

Annual Report 2020



When I think about the year of our Lord 2020, I realize that I was being tested. I am not sure if God was testing me or I was testing myself. I just know that it was a hard year and calling off this rodeo might have made it a lot easier. Well, easier for me, but what about those who depend on K9 Care Montana to keep them moving forward in their own lives. Quitting would have been easy, but it would have been wrong. So, we are here for another go-round and we are going to need a bit of help to make that eight second ride.

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This is the annual report for calendar year 2020. Its purpose is to update our board and supporters regarding our accomplishments in 2020 and outline the focus of efforts in 2021.



Remembrance: We lost our previous K9CMT president, Jo Ellon Smaha Roberts, this past fall. Her loss was devastating to her family and to me. K9CMT will convert her loss into fuel to drive us forward in 2021 and beyond. Bless her heart and bless her soul.

Recognition: I want to recognize a group of people whose work doesn't get as much credit as it should. There is a lot more to helping a wounded warrior find him or herself that just teaming them with a world class service dog. We do that, but we also reintroduce them to the nonthreatening and uplifting experiences found in the great Montana outdoors. There are landowners who welcome our veterans to hunt pheasant in their fields and waterfowl over their water. There are topflight trout fishing guides who willingly introduce our recipients to the exhilarating sport of trout fishing in the surrounding abundant rivers and streams. These good folks volunteer their time and permit the use of their resources as part of the multifaceted effort required to regain a life that is once again "normal". We don't name them to protect their privacy, but we could not do this without them. You guys, you make our "outdoor experience" so very meaningful. Thank you!



The impact of COVID 19: Just about the time we cleared the last big tasks associated with moving this outfit to Livingston, COVID 19 reared its ugly head. Our clients are, by definition, at risk both to the virus itself and to the psychological implications that the isolation and fear add to already vulnerable minds and souls. We borrowed an Army concept that all our veterans appreciate. On active duty they call it "Battle Buddy" and it is all about keeping each other in the fight. We introduced our own "buddy system" to ensure appropriate health and welfare checks are made wherever and whenever possible. I'm glad to say that at this point we are pretty solid across the K9CMT family.



The dynamics of the virus created a major disruption both to our fundraising since we had to cancel all public events and our public access training. It also meant that we needed to help some recipients manage unanticipated vet bills. There was some good news, however. Livingston is in Park County, Montana, and the Park County Community Foundation stepped up in a big way by creating a matching fundraising program called "Give a Hoot." We participated in the program

and campaigned online and through the personal networks of some of our primary supporters. The money raised kept us afloat at a critical time. A local well known photographer Joanne Berghold was of enormous help as were some of the fine businesses in Park County. I also want to shout out to Mountain Hot Tub in Bozeman. They are a veteran owned small business and donated a large hot tub to us that is available to our recipients when they are training or just stopping by.

Montana Great Nonprofit: For several successive years K9CMT has been privileged to be designated as one of the state’s “Great Nonprofits”. This designation was continued into 2020 and underscores the value of our service and our stewardship of the funds you entrust to us. This is a recent quote from one of our recipients that reflects the life changing nature of a well-trained service dog:

“David and K9 Care MT were a catalyst and stabilizing force in my recovery. I have been with Jade for 5 years. She was there and helped give me confidence to leave the house. She has helped me conquer so much as I continued to navigate a new normal. She is a constant in my life when there wasn't much consistency. I am grateful and inspired by David's organization. Always a reminder and encouragement and warm smile. After 5 years, K9 care continues to support my recovery. I so grateful for the time and effort in training and working with me and offering time out to reset on the waters with top notch Fly Fishing. Being out in nature, learning something new, I am grateful the continued support.”



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The evolution of a service dog: We have written about this before, but I think it is worth a reminder. This photo makes the point. Both Golden Retrievers are K9CMT “projects.” Though we occasionally work with older rescue or donated dogs, most often we began with pups that we carefully select then place with volunteers (sometimes the intended recipient) to do the initial socialization, at a point we bring them to Livingston or one of our partner trainers to begin training toward the serious work required of service dogs. When the time is right, we match the dog with the veteran and train them as a team. In some way it is a never-ending continuum as we track our dogs to assure their welfare, refresh their training when necessary, and help recipients when needed and as we can. There are numerous such projects now under way with the expectation of increasing that number again in 2021. To date we have served over 80 wounded veterans including a few special needs children.



Financial footing and Looking Forward: It would be easy enough to join the chorus lamenting 2020 and Lord knows it has been a hard year for lots of folks. As I mentioned at the outset, we cancelled fundraisers and learned to reach out through the internet. We also qualified for and received a CARES Act loan of \$10,000. I have attached a

copy of the 2020 Profit and Loss Statement and as you can see, we will be carrying forward some funds into 2021.

Finally, I take some small measure of pride in the fact that we are not only still standing, but successfully sustained our service dog teams; reached out to new potential recipients; and were positioned to provide some help to members of the K9CMT family that needed a hand with vet bills, dog food and such. That, of course, is due to the ongoing and generous support provided by our corporate and individual donors who continue to see value in our mission to serve those who served the nation and to help others through the provision of these wonderful service dogs, Thank you so very much!



May God bless each of you and May God bless America.

Sincerely,

David W. Riggs
Founder and CEO
K9 Care Montana, LLC

Enclosure: 2020 Profit and Loss Statement