

Annual Report 2018



We are setting the table for K9 Care Montana's future. In order to get where we need to be...providing these extraordinary service dogs to as many as we can, we needed to move here...to Livingston, Montana.

*Near the east bottom of the Bozeman Pass and not too far from The Yellowstone
Come sit a spell*

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This is the annual report for calendar year 2018. Its purpose is to update our board and supporters regarding our accomplishments in 2018 and outline the focus of efforts in 2019.

Remembrance: I lost my father this past year, suddenly and unexpectedly. He was a good man who over the years helped make sure this sometimes struggling operation stayed on its feet. My sister and I shall miss him greatly.

Recognition: The number of veterans who served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are approaching three million. The number of those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is difficult to tally, but most experts say it is at least 20% of those who served. These interminable wars have lasted nearly 18 years and are ongoing. Flag draped coffins and soldiers with wounds visible and invisible continue to return to our shores. We recognize their service and will ever remember their sacrifices. We will help as many of those men and women *who answered the call* as we possibly can. That is why K9CM exists.

“I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us?
And I said, here am I, send me.”

Isaiah: 6:8

Important Distinctions: Pets are important in the lives of lots of folks, but simply placing an internet purchased vest or cape on them doesn't make your best friend a “service dog”. Don't get me wrong, Emotional support animals and therapy animals have a special place in the world. However, they are not service dogs and are not recognized as such by the ADA. K9CM will push to have the Montana legislature adopt laws addressing the growth and impact of “fake” service dogs. Here's one generally accepted definition of a service dog:

“A service animal is **any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks** for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.”

That's a very good description of the canines we're able to produce with your support. While there are no national certification tests, K9CMT does use a “Public Access Test” we devised to insure our dogs are disciplined, comfortable and can support the recipients in any setting.



The big move: First, the folks in and around Philipsburg are terrific. They've supported us and treated us like family for years. I can't thank them enough! Still, we needed more space and we needed to be more convenient for our recipients. We also needed a place we could call our own.

Service dogs in training (SDIT) should be spending most of their time with people, but need to be kenneled from time to time and now we have a six indoor/outdoor runs available to rotate the dogs in training. Importantly, this will give us a dedicated place to conduct the task specific training that is required if the canine is to be a service dog.

We're working hard to get the outside runs heated and required indoor heat and hot water. At 800 sf it's tight, but will work for individual and small group instruction. Proud to say we have the most up to date training devices and adaptive equipment.

Of particular importance is the fact that with this relocation we have room to house two families at a time thus decreasing overall lodging expenses for our recipients. I should note here that the Livingston property was purchased entirely with personal funds. No K9CMT money was expended in this transaction. I'm working with the board of directors to develop an acceptable protocol regarding how expenses related to the direct operation of K9CMT from my personal property and facilities will be managed. At the moment, K9CMT is only funding office operation and related utility expenses. It will take us some time to sort through this and I'll provide details later once they are worked out. The process will be transparent and the move will prove to be a win for all concerned.

Our Recipients: The logistics surrounding the move notwithstanding, we've continued to focus on the folks we are here to serve. We now have a total of 61 service dog teams deployed. That number includes our SDIT pups. Our focus through the years has been on wounded warriors and children with autism. This past summer we decided to expand beyond those two groups and reach out to the first responder community, as well, including both emergency medical technicians (EMT) and retired law enforcement officers (LEO). Additionally, we're looking at applications from two survivors of the Las Vegas mass shooting.



Over the years we've helped folks beyond Montana. In fact, the first retired LEO we've connected with is a former New York State trooper. Candidly, the decision to select and support recipients outside of Big Sky Country is more expensive. It also has not proved to be as productive since working within the state makes it quicker and cheaper to manage ongoing and remedial training for both the dog and the recipient. There may be a rare exception, but going forward we plan to focus exclusively on Montanans who need the support of service dogs. There is no shortage of potential recipients.

Our Training Model: It's become increasingly clear the last couple of years that growth in the program means we have to adjust our training model without compromising our standards. I have established agreements with several professional trainers in Helena, Billings and Bozeman. As I indicated earlier, there are 61 service dog teams in various levels of training. It's an ongoing process that includes socialization, discipline and task specific work. Some dogs will require remedial training as well. Socialization of the pups will be handled by "foster parents" who whenever possible will be the family for whom the trained dog is intended. I'll use the paid professional trainers to do the discipline training and I'll take the lead in the task specific drills. Don't worry, I'll quality assure it all from beginning to end.



Financials: I spoke recently to a trainer here in Montana that produces service dogs. He charges the recipients a lot of money...\$30,000 and up. Serious money which many who are in need simply can't afford. Those are the people we're trying to help. K9CMT service dogs are provided free of charge to our recipients. That is only possible through the ongoing support by those who value what we do and believe in our mission to improve the lives (sometimes save the lives) of wounded warriors, children with autism and now the first responder community.

I have attached our *2018 Profit and Loss Statement*. It reflects continued growth in our revenue and increasing attention to control of our expenses. In 2019, we will need to work even harder at fund raising and I intend to continue to commit personal resources when and where I can, but growing while maintaining our quality standards is expensive. Simply put, your continuing support is essential and I thank you for it as do the families which benefit from your generosity.

Final Thoughts: We all know that, "sometimes life gets in the way" of our best plans and intentions. Given that, it's all together appropriate to begin to look at how this important mission continues in the years and decades ahead. My own health is compromised by a spinal injury and related joint pain. I have lived with this the bulk of my adult life. God willing, I will continue to be able to manage this exacting and demanding task for the foreseeable future in spite of my physical disabilities



I've come to think there will be a point at which we will need to establish two paid part-time positions; perhaps an executive director and a manager/trainer. I'll work with the board over the next year in order to develop this thought. Perhaps in 2020 we can set the process in motion.

As I've said to some before, my own disability and dependence upon a service dog is part of why I do this. My life choices are made hard by my condition, but they are made possible by a K9 Care Montana service dog. God bless you all for your unending support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David W. Riggs".

David W. Riggs
Founder and CEO