

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Funding Cuts will Leave Veterans without Treatment and Therapy**

*NAPPS Urges the Public to Support Veterans in Need—Despite Recent Funding Cuts*

MOUNT LAUREL, N.J. October 4, 2012 –The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters (NAPPS), supports the need for service dogs as a form of treatment and therapy for veterans living with the lasting effects of their time spent in the military—regardless of whether the results are physical handicaps or mental disorders.

Despite returning home, many veterans continue to carry with them the harsh and lasting memories of war. An alarming number of service men and women struggle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), both of which are mental illnesses that can severely impact a person's daily life. Although injuries to the brain are not always as noticeable as physical impairments, they are severe and require medical treatment and continuous therapy.

According to the United States Government, the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) will no longer provide funding for service dogs, unless the animal is serving a veteran living with a visual, hearing and/or mobility impairment. As a result, veterans with PTSD, TBI and other mental illnesses, wishing to utilize service dogs for therapy, will be responsible for covering all costs associated with training and caring for the animal. The VA defends the financial cuts by stating that there is not enough evidence to support the medical need of service dogs for individuals suffering from mental disorders.

These funding cuts will go into effect on October 5, 2012.

Despite the VA's funding cuts, nonprofit organizations like Paws and Stripes will continue their efforts of providing service dogs for military veterans in need. Obtained exclusively from shelters, the service dogs of the Paws and Stripes program are trained by professionals at absolutely no cost to veterans. The organization encourages the veterans to participate in the weekly training with the dog, which offers a unique form of therapy and creates a connection between the animal and its handler. Through the Paws and Stripes program, each dog is custom trained to fit the needs of the veteran. The animal is not a pet—rather a trained service dog, protected by the rights of the American Disabilities Act.

“The extensive training required for a service dog can total up to \$60,000 and while individuals and charitable organizations are able to provide financial support through programs like Paws and Stripes, the need continues to grow,” said John D’Ariano, president of NAPPS. D’Ariano, a former Police Lieutenant of a K9 Unit in Palm Beach County, is familiar with the various expenses associated with properly training a service dog.

“The recent funding cuts from the VA will severely impact the many veterans in need,” added D’Ariano. “They will be forced on a waiting list, unable to begin their much needed therapy and treatment.”

As a member of NAPPS, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the welfare of animals, D’Ariano and hundreds of other professional pet sitters serve as supporters and advocates for the Paws and Stripes program, the NAPPS official charity.

Members of NAPPS are given the opportunity to contribute funds, in addition to their membership fees, to support Paws and Stripes in several fundraising initiatives throughout the year—including a charitable auction benefitting the organization at the NAPPS Annual Conference and Small Business Forum, taking place in San Antonio, Texas, February 8-10, 2013.

Individuals wishing to support the efforts of the Paws and Stripes program and the veterans in need, can donate to the cause by visiting [www.pawsandstripes.org](http://www.pawsandstripes.org).

“Veterans of the United States military have made incredible sacrifices – both physically and emotionally – to protect our country, and NAPPS is grateful for the opportunity to support these heroic women and men through Paws and Stripes,” said D’Ariano. “We applaud the bravery of our military veterans, and respect the efforts of Paws and Stripes to assist in the emotional healing by providing service dogs.”

### **About NAPPS**

NAPPS is the only national non-profit trade association dedicated to promoting the welfare of animals. The Association aims to help the pet owning public, those interested in pet sitting, and professionals engaged in the in-home pet care industry by fulfilling its vision statement, serving as “the most respected authority in professional pet sitting.” It does so by providing the tools and support to foster the success of its members. Additionally, pet parents can benefit from NAPPS’ free resources including a disaster preparedness guide, tips on how to select a pet sitter, nationwide referral service, and quarterly teleconferences aimed to educate the pet owning public. To find a pet sitter in your area, check out NAPPS’ nationwide “Pet Sitter Locator” at [www.petsitters.org](http://www.petsitters.org). For more information on NAPPS, please follow [@TheNAPPS](https://twitter.com/TheNAPPS) on Twitter or join us on Facebook at [facebook.com/TheNAPPS](https://facebook.com/TheNAPPS).

### **About Paws and Stripes**

Paws and Stripes was founded by Lindsey Stanek, whose husband was sent home from his third tour in Iraq for injuries he received on deployment. After nine months in treatment at Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX, Lindsey’s husband, Jim, discovered that the most comfort and relief he found was in the presence of therapy dogs. In May of 2010, Lindsey and Jim tried to obtain a trainer for their rescue dog, Sarge, and soon discovered the difficulty and expenses associated with this process. After being either turned down or unable to pay for service dogs from multiple organizations, Lindsey and Jim decided to start their own organization for veterans, and incorporated the

organization in June 2010. To learn more about Paws and Stripes, please visit <http://www.pawsandstripes.org>.

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