcast.net.

For more information about the USWDA, visit www.uswardogs.org.


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