

Annual Report 2017



“K9 Care Montana has changed our lives. They provide service dogs to wounded warriors free of charge. The dog they gifted us has literally saved my husband’s life and given us hope for the future...” a recipient’s spouse

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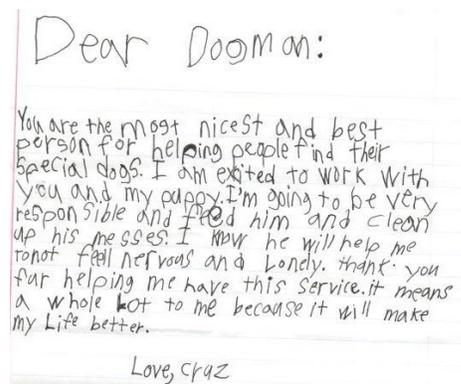
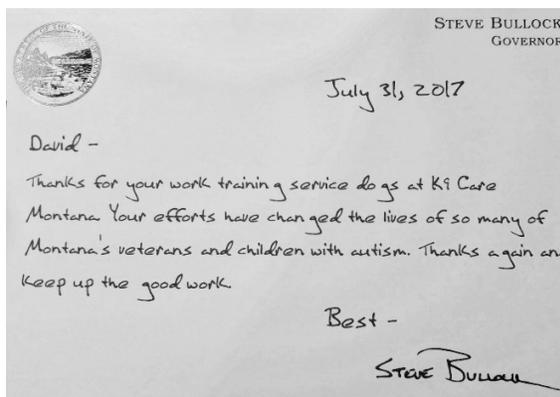
www.K9caremontana.org

This is the annual report for calendar year 2017. Its purpose is to update our board and supporters regarding our accomplishments in 2017 and outline the focus of our effort in 2018.

Remembrance. There are studies out that suggest 22 veterans on average commit suicide each day. People a lot smarter than me assess and write about why that is. Well, I've looked into some dark places at times myself and it seems to me that it's as much about the loss of hope as anything else. And, that speaks to the efficacy of K9CMT. We're in the HOPE business. In remembering those who made the sad choice; and, in remembering those who mourn them, we will continue to offer hope that is found through our magnificent canines to as many as we can.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Recognition. In last year's report I wrote of the growing recognition that we are achieving across the state and beyond. That growth continues. The Governor of Montana, Steve Bullock, took the time to hand write a note and so did Cruz:



Take a couple of minutes and look at the host of comments our recipients and families have added to our website: www.K9caremontana.org

A Bit of Clarity. Post traumatic stress is defined by most medical professionals as a “Disorder”, as is autism. Look up the definition, just being told you have a “disorder” is depressing. I can't argue with the formal definition of course, but at K9CMT we tend to steer away from that “label” as it hasn't proved helpful in our work with either wounded warriors or children with autism. When we go through the decision process to determine with whom we'll place our dogs we don't diagnose, but we do assess. We look at two central issues: Is the potential recipient likely to benefit from a service dog? And, is that individual in an environment within which the dog can and will be cared for properly?

To meet the needs of selected recipients we produce service dogs that are trained to optimally support either the needs of those battling post traumatic stress or those who have significant mobility challenges.

For example, dogs trained to mitigate PTS are skilled, among other things, in “blocking” and “posting”. These specialized tasks help reduce the warrior’s anxiety about intrusion into his personal space and secure his back...the soldiers say, “Watch my six”.



In both situations extensive obedience and task training are required. As explained before, the journey from playful, energetic pup to trained service dog is an iterative and time consuming process.

Fine Tuning our Training Model. In 2017 we came to grips with the fact that if we’re to continue to serve the growing K9CMT family adequately and indeed, to expand it, then a different approach was required. To that end we’ve incorporated five paid trainers located in Helena, Bozeman and Billings. I’ve been training dogs pretty much my whole life so giving up a little control wasn’t an easy decision. Notice I said a “little”. Here’s how it’s going to work. I’ve evaluated and selected the trainers. I set the task work, establish the standards to which we train and look to the trainers to reinforce my initial work. Of course, I’ll quality assure the whole shooting match and most importantly, I remain the connecting file with the veteran and the child’s family throughout the process. We now have two kennel locations we use when dogs need to be on site. One here in the Phillipsburg area, the other in Bozeman. We work with the recipients to place their respective dog’s at the most convenient location.

Impact. We entered 2017 working with 41 families. By the end of the year our fold had increased to 47. Given the time and effort required to produce a quality service dog, adding six to eight families a year is about the best we can do. It may be that as our new approach kicks in we can up that number a bit, but there’s always the challenge of raising the money needed to permit us to gift these dogs.



Still, if you ask this boy or this vet about the value of what we do, they’ll say it’s PRICELESS. And, they are right.



Looking Ahead. 2017 was a busy year, a very busy year really. The new training model eased my training load a bit, but increased the travel requirements as I moved regularly from site to site. 2018 is shaping up to be a high tempo year as well. I do plan on carving out time to assess the overall health of K9CMT. I'll reexamine our organizational structure; look at each aspect of increasingly complex service model; survey a sample of our recipients; and, do a "press to test" with our supporters to be sure we're meeting or exceeding their expectations. We'll fine tune as needed.

It's also time to contemplate the long term future of K9CMT. Those of you who know me are aware of the physical limitations I cope with on a daily basis. There will come a point when, if we are to continue to be a force for good in the lives of others, the challenge to lead our team will have to be picked up by someone else. God willing, that's well in the future. Still, it's time to begin broad discussions with family members and veterans to get a sense of what the future might hold. I am, of course, very interested in any feedback you might have on either organizational change or succession.

2018 Objectives. To summarize, here's where we're focused for this year:

- We will reassess our organizational structure and the service package we deliver each recipient and family.
- If adjustments are in order, we'll make them.
- We will continue to ramp up our fund raising to help meet the needs with this ever growing challenge.
- We will reinforce existing relationships with like-minded organizations and reach out to others.
- We will continue our efforts with all members of the K9CMT extended family. And,
- We will work to bring this priceless gift to another six to eight families.

I have attached the 2017 Profit and Loss Statement. Please let me know if you have questions with regard to our stewardship.

Finally. In 2017 we were again recognized as one of Montana's great non-profit organizations. That recognition is really a tribute to all of you. So many are involved in helping us make the magic. Volunteers, land owners, professional guides, other trainers, businesses and benefactors...all are vital to our ongoing success. Thank you so very much for all you do. May God bless and keep you safe in 2018 and beyond.

David W. Riggs
Founder and CEO