

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Service Dogs Offer Therapy and Comfort to Veterans**

*NAPPS Supports Military Veterans through Official Charity, Paws and Stripes*

MOUNT LAUREL, N.J. April 26, 2012 –The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters (NAPPS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the welfare of animals, encourages the support of their official charity, Paws and Stripes. Established in 2010, Paws and Stripes is a nonprofit organization working to provide service dogs to veterans of the United States military.

Despite returning home, military veterans continue to carry with them the harsh and lasting memories of war. An alarming number of service men and women struggle with the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). To help support veterans suffering from PTSD and TBI, Paws and Stripes assists with providing trained service dogs to offer therapy and comfort.

Obtained exclusively from shelters, the service dogs of the Paws and Stripes program are trained by professionals at absolutely no cost to the veteran. 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. Each dog is custom trained to fit the needs of the veteran and is not a pet—the animal is a working service dog, protected by the rights of the American Disabilities Act.

“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 John D’Ariano, president of NAPPS. “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.”

The extensive training required for a service dog can total up to \$2,000 and although the costs associated with the Paws and Stripes program are significantly less than others, the need continues to grow. As a result, veterans are often put on a waiting list for a dog through the Paws and Stripes program. Luckily, individuals and charitable organizations are able to support veterans in need, by sponsoring the training of a service dog through the Paws and Stripes program.

Through NAPPS, professional pet sitters are given the opportunity to designate a portion of their annual 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.

“The members’ involvement and support of Paws and Stripes will continue to increase public awareness of the need for service dogs,” added D’Ariano. “We hope that our

efforts will help provide more veterans with the support and therapy they need and deserve.”

Lindsey Stanek, CEO and founder of Paws and Stripes added, “We appreciate the efforts of NAPPS members in supporting the shelter and rescue dogs and think this partnership is such a neat idea. We truly believe in the power of service dogs and look forward to working with NAPPS to serve veterans in this critical endeavor.”

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>.

### **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).

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