

# Five Courageous Canines Chosen to Compete for Honor of Becoming America's Top Dog

*America has voted: Buda, Poppy, Raina, Moxie, and Maverick are finalists for the 2023 American Humane Hero Dog Awards®*

PALM BEACH, FLORIDA, USA, September 7, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following a public voting period in which animal lovers from across the country participated, a field of 25 courageous canines has been narrowed down to five finalists. These five dogs now advance to the final round of the 2023 [American Humane Hero Dog Awards®](#). It's a nationwide competition that searches for and recognizes America's standout dogs in five categories. The 13th annual American Humane Hero Dog Awards® and Gala presented by Lois Pope and the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, will culminate with a nationally televised event broadcast on A&E on November 26 and fyi on Thanksgiving Day.

How did we get here? The four-legged contestants have gone through an extensive process, meeting strict standards and benchmarks along the way. Hundreds of dogs from across the country were nominated earlier this year and, from there, five semi-finalists in each of the five categories were chosen to meet the American public. And they were met with open arms and loving hearts.

The five categories for 2023 are: Therapy Dogs; Service and Guide Dogs; Military Dogs; Law Enforcement and First Responder Dogs; and Shelter Dogs. Public voting concluded on August 24th and the 25 semi-finalists have now been whittled down to five finalists—all of which will be featured at the awards show taking place at The Breakers Palm Beach on November 10.

Meet the five remarkable American Humane Hero Dog Awards® finalists!

Buda (Oceanside, California): Military working dog Buda—a four-year-old German shorthaired pointer—bravely serves our country as one of only eighteen certified explosives-detection



Service Dog Moxie

canines in the U.S. Coast Guard. Buda and his canine handler, Maritime Enforcement Specialist Chase Leamer, work together to protect their local community both on the water and on land. Since graduating from his elite training program in 2021, Buda has participated in over 185 operational deployments and engagements. His work includes responding to bomb

threats, performing safety sweeps of sea vessels, providing security at events like Super Bowl LVI in Los Angeles, and more. This extraordinary hero dog is even trained to be hoisted in and out of helicopters.

Poppy (Columbia, South Carolina): Law enforcement canine Poppy—a five-year-old black Labrador—courageously protects students and faculty as an invaluable member of the University of South Carolina (USC) Police Department. Poppy is an award-winning explosives and firearms detection dog who serves alongside her handler, Sgt. Mark Tevepaugh. Poppy is a regular fixture at school and community events, providing security sweeps, crowd screening, and safety presentations to help empower students. She can also be found roaming the sprawling USC campus, where she brings smiles and comfort to stressed and homesick college students. When this hero dog is off duty, Poppy loves to spend time at home with her handler's son.



Military Working Dog Buda

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The Hero Dog Awards provides Americans the opportunity to come together and celebrate the strength, hope, and happiness that dogs bring to our lives.”

*Dr. Robin Ganzert, American Humane President & CEO*

Raina (Perkasie, Pennsylvania): Emerging hero shelter dog Raina—a 13-year-old Australian shepherd—came into this world blind, deaf, and with a contagious sense of joy. Her owner Kristen Strouse adopted Raina from a shelter when she was six months old. Ever since, this 13-year-old hero dog has served as a beautiful advocate for people and pets with special needs. Raina and Kristen are passionate about using public education, awareness events, and fundraisers to help rescue blind and deaf dogs, who often struggle to find their forever homes. At home, Raina offers comfort

and inspiration to Kristen after an autoimmune deficiency forced her into early retirement. Her owner credits Raina with saving her life and keeping her going during that traumatic transition.

Moxie (Ballwin, Missouri): Lifesaving service dog Moxie—a five-year-old mini goldendoodle—helped her handler, Katie Harris, find hope and purpose again when a rare disease robbed her of her ability to walk, leaving her suicidal. Moxie's unconditional love and



dedication have since helped Katie get through countless hospital visits, surgeries, and painful medical episodes. She provides invaluable assistance on a daily basis, performing tasks like picking up dropped items, opening and closing doors, and alerting her handler to impending seizures and other medical crises. This hero dog lives up to her name, bringing spirit and courage to everything she does.

Maverick (Saint Robert, Missouri): United Service Organizations (USO) therapy dog Maverick—a six-year-old European Blue Great Dane—brings comfort and solace to our nation's military heroes and their families. His unconditional love uplifts the spirits of the military community stationed at the Fort Leonard Wood Post base in Missouri, where he supports service members on suicide watch, escorts children to military funerals for their parents, and helps men and women cope with trauma, injuries, and stress. When not supporting our troops, this 150-pound hero dog—who is a canine cancer survivor—offers snuggles and strength to his owner, Kelly Brownfield, in her own ongoing battle with cancer.

During the past 12 years, Americans have cast millions of votes for more than 1,000 dogs, all seeking the coveted title of American Humane Hero Dog. The program reaches billions of people each year and draws the support and participation of top celebrity dog lovers from all over the world. Hosts, judges, award presenters and entertainment acts have included Jay Leno, Billy Crystal, Betty

White, Ariel Winter, Vivica A. Fox, Rebecca Romijn, Alison Sweeney, James Denton, Beth Stern, Faithe Herman, Marcus Scribner, Bindi Irwin, Derek Hough, Richard Marx, Katharine McPhee,



Therapy Dog Maverick



Emerging Hero Shelter Dog Raina

Michelle Beadle, Whoopi Goldberg, Denise Richards, Lisa Vanderpump, Chelsea Handler, Martin Short, Jewel, Wilson Phillips, John Ondrasik, Carson Kressley, Miranda Lambert, Pauley Perrette, Kristen Chenoweth, Naomi Judd, Eric Stonestreet, Danica McKellar, Bailee Madison and many more.

"The Hero Dog Awards provides Americans the opportunity to come together and celebrate the strength, hope, and happiness that dogs bring to our lives," said Dr. Robin Ganzert, President and CEO of American Humane. "Like the voting public, we are captivated by the heartwarming stories of Buda, Poppy, Raina, Moxie, and Maverick, who all do extraordinary things. These awards help to give these four-legged heroes the recognition they deserve."

"The Hero Dog Awards celebrate America's often unsung heroes," said Palm Beach philanthropist and platinum presenting sponsor Lois Pope. "From those who defend our country to those who help us heal, guide us, protect us, and help find the lost, every single contender exemplifies the courage and heroism we seek to spotlight in this campaign. Our goal is not only to honor these magnificent dogs but to inspire America to reflect on the outsized contributions that animals make in our lives each and every day."

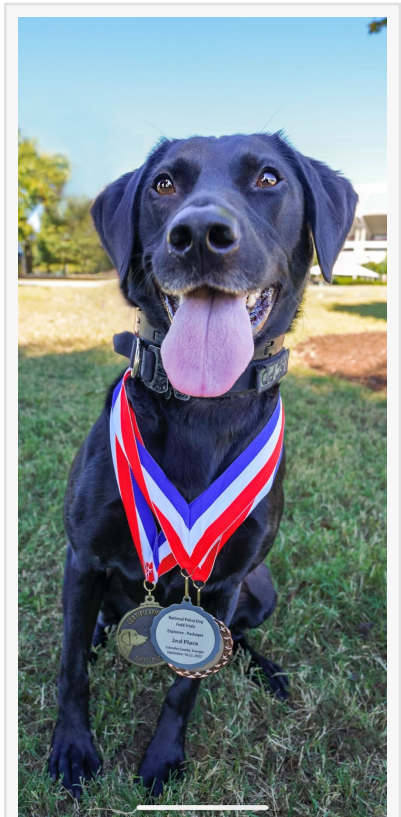
Thank you to our sponsors, including Lois Pope Life Foundation, Lulu's Fund, American Airlines, and the Brady Hunter Foundation. Without them, the 2023 American Humane Hero Dog Awards® would not be possible. For more information about the 2023 American Humane Hero Dog Awards®, visit [herodogawards.org](https://herodogawards.org). For more information on sponsorship opportunities, email [herodoginfo@americanhumane.org](mailto:herodoginfo@americanhumane.org).

#### About American Humane

American Humane is the country's first national humane organization with offices in Palm Beach and Washington, DC. Founded in 1877, American Humane is committed to ensuring the safety, welfare, and well-being of animals, and our leadership programs are first to serve in promoting and nurturing the bonds between animals and people. For more information or to support our work, please visit [americanhumane.org](https://americanhumane.org). Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

#### About Lois Pope and the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation

As one of America's leading philanthropists, Pope has positively impacted the lives of individuals at the local, national, and international levels. She has established three separate organizations dedicated to helping those in need. These organizations are the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, Inc., Leaders In Furthering Education (LIFE), and the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation. For



Law Enforcement Dog  
Poppy

more than 20 years she has been the driving force behind the Lois Pope LIFE Center at the University of Miami School of Medicine, The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, and a groundbreaking new program with American Humane in Palm Beach County. Pope recently donated to American Humane several Lois Pope Rescue Vehicles. Each rescue vehicle is a 50-foot-long response unit, complete with a Ford F-350 truck and trailer, which is specifically designed and outfitted to provide an array of animal emergency services and cruelty responses within a region.

On October 5, 2014, Pope saw the completion of a decades-long dream – the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, which was dedicated by President Obama in Washington, DC. It will stand in perpetuity as a reminder to the public and legislators of the courage and sacrifices of the four million-plus living disabled veterans and all those who died before them, as well as the need to be vigilant in assuring their support and understanding the human cost of war. Through her advocacy, October 5 every year will serve as a National Day of Honor for disabled veterans. A mother, a grandmother, and a great grandmother, Pope has trained for and completed five New York City Marathons.

#### About American Airlines Group – Our Heroes

American Airlines Group – Our Heroes – has a longstanding tradition of serving those who serve our nation dating back to 1926. Today more than 9,000 of American's 130,000 team members are veterans or are still serving in the National Guard or Reserve components. Our initiatives include providing financial and in-kind support to several organizations, to include The Medal of Honor Foundation, the Gary Sinise Foundation, the Honor Flight Network and the USO among many others. American supports those who have served our nation through mileage donations, providing charter flights for special missions and workforce development opportunities. For more information about the ways American Airlines supports members of the military, veterans, and their families, please visit [aa.com/heroes](http://aa.com/heroes).

#### About Lulu's Fund

Lulu's Fund, which is part of the Timothy T. Day Foundation, was founded in 2012. Named after the Day's beloved pug Lulu, Lulu's Fund continues the Foundation's ongoing commitment to supporting organizations in the animal rescue community throughout the United States. Organizations that receive support from Lulu's Fund are primarily those that rescue abused, neglected, and abandoned dogs. Their focus is to treat existing medical issues, provide spay and neuter services, place dogs in safe foster homes, and ultimately find forever homes for the animals. For more information about the Foundation, visit [tdayfoundation.org](http://tdayfoundation.org).

#### About the Brady Hunter Foundation

The Brady Hunter Foundation is a leading 501(c)(3) non-profit organization operated by a group of philanthropists, humanitarians and animal lovers committed to ending animal cruelty, protecting wildlife, and making a positive impact in the lives of children. The Brady Hunter Charitable Fund was established in 2022, with The Brady Hunter Foundation formally launched

shortly thereafter in early 2023. BHF is dedicated to creating sanctuaries all over the world to save animals from endangerment, abuse, and neglect, while also recognizing the importance of uplifting children and providing them with opportunities for a better future. For more information about The Brady Hunter Foundation, please visit [bradyhunter.org](https://bradyhunter.org).

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