



# 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.*

Throughout history, dogs have played a special and important role in our lives. Recognized by individual breed, dogs have been depicted in a vast array of paintings, sculptures, books, and other media, signifying the unique bond and the essential role that purpose-bred dogs have played in our lives for thousands of years.

Purebred dogs are a part of our heritage, and a window into the culture that created them. Unfortunately, some breeds are becoming increasingly rare and, in certain cases, are in danger of becoming extinct. As with the recognition and effort to preserve other endangered animal species, it is also important we recognize preserve our own rare breeds of dogs.

***The American Kennel Club invites you to join us in celebrating and the diversity, heritage, and contributions of the purebred dog by supporting Senate Res. 447, which establishes National Purebred Dog Day.***

Purebred dogs are living legacies of the cultures that created them. Historically, these dogs both worked alongside their people and provided them companionship. Today, the service of these breeds continues. They are guide dogs and service dogs; work in search and rescue; help put food on the table; serve alongside the military and police; and are guardians of home, hearth, and livestock. Purebred dogs make extraordinary pets because of their predictability in temperament, characteristics and requirements which is absent in non-purebreds.

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## Congressional Canine Spotlight – Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham (NM-1) and Kiwi



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Everyone loves a happy ending. And some of the most heartwarming are those of lost dogs being reunited with their owners. Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico knows this personally through the incredible story of her Shih Tzu “Kiwi” – a story she described as “a sad experience that had the best ending ever.”

“[A few years ago], Kiwi got scared [over] some fireworks in the neighborhood and ran away,” she explained. “I was in the middle of my second campaign for Congress, and I dropped everything to look for her. She didn’t return and I was heartbroken.”

Thirteen months later, this story took an amazing turn. “While I was serving in Congress, I got a call [saying] Kiwi turned up at a veterinary clinic, and fortunately they found her [micro]chip that identified me as her owner. We posted a photo of Kiwi and me on Facebook and got the most incredible responses from all over the world.”

For Lujan Grisham, microchipping is an important part of being a responsible dog owner, but it’s not the only thing. “Obviously, responsible dog owners must care for their pet’s day-to-day needs, like food, water, and shelter.” She also emphasizes that there is more that is required. “Just as important, pet owners must be considerate of their neighbors, which means ensuring your dog isn’t a nuisance.

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Part-and-parcel to the celebration of the purebred dog is honoring the breeders who dedicate their lives to preserving the breeds.

Responsible breeders are experts in their breed and know the pedigree of the dogs they develop. They tell potential buyers about the temperament, health, and other characteristics unique to the puppy they are considering. Many breeders devote their entire lives to developing a line or pedigree of dogs that meet specific temperament, performance, and health standards. Breeders often take dogs back if they are not in an ideal situation and place them in new homes. Responsible breeding of purebred dogs is a labor of love that celebrates the human-animal bond, the history and beauty of a particular breed, and the commitment and hard work of breeders who dedicate their lives and resources to raising them.

We invite you share in the celebrating purebred dogs through your support of National Purebred Dog Day.

All the best,



Sheila Goffe

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Staff dogs Yoshi and Patches playing in Lujan Grisham's office.

Typically, if you're taking care of your dog's basic needs and making sure the dog gets exercise, they aren't a problem for neighbors."

Congresswoman Lujan Grisham has owned many dogs in her life. She believes that it is important for those who want to own a dog to learn how to care for that dog responsibly, in order to prevent more serious issues for the animals and the community. "Pet overpopulation and pet abuse are serious problems. We must invest in educating people, starting with young children, to be responsible pet owners."

Congresswoman Lujan Grisham believes that the work and responsibility that comes with dog ownership also has significant rewards. "[Dogs] have their own personalities, and they truly become part of the family. Children benefit from that relationship, but more important, they get their first taste of what it's like to be responsible for someone other than themselves."

Dogs can provide benefits to the workplace as well, and the Congresswoman said that she encourages her staff to bring their dogs to work. The staff enjoys bringing their dogs, who play together and join in office festivities. Recently, Grisham's Chief of Staff organized a birthday party for his dog (including cake!) and the staff and dogs celebrated together.

"Sometimes, it's more convenient to bring our dogs into the office, as long as they are not disruptive," she explained. "Most importantly, the dogs provide a warm, welcoming [environment] for our visitors and staff."

"A relationship with your dog is so rewarding," Congresswoman Lujan Grisham explained. And her relationship with Kiwi is evidence of this. The Congresswoman explained that she is "very special" to her. "We found each other many years ago during a tough time in my life. She helped me get through that time, which is why I have been especially protective of [her]."

**"We must invest in educating people, starting with young children, to be responsible pet owners."**



## Did You Know?

- The Shih Tzu, which means "lion dog" is an ancient breed, being depicted in Tibetan and Chinese art and documents dating back to 624 A.D. Today, it is the 19th most popular breed in the United States.
- Shih Tzus are known for their affectionate, outgoing, and playful nature.

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# AKC Names First Recipients of the AKC Paw of Courage Award

The American Kennel Club just launched its newest award, the AKC Paw of Courage, in an effort to show appreciation for the many sacrifices that working dogs make while serving and protecting our country. This award specifically recognizes the extraordinary sacrifices of dogs who have been severely injured or killed in the line of duty.

“These working dogs possess great courage and dedication,” said AKC Vice President Gina DiNardo. “They continuously put their lives on the line, and have sacrificed their own safety, well-being, and in some cases even their lives, to keep us safe. Each dog awarded with the AKC Paw of Courage has made a significant sacrifice in the line of duty.”

Any working dog is eligible to receive the AKC Paw of Courage; the award is not specific to purebred dogs. Recipients of the award, or their former human partner, will receive a 2016 AKC Paw of Courage medal along with a certificate. In addition, the recipients will receive a photo and profile on [akc.org](http://akc.org).

The first 2016 AKC Paw of Courage recipients are:



**K9 OFFICER OGAR: OF SMITH COUNTY CONSTABLE’S OFFICE – PRECINCT 5, TX**

K9 Ogar, a one-year-old Belgian Malinois of Smith County

Constable’s Office in Texas, was shot and killed while attempting an apprehension this past January. K9 Ogar and his handler, Deputy Constable Kevin Petty, were conducting a routine traffic stop when a vehicle fled, leading to a pursuit. The vehicle was wrecked and the subject evaded on foot into a wooded area, and K9 Ogar was deployed. During this confrontation, K9 Ogar was shot and killed. Deputy Constable Petty says, “Ogar sacrificed his life to save mine.” He says that Ogar was always right by his side and looked at him with true love and devotion.

When K9 Ogar was not on duty he was like any other family dog. He loved to run circles around the swimming pool with Deputy Constable Petty’s two young girls. He also enjoyed playing tug of war and catch and was a master escape artist. From the moment he was brought home by his handler, he fit right in with the family. According to his handler, Ogar had mastered the combination of being both soft and strong simultaneously. He loved any attention he could get and in exchange, all he asked for was love. K9 Ogar touched many lives in his time as a K9 officer and he is dearly missed each and every day.



**K9 OFFICER JAG: OF TWIN RIVERS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICE DEPT., CA**

K9 Jag was an eight-year-old Belgian Malinois who served with the Twin Rivers Unified School District Police Department for five years. During his annual state certification, he was struck by a vehicle. “K9 Jag was everything a handler and a school Police Department could want. He knew his job and did it well,” says his partner, Sergeant Arlin Kocher. He describes Jag as intense, energetic, sweet and powerful. K9 Jag was the first ever Twin Rivers Unified School District Police Department’s canine. He excelled in every aspect of his career;

credited with hundreds of narcotics searches, over 50 suspect surrenders and three apprehensions throughout his time in the department.

Equally as important, K9 Jag also spent a ton of time doing public outreach in the schools and nearby communities. Students, staff and parents looked forward to seeing Jag on a daily basis. He was adored for being sweet and friendly while also serving as their fierce and dependable protector.

Throughout his career, K9 Jag competed in countless events and won numerous awards. According to his partner, Sgt. Kocher, K9 Jag wouldn't let anyone leave a room without petting him. At the end of his shift, he was always eager to go back to the Police Department where the fellow officers were waiting, for what he thought was just to play with him. K9 Jag is sorely missed by Sergeant Kocher as well as the entire Twin Rivers USD as a uniformed working dog as well as a family dog.

### **K9 OFFICER BETCHA: OF RUTLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, VT**

K9 Betcha was a two-year-old Australian Cattle Dog who served as a narcotics/tracking K9 at the Rutland County Sheriff's Office in Vermont. He was with the Sheriff's Office for about a year when he was struck and killed by a vehicle while in the line of duty. "He was my fourth K9 partner but my first dog that I can say was my therapy," says his handler, Deputy Sheriff Edward Hunter of Betcha. Deputy Sheriff Hunter has been in police work for 35 years and says that K9 Betcha truly helped him cope with his past and present in the job. When Betcha was off-duty, he loved playing Frisbee and driving down the road with his head out the window allowing people to snap pictures of him as he passed by. K9 Betcha gave his life for his career and is greatly missed by his partner, and his off-duty family, as well as his family at Rutland County Sheriff's Office.

### **K9 OFFICER KRIJGER: OF NORFOLK POLICE DEPARTMENT, VA**

K9 Kirjger, a four-year-old Belgian Malinois of the Norfolk Police Department in Virginia was shot and killed following a violent barricade situation this past January. Police were responding to a domestic violence call when the man barricaded himself inside his home with his wife as a hostage. After several hours, the man exited the home opening fire on the officers, fatally wounding Krijger.

K9 Krijger's partner, Officer Ryan McNiff began his partnership and friendship during a 16-week training course. During the training, the duo became proficient in numerous skills including: obedience, tracking, open area searches, agility, building searches, apprehensions, and control commands. Even more importantly, Officer McNiff and Krijger learned to work together and to trust one another. "Krijger was not only my partner, he was also my best friend", says Officer McNiff. "Krijger taught me many things about courage, honor, loyalty and friendship". K9 Krijger has assisted in locating evidence for countless

crimes and he is responsible for over 30 felony apprehensions. Not only was he constantly busy keeping the city safe, Krijger also performed many public demonstrations within the schools and the community. In his off-duty hours, K9 Krijger could be found hanging out on the patio enjoying a bone or running around the backyard with one of his many toys. Krijger loved backyard barbeques with his off-duty family and enjoyed relaxing by the fire pit at night.

When it came to making the ultimate sacrifice in order to protect his partner and his fellow officers, Krijger did not hesitate. "I truly believe that because of him, I am a better police officer and person", says Officer McNiff. K9 Krijger's sacrifice is deeply appreciated by his fellow officers, his partner, his off-duty family and the entire community that he served. He is commemorated by his community as a true hero.

*From akc.org*



**OFFICER MCNIFF AND K9 KRIJGER K-148**

# Labrador Retriever Celebrates a Quarter of a Century at Number One

*Loveable Lab Claims Top Spot for 25th Consecutive Year*



Labrador Retriever- ©AKC

Labrador Retriever lovers have spoken! The American Kennel Club (AKC®), the nation's largest purebred dog registry, announced that the intelligent, family friendly breed holds tight to the number one spot on the most popular list for the 25th consecutive year, continuing the longest reign as the nation's top dog in AKC history.

While the Lab is clearly America's dog, the French Bulldog is poised for a takeover. The affectionate and playful breed continues to win the hearts of dog lovers everywhere, jumping three spots to number six in 2015.

"The versatile, loveable Lab has firmly planted its paw print in AKC's history, celebrating a quarter of a century as America's most popular dog," said AKC Vice President Gina DiNardo. "But keep your eye on the French Bulldog. The Frenchie has risen 32 spots over the past decade and shows no signs of stopping."

In addition to the country's most popular, the movers and shakers of 2015 were the bigger breeds. The Cane Corso jumped 12 spots (47th to 35th), the Norwegian Elkhound rose 12 spots (100th to 88th), the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon jumped eight spots (74th to 66th), the Belgian Malinois moved up eight spots (59th to 51st), the Belgian Tervuren rose eight spots (106th to 98th), and the Leonberger jumped eight spots (101st to 93rd), among others.



French Bulldog-©AKC

## Did You Know?

The top five most popular breeds in Washington, DC are: the Labrador Retriever, French Bulldog, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Bulldog, and German Shepherd Dog