



**American  
Kennel Club®**



# IN SESSION

AKC'S CONGRESSIONAL NEWSLETTER

The American Kennel Club's Newsletter for Members of Congress and their Staff

## PERSPECTIVES

*We're more than champion dogs...  
We're the dog's champion.*

With more than 130 years as the experts on all things canine, the American Kennel Club (AKC) has a long history of helping the government with military working dog programs. In World War II, some 17,000 AKC registered dogs served in the Dogs for Defense program.

Today, military working dogs such as explosives detection dogs play a visible and unprecedented role in our national security. Few people realize, however, that 80-90 percent of the dogs America relies on for national security are imported from overseas vendors. Reliance on foreign and uncertain sources for such an extraordinarily high percentage of the dogs that protect the public and our national security should concern all Americans.

Following the events of 9-11, the worldwide demand for scent detection dogs has risen steadily. Numerous terrorist events and human tragedies worldwide have added to demand. Additionally, many nations (and private security providers tasked with protecting public places and high profile events) rely on the same European sources for detection dogs. Growing demand has led to a shortage of even mediocre-quality foreign dogs available to protect the United States.

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## CONGRESSIONAL CANINE SPOTLIGHT

# Congressman Ralph Abraham



Rep. Abraham presenting at National Purebred Dog Day on May 1st on Capitol Hill, after sponsoring the House resolution recognizing the day.

An average day on Capitol Hill took a perilous turn when Representative Mark Meadows' apricot Toy Poodle, Jolie, took a fall from a staffer's arms. Fortunately for Jolie, Representative Ralph Abraham (LA-5) is not only a medical doctor, but also a veterinarian and able to help anyone that walks on two or four legs. Rep. Abraham was in the middle of a meeting when he was informed of the emergency and quickly jumped into action. After a thorough examination, he concluded that Jolie suffered a slight concussion, but was more shaken up than anything. More importantly, he could give Representative Meadows the peace of mind that Jolie was going to make a full recovery.

Growing up on a farm, Rep. Abraham was surrounded by many pets. He fondly remembers his first dog, a shepherd-lab mix named Lucky, who was abandoned on the road in front of his childhood home. Little did he know that Lucky would turn out to be a hero. One day on a walk, they encountered a snake. Lucky put his body between the snake and Rep. Abraham, saving the Representative while getting bit in the process. True to his name, Lucky survived the ordeal and lived to be 11 years old.

Not all his experiences with dogs have been heroic, though. There are

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Recently, the American Kennel Club was asked by government contacts how we could help assist with development and procurement of quality, domestically-bred dogs suitable for training as military working dogs. The AKC does not sell dogs, but we are pleased to offer our knowledge and expertise in this and related areas.

About a year ago, the AKC formed a team to gather information about American use and procurement of explosives detection dogs; the challenges faced in having enough fully trained, deployable dogs to meet demand; and how changes in breeding and procurement can improve outcomes. We met with the Department of Defense, TSA, vendors, government and private contractors, academia, and law enforcement.

We found:

- A range of concerns regarding an over-reliance on foreign-bred and -procured dogs;
- A lack of transparency and consistency in the selection process for untrained or “green” dogs;
- High failure rates among both foreign and domestic dogs; and
- and procurement processes that intimidated potential suppliers and could favor foreign dogs over domestically-bred dogs.

We also heard that outcomes from scientific research on improving performance and efficiency within our training programs were not being implemented consistently.

In March, AKC hosted the first annual U.S. Detection

Dog Conference in Raleigh, NC. The conference assembled key stakeholders from government, academia and the private sector to discuss ways that stakeholders and AKC could help provide dogs to protect the safety and security of the United States and advance the concept of a working dog center of excellence.

In October, we testified about our findings and recommendations before a joint hearing of the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Affairs and the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security.

We continue to work with members of Congress to secure more information about the cause and possible solutions for the shortage of domestically-bred explosives detection and working dogs for national security purposes. Language in the National Defense Authorization Act (HR 2810) will require reporting on specific aspects of current military working dog procurement and breeding programs to help address this issue and provide long-term, sustainable, high-quality sources of domestically bred working dogs to meet our national security needs. We appreciate Congressional support for these efforts. To learn more, please contact us at [doglaw@akc.org](mailto:doglaw@akc.org).

All the best,



Sheila Goffe  
Vice President, Government Relations  
[shg@akc.org](mailto:shg@akc.org)



plenty of more light-hearted moments as well. During his time as a practicing veterinarian, Rep. Abraham recalls a rather odd moment when a woman was feeding her cocker spaniel and realized she had lost her diamond wedding band. Every day she'd bring the dog to the clinic for x-rays so we could monitor its progress through the dog. She got the ring back three days later.

Representative Abraham's most recent companions were two yellow Labrador Retrievers named Drake and Jake. He and his wife Dianne live on a farm near a river and spend a lot of time duck hunting and walking through the yard and fields with the boys.

The Congressman has always been a great supporter of purpose-bred dogs and sponsored a House resolution recognizing National Purebred Dog Day on May 1st, along with Congressmen Ted Yoho and Kurt Schrader. Rep. Abraham believes it is important to highlight the role that purebred dogs and breeders of purebred dogs have played in the history of the United States as well as the numerous ways purebred dogs have served Americans as search and rescue dogs, guide and service dogs, military working dogs and more, all while providing one-of-a-kind companionship.

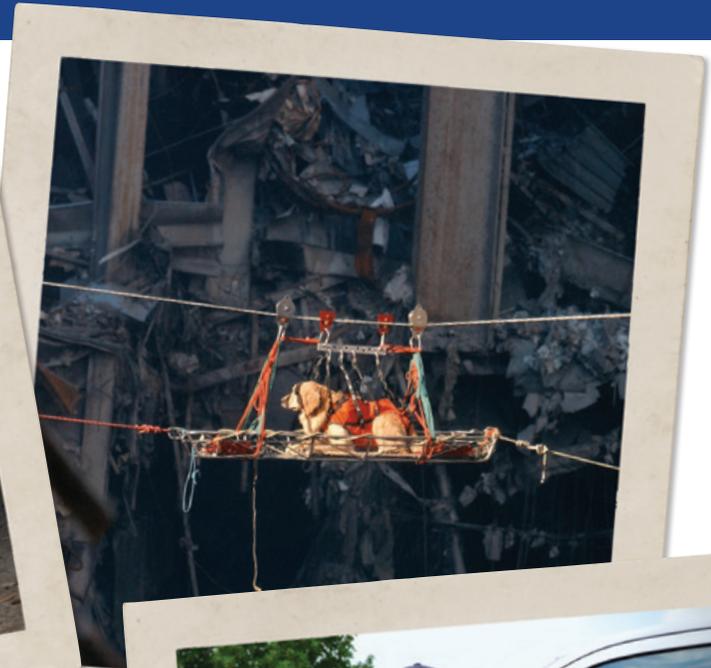
Representative Abraham

started his military career as First Lieutenant with the 20th SFG Airborne Division of the Army National Guard. He is a fixed-wing and helicopter pilot who currently flies reconnaissance missions for the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and he is a mission pilot for the Air Force's Civil Air Patrol Green Flag Program. His military experience provides Rep. Abraham a unique perspective for discussions on military services dogs. He notes, "It was an honor to be involved in discussion with our great men and women in uniform along with our canine soldiers. Make no mistake, these dogs play an invaluable roll in keeping our troops safe from harm."

Rep. Abraham believes one of the greatest issues of dog ownership in this county irresponsible dog ownership. "It's unacceptable to keep an animal if you're going to abuse it." Rep. Abraham concludes that being a responsible dog owner is like being a responsible parent—their total care is dependent on you. ■



# OUR NATION'S SECURITY RELIES ON PUREBRED WORKING DOGS.



So why are we  
importing  
**nearly 90%**  
of our detection  
and security dogs  
from overseas?

AKC Stands with Members of Congress, TSA, and law enforcement to support and develop American breeders and trainers, expand America's world-class breeding and training programs, and establish a U.S.-based Center of Excellence for purebred security and detection dogs.





# AKC Humane Fund Grant Helps Domestic Violence Shelters Become Pet Friendly



The statistics are staggering; every nine seconds, another woman in the United States is beaten, according to the Partnership Against Domestic Violence. While violence against women often takes place behind closed doors and isn't always visible to others, that doesn't mean it's not happening. Chances are, if there are children involved, they, too, are facing some sort of abuse, whether it is physical or emotional.

Victims of domestic violence fear for the safety of their children and themselves, and also for the safety of their pets. Up to 48 percent of domestic abuse victims will either delay leaving or possibly remain in a volatile situation because they don't want to be separated from their beloved animals and are afraid of what may happen if they leave them behind. For the abuser, the victim's bond with a pet offers another way to exert control and instill even greater fear.

In the U.S., there are approximately 73 million companion animals, and there are 1.3 million victims of partner violence annually, with 85 percent of the victims being women. A victim may need to make an immediate escape to avoid a potentially life-threatening situation, but planning that escape can take time. There are a variety of factors to consider, including where they can safely leave their pets. While some are able to make arrangements with family and friends, not everyone has those outlets to turn to. While they know they can seek refuge and find assistance in a domestic violence shelter, not all of those

shelters are able to welcome animals, thus making an already stressful situation that much more intense.

To run a pet-friendly shelter, it takes resources and money to outfit the facility with the proper tools to accommodate animals of all different sizes. Thanks to the AKC Humane Fund grant, more shelters across the country are now able to offer a safe haven for humans affected by domestic violence and for their animals, as well.

Established in 2007, the fund's mission is to promote responsible pet ownership through education, outreach, and grant making. "Grants are awarded on a rolling basis to not-for-profit domestic violence shelters that accept pets and to not-for-profit animal shelters that provide services for domestic violence shelters," says Daphna Straus, secretary of the AKC Humane Fund, Inc. While the number of pets housed in a domestic violence shelter is among the many factors that determine funding need, all eligible organizations are invited to apply for AKC Humane Fund grants.

"The grant makes all the difference in the world," says Jolanda Ingram-Obie, program director for Harrington House in Crescent City, Calif. A two-time recipient, the shelter received its first grant in March of 2010, which allowed for the construction of two outdoor kennels, as well as purchasing vet visits for animals that might be in need of medical attention. A few months ago, Harrington House received its second grant.



“This time I applied for a three-year grant, which will continue to help us over the next few years,” says Ingram-Obie. Harrington House has already added an additional kennel a bit closer on the property, along with the purchase of portable crates that will allow participants to have their pets in their room if they choose. Ingram-Obie says that the Harrington House staff believes having a pet close by can be helpful for the victim who has already experienced so much trauma.

Other necessities such as leashes were purchased for owners, so they can keep their pets right next to them while walking throughout the facility.

Harrington House opened as an emergency shelter in 1985 and became a transitional shelter, as well, in 2016. The shelter is able to provide victims with shelter for a longer period until more permanent housing is found. With the help of the AKC Humane Fund grant, the staff at Harrington House has been able to help its participants feel more at home and give them a sense of ease.

“Pet-friendly shelters are important because the participants won’t feel safe if they have to leave their pets behind, especially if they have children who are emotionally attached to the animal; they are going to be re-traumatized not having them there,” says Ingram-Obie.

With any shelter, the number one concern is the safety of those seeking assistance. In Tulsa, Okla., Domestic Violence Intervention Services (DVIS), an 80-bed emergency facility and 20-unit transitional housing program, built a completely new shelter 2-1/2 years ago for the specific purpose of converting completely to a pet-friendly facility.

While the previous shelter ran for 25 years, DVIS knew it needed a safe space for residents to bring their pets. “We had families who experienced trauma, and their pets were their support system, and we saw the importance of that,” says Chelsea Foreman, assistant shelter director for DVIS. “We had that in our minds when designing this new space and found the AKC Humane Fund grant to help make this possible.”

DVIS received its first three-year grant in 2014, and it plans to reapply this fall. Since the new facility opened, DVIS has served

close to 200 animals. Separate kennel spaces for dogs and cats, along with dog runs and an outdoor fenced-in climbing area for cats are some of the amenities now available for the animals.

A part-time kennel technician is also on staff to help owners provide the necessary care needed, whatever it may be. From routine health care to assisting with walks, feeding, and other everyday responsibilities, the staff members at DVIS pull together to make sure the animals are well taken care of.

Harrington House and DVIS do not restrict pets based on size or breed, and there are no limits on how many pets one person can bring. And if there isn’t enough room in the shelter to accommodate an animal, the staff does its best to help find temporary care until space becomes available.

“Changing over to a 100 percent pet-friendly facility was a great move,” says DeJon Knapp, DVIS vice president of safe housing services. “I’ve seen the biggest improvement in client morale and their outlook; it’s like they are not only fighting for a better life for themselves, but for their pets as well.”

At DVIS, the staff has seen an increase in enthusiasm in regard to coming to the shelter. In difficult times, knowing that a facility will accommodate a pet helps alleviate some of the worry and removes a lot of barriers for them. “We have people come to us more quickly than before we had the kennel,” observes Foreman. “Although I do think a lot of those survivors would have gotten to us, just maybe not as quickly as they are now.”

For victims of domestic violence, Ingram-Obie suggests putting a plan into place if possible, including one for the pet. Documents such as shot records, medications, and anything else related to your animal should be included. Victims also have the opportunity to work with an advocate who will help navigate next steps, before and after they leave the home.

Turning a shelter into a pet-friendly safe haven is possible, thanks to resources like the AKC Humane Fund grant. “For other agencies considering making the change, it might seem like an unsurmountable thing to do, but it is worth it to see so many survivors succeed in ways I didn’t see at our previous shelter,” says Knapp. ■

# AKC Reunite Pitches in to Help Hurricane Harvey Evacuees and their Pets



Our hearts and prayers go out to the many people in Texas, Louisiana and surrounding areas that are in the path of Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath. The magnitude of the devastation from this storm is unimaginable and the American Kennel Club® (AKC®) and AKC Reunite are here to contribute to the relief. Two AKC Pet Disaster Relief trailers have been deployed in Dallas and Ft Worth, Texas to help evacuees from the storm and AKC Reunite will continue to help shelters caring for pets displaced by the storm.

“AKC Reunite continues to monitor the situation in Texas and Louisiana. We are committed to providing as much assistance as possible to those affected by this storm,” said Tom Sharp, AKC Reunite President and CEO. “Pets are part of the family and we understand how important it is to ensure their safety as well.”

The Fort Worth AKC Pet Disaster Relief trailer has been deployed at the Fort Worth Wilkerson Facility emergency shelter, located at 5201 Ca Roberson Blvd, Fort Worth, TX 76119. The deployment of this trailer allows people to safely evacuate with their pets instead of risking their lives because they do not have a safe, pet-friendly place to go. It houses supplies that create a safe, temporary home-base for at least 65 pets in the wake of a disaster. The essential, non-perishable AKC Pet Disaster Relief supplies are crucial, as many pet owners do not have the time to gather the necessary items to care for their pets during an emergency evacuation.

The Tri Cities/Cedar Hill AKC Pet Disaster Relief Trailer is deployed adjacent to the “Mega” Shelter set up in Dallas at

the Kay Bailey Hutchinson Convention Center. This self-care animal shelter set up in the nearby parking garage so evacuees have close proximity to their pets. Efforts are being supported by the SPCA of Texas, the Dallas Animals Services, and the Dallas County Animal Response Team.

AKC Reunite has donated thousands of dollars to Austin Pets Alive shelter, Etosha Rescue, the SPCA of Brazoria County, among others. The organization has also purchased \$2,600 worth of kennel runs for the Tri-Cities Animal Shelter and Dallas County Response Team to assist at the Dallas Mega Shelter. ■



# Five Heroic Dogs Honored with AKC® Humane Fund Awards for Canine Excellence

The AKC® Humane Fund is pleased to announce the winners of the 18th annual AKC Humane Fund Awards for Canine Excellence (ACE). These awards celebrate five loyal, hard-working dogs that have significantly improved the lives of their owners and communities.

One award is presented in each of the following five categories: Uniformed Service K-9, Service, Therapy, Search and Rescue and Exemplary Companion dog. This year's winners range from a retired show dog that helps children learn to read to a family pet turned narcotics detection K-9.

“The extraordinary stories of these five heroic ACE Award winners illustrate the devotion, loyalty and unconditional love that dogs give us,” said AKC Spokesperson Gina DiNardo. “Each of these dogs has changed the life of a person or a whole community and they all deserve to be celebrated. The ACE Awards give us an opportunity to pay tribute to these valiant canine companions.”

All of the ACE recipients will receive \$1,000 to be awarded to a pet-related charity of their choice, a one-year pet insurance policy from AKC Pet Insurance, and an engraved sterling silver medallion will be presented to each at the AKC National Championship presented by Royal Canin in Orlando, Florida held on Saturday and Sunday, December 16-17, 2017.

This year's ACE winners are:

**Uniformed Service K-9:** “Duke,” a Doberman Pinscher handled by Detective Sergeant Ed Soares of Menlo Park, California

“K-9 Duke” is a two-year-old Doberman Pinscher serving San Mateo County, California. He is certified by Police Officer Standards & Training (P.O.S.T) & California Narcotic Canine Association (CNCA). At eight weeks old, Duke was purchased by Detective Sergeant Ed Soares as a personal canine companion. After accompanying Sgt. Soares to a meeting at six-months-old, Duke was quickly enrolled in intensive training to become certified in narcotics detection. Duke has since been incorporated into the Menlo Park Police Special Investigation Unit, deployed during traffic enforcement stops, parole and probation searches, and narcotics cases all throughout the county. Duke also assists other agencies in narcotic investigations and is credited with finding tens of thousands of dollars in illegal narcotics and firearms during his career.



When Duke is not paroling the streets of San Mateo, he acts as an ambassador for his breed. He attends educational functions at schools, community events and hospitals where he meets and greets children and the citizens he and his team serve. According to Detective Sgt. Soares, Duke is his best self when he is around children. In 2016, the Doberman Pinscher Club of America board and officers named Duke the club's honorary mascot.

**Service Dog:** “Gunner,” a Great Pyrenees owned by D. Hamilton Kinard of Richmond Hill, Georgia

“Gunner” is a three-year-old Great Pyrenees certified as a mobility assistance and PTSD service dog. After serving most of his adult life in the US Army, D. Hamilton Kinard medically retired in 2010. Kinard was paired with Gunner in 2013 after Hamilton was considered 100% disabled with total body nerve damage, a severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) and severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Gunner braces Kinard so he can stand and even pulls his wheelchair on his bad days. The Great Pyrenees' kisses return Kinard to reality when he suffers from chronic flashbacks.



In 2014, Gunner inspired Britnee Kinard to found the SD Gunner Fund, a nonprofit organization providing disabled veterans and children with the financial means to obtain and maintain service dogs. Gunner also became the first mobility assistance TBI Service Dog to be approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Southeast Georgia Coastal Region. In 2015, Gunner was honored along with the Kinard family as a Lincoln Award winner in Washington, D.C., at the Kennedy Center. Later that year, Gunner and the Kinard family were presented with the Distinguished Alumni Award for Community Service at Middle Tennessee State University for their continued dedication to helping others and spreading service dog awareness. Gunner visits schools, military installations, state and federal government entities, and universities all over the United States to raise awareness.

**Therapy Dog:** “Dennis,” a Skye Terrier owned by Stephen P. Hersey of Hampton, New Hampshire

“Dennis,” officially known as CH Seamist Big Man In Town

CD BN RAE THDA, was an eleven-year-old Skye Terrier bred and owned by Stephen P. Hersey. Certified by Therapy Dog International, Dennis has left nothing short of a legacy behind.



Over the past seven years, Steve Hersey and Dennis had spent countless hours working in several areas of therapy work. Dennis visited a special autistic friend on Thursdays for the past six years and helped him build confidence and independence. He also participated in a Therapy Dog International reading program called “Tail Waggin Tutors” which allows children to read to dogs to help improve literacy skills. Illustrative of Dennis’ impact is a beautiful and moving letter from a parent of two boys in the program describing how her sons have grown into “reading machines” thanks to Dennis. She stated that her sons’ love for dogs has grown as well.

Unfortunately, Dennis passed away earlier this year after a life of helping others. Dennis’ work as a therapy dog has impacted many hearts and will always be remembered. His daughter, Evie, will accept the ACE Award on his behalf. Following in Dennis’ pawprints, Evie is currently training to become certified as a Therapy dog as well.



**Search and Rescue Dog:** “Piglet,” a Catahoula Leopard Dog owned and handled by Lori Wells of Lancaster, California

“Piglet,” a six-year-old Catahoula Leopard Dog, is rigorously trained and certified to find human remains on land and in water. Each year Piglet and handler, Lori Wells spend hundreds of hours training, testing, and answering the call of duty for law enforcement agencies in California, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah. At nearly 7 years old, Piglet has built a reputation as an unparaleled search resource.

Her case file is thick with an extensive list of grieving families who were granted some closure because of the grueling searches

performed by Piglet and Wells. In one case, searchers had spent a week scouring a lake for a drowning victim to no avail. On day eight of the search, Piglet deployed and successfully recovered the person. In another case, she deployed in a remote wilderness area to assist in a search and Piglet was able to locate the subject’s remains. Her diligence and tenacity in this discovery provided a wife and nine children the answers they needed to move forward. Piglet is unique not only for her diligent work ethic and talented nose, but also for her infectious ‘smile’. She always lights up the room at community events and fundraisers and is happy to make new friends, human and canine alike.



**Exemplary Companion Dog:** “Amber,” a Cardigan Welsh Corgi owned by Sonja Benavidez of Geneseo, Illinois

“Amber,” a two-year-old Cardigan Welsh Corgi, owned by Sonja Benavidez of Geneseo, Illinois, helped Sonja regain her happiness after a life filled with much pain and agony. After surviving Encephalitis in the early 1960’s, Sonja has overcome a coma, paralysis below the waist, braces and many surgeries, none of which stopped her from doing what she loved most - showing Cardigan Welsh Corgis. In 2013, a series of foot injuries had bound Sonja to a wheelchair which diminished her independence and motivation.

Sonja received Amber about a year later, after helping a friend with a litter. Just two-years-old at the time of her nomination, Amber is a Grand Champion. She placed in conformation, obedience, and rally at the 2016 Cardigan national specialty, and was Novice A High in Trial at the 2017 national. Additionally, Amber has earned a Canine Good Citizen Advanced title, is a certified therapy dog, and has met the requirements for the Cardigan club’s versatility award.

Amber and Sonja have been told that they are the best wheelchair dog-and-handler team ever seen in the show ring. Amber helped re-light the flame in Sonja’s heart and this dynamic team continues to inspire other disabled people to get in the ring. ■

# Westminster Winner, Rumor, Has Litter of Eight Puppies



Westminster's 2017 Best in Show winner, Rumor the German Shepherd Dog, has had a litter of eight puppies. Rumor had her litter of four boys and four girls at the end of August, Madison Channel 3000 reports.

Rumor retired from the show world after her Westminster win in February 2017. But life hasn't settled down for this busy champion. "She's been a great mother," her owner and handler Kent Boyles told Channel 3000.

In addition to being a mother, Rumor also has been making appearances and doing therapy work at children's hospitals.

As for the pups, Boyles hasn't decided where their final homes will be. He has already been contacted about the puppies, but hasn't made any commitments. He also plans to evaluate them to see if any will be good candidates to follow in their mother's footsteps, and compete in conformation.

Congratulations, Rumor!

You may recall that Rumor joined us this past summer on the Hill for National Purebred Dog Day. You can read more about her visit by visiting [www.akc.org/government-relations/newsletters/in-session/](http://www.akc.org/government-relations/newsletters/in-session/) and clicking the Summer 2017 issue. ■



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AKC Government Relations Department  
(919) 816-3720 • [doglaw@akc.com](mailto:doglaw@akc.com)  
[www.akc.com/government-relations](http://www.akc.com/government-relations)

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