

Veteran's Service Dog Remembered after rescuing 300 Veterans from Homelessness

"Vets with Pets" Fund Launching at Veteran Memorial Golf Tournament

CAMARILLO, CA, USA, April 10, 2024
/EINPresswire.com/ -- - 16th Annual
[Veterans Memorial Golf Tournament](#)

The golf event isn't the only big news coming from the region's leading veteran services nonprofit, however. GCVF's Executive Director Bob Harris is announcing a new initiative called "Vets with Pets Rescue Fund", to finally address one of the major causes of homelessness and suffering among American military veterans. Please visit: [VetsWithPets.Fund](#)



Veteran Rafael Stoneman and LEO the service dog

Over half of homeless veterans have pets that provide companionship, emotional support, and a deep bond that they simply cannot establish with other people. Often, these animals are the only family the veteran has, yet almost 100% of "low-income housing" property owners won't rent to pet owners. The veteran is left with a choice of abandoning their best friend or living on the streets. All of GCVF's homeless veteran clients have declined housing if they had to abandon their pets as part of the deal.

“

My beloved husband would be so proud to see GCVF carry on his same passion and commitment to helping the most vulnerable veterans in need.”

Nancy Phillips, Widow of USAF Veteran, Dennis Phillips

“It's like an offer from the Devil himself”, says Harris; “These pets are often the only source of emotional healing

and bonding that a veteran has. Having to choose between a roof over their head and keeping the only friend they've got... might create worse emotional trauma than what they faced in combat. Every one of these veterans did the right thing and said no. They kept their friend and kept their soul!”

The Veterans Memorial Golf Tournament is also the fifth anniversary of GCVF's Mobile Veteran Outreach program (MVO), which has now rescued over 300 veterans and families from homelessness in Ventura County. Leo was the 195 pound Malamute-Husky service dog who traveled with GCVF's outreach director Rafael Stoneman on the MVO program.

The friendly giant, who passed in early 2024, was irresistible to even the most contact-resistant veterans. His presence made it possible to begin the first conversations with these veterans, leading to rescues that would not otherwise have been possible.

As Harris explains; [“Vets with Pets Fund”](#) will provide increased security deposits and greater negotiating power with landlords, so that veterans with pets can have a home. As with our other groundbreaking initiatives and service components, we're disrupting and defeating the series of events that cause a veteran to become or remain homeless.”

“Vets with Pets Fund” Goals: will facilitate property owners accepting homeless veterans with pets as tenants and provide immediate emergency medical care to those pets with injuries or unmet medical needs.

The son of a Korean era Army veteran, and himself a leader on the front lines of nonprofit causes for over half a century, Harris adds; “We're winning the battle against veteran homelessness, because we identify and attack the root causes of the problem, not just the symptoms. Leo's Fund is the weapon that will finally allow us to defeat one of the primary obstacles that keeps veterans living on the street.”

About Gold Coast Veterans Foundation – GCVF provides everything to prevent or eliminate suffering and homelessness for American veterans. GCVF has now rescued over 300 veterans

VETS WITH PETS FUND

GOLD COAST VETERANS FOUNDATION

How would you feel if you had to make a choice between having a place to live, and being able to share your life with family? What if that family member was the only family, the only friend, and the only love & companionship you had left in your life?

Over half of the American military veterans who are experiencing homelessness in Ventura County have to make that choice.

Leo saved the lives of 300 veterans +

“Who will be there to save the next 300 Veterans?”

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We all know the unique bond we share with our pets. But for homeless veterans suffering from isolation, PTSD, and estrangement from their human family...pets become even more important.

55% of the homeless and high-risk veteran clients that our programs serve have a pet.

Almost 100% of low-income housing landlords & property owners don't accept tenants with pets.

These veterans may have lost their limbs in combat. They may have lost their job, their car, their sobriety, and maybe even lost part of their mind.

But even after losing everything else and living on the street, they didn't lose their soul! Each and every one of the veterans who would have to give up their beloved pet to get low-income housing...chose to live on the street and keep their loyal companion.

The Vets With Pets Rescue Fund provides dedicated funding for these homeless veterans and their pets to finally have a home. It funds increased security deposits that give GCVF's caseworkers far greater negotiating power with landlords, plus contingency funds to address insurance and property damage issues during the veteran's tenancy. This gives us a powerful tool to overcome the barrier that keeps many American veterans living on the street. The Vets With Pets Rescue Fund will also provide emergency veterinary medical care for the pets of homeless and low-income / high-risk veterans who cannot afford veterinary care, but love their pets as much as the rest of us.

As with all of GCVF's other services and program components, this program disrupts and defeats the underlying and ongoing causes of homelessness, suicide, and suffering for American military veterans.

The Vets With Pets Rescue Fund was launched to honor the memory and legacy of Leo, the giant service dog who helped rescue nearly 300 veterans and veteran family members in Ventura County. The friendly giant who melted the coldest heart in an instant, Leo made it possible to approach, engage, and create a bond of trust with the most difficult and anti-social veterans. Leo was the secret weapon that allowed Gold Coast Veterans Foundation to launch the Mobile Veteran Outreach program with his partner and best friend Rafael. Together, they brought compassion and care directly out on the streets where the problem was greatest, to rescue the veterans that all other agencies had "written off" as unable to save.

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and family members from homelessness. All services are provided free of charge.

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