

# 'Maine Comfort Dog Baxter Honored May 30 with Portrait Unveiling, Community Tribute and Fundraiser'

*'Maine Comfort Dog Baxter Honored May 30 with Portrait Unveiling, Community Tribute and Fundraiser', 25 %Sales this day to benefit Hero Pups*

PORTLAND, ME, UNITED STATES, May 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Maine Comfort Dog Baxter to Be Honored with Portrait Unveiling and Community Tribute Event in Portland, Maine at Woof Play Eat

Baxter, widely recognized as Maine's first full-time facility comfort dog, will be honored at a special community event featuring the unveiling of a commissioned portrait celebrating his life, service, and lasting impact across the state.



Hosted by Woof Play Eat, the event will bring together members of Hero Pups, community supporters, and guests to recognize both Baxter's legacy and the ongoing work of comfort dogs serving individuals in times of crisis, trauma, and need.

"Baxter helped people find their voice in moments when they might not have been able to speak," said Brad Sterl, co-founder of Woof Play Eat. "This event is about honoring that kind of impact—not just what Baxter did, but what comfort dogs continue to do every day for people across Maine."

Baxter's story began with extraordinary circumstances. He was born into a litter requiring intensive neonatal intervention after significant health challenges faced by his mother. Through dedicated, around-the-clock care from volunteers, both the mother and her puppies survived and thrived. From an early age, Baxter displayed the temperament, calm, and intuitive awareness that would later define his work as a facility comfort dog.

“

Baxter set the standard for what comfort dogs can do. Now it's about making sure more communities have access to that same level of care.”

*Brad Sterl*

Assigned by Hero Pups to the State of Maine in 2022, Baxter worked alongside legal professionals to support victims and witnesses during some of the most difficult moments they would ever face. His presence helped reduce anxiety—particularly for children and vulnerable individuals—allowing them to participate more fully and confidently in the justice process.

Beyond the courtroom, Baxter's impact extended into hospitals, community settings, and moments of crisis,

where his calm and intuitive presence provided comfort when it was needed most. Baxter's life of dedicated service concluded in May 2025 at the age of three, leaving a lasting legacy across the communities he served.

A centerpiece of the event will be the unveiling of a custom-commissioned portrait of Baxter, painted by Angela Hur, created to serve as a lasting tribute to his service and the lives he touched.

The event will also highlight the work of Hero Pups, whose approach to training and placement reflects a deep commitment to both the animals and the people they serve. Through a no-fear, relationship-based training philosophy, Hero Pups carefully develops each dog to perform in high-stress environments with confidence, calm, and compassion.

Unlike many programs, Hero Pups places these highly trained comfort dogs at no cost to the organizations and individuals who need them—removing barriers and expanding access to critical emotional support services.

In support of that mission, Woof Play Eat will donate 25% of all pizza sales during the event, along with \$5 from every dog park entry fee, to Hero Pups—helping fund the training and placement of future comfort dogs across Maine and beyond.

“This is about continuing the mission Baxter helped define,” said Laura Barker. “Every comfort dog placed represents another opportunity to provide calm, connection, and support when it matters most.”

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#### Event Details

Date: May 30, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM (Portrait unveiling at 1:00 PM)

Location: Woof Play Eat, 49 Northport Drive, Portland, ME

Details: Community tribute, portrait unveiling, and fundraiser supporting Hero Pups

Admission: Open to the public

Media are invited to attend the event and portrait unveiling. Visual opportunities will include the unveiling moment, interaction with comfort dogs, and interviews with event organizers and Hero Pups representatives.

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## About Woof Play Eat

Woof Play Eat is a first-of-its-kind destination in Portland, Maine, combining an indoor dog park, daycare, and elevated casual restaurant experience. Built around community and connection, Woof Play Eat brings people together through their shared love of dogs—whether they have one or not.

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