



NATIONAL DISASTER SEARCH DOG FOUNDATION

BARK ALERT

FALL 2014



Photo: Susan Bollinger

National Training Center - Canine Memorial

SDF Trainers: Lyz Gregory, Emily Fisk, Sonja Heritage

SDF Search Teams: Donovan George & Ollie, Jason Vasquez & Ripley, Alex Van & Winnie

MEET TWO NEW SEARCH TEAMS



Dear Friends,

It's a beautiful Fall day here at the National Training Center in Santa Paula, CA. I hear dogs barking excitedly as they practice the search techniques they'll one day use to save lives. I see first responders learning to guide their canine partners through challenging search scenarios. And I see the Navy troops hard at work at "Search City" in the Disaster Training Zone.

I hope you enjoy the Bark Alert, a report on our recent program activities. I know you'll feel a sense of real pride and satisfaction, seeing all the work made possible through YOUR support.

Thank you for taking this journey with us. We couldn't do it without you!

Yours with gratitude,

Wilma Melville

Wilma Melville, SDF Founder



Photo: Denise Sanders

Kristi Bartlett & Ivan

(Fairfax County Fire & Rescue, Virginia Task Force 1)

Kristi Bartlett is a nine-year veteran of Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department and member of VA-TF1, where she works as a Hazardous Materials specialist. Ivan flew home with Kristi to Centreville, VA, where he joined her nine-month-old Malinois pup Ivy.

Born to a breeder in Georgia, it was clear from the start that Ivan needed a job. After his owner met SDF Master Trainer Sonja Heritage at a canine training workshop, Ivan passed Search Dog testing with flying colors. Ivan is a joyful dog who loves to work and also loves a cuddle every now and then.



Photo: Denise Sanders

Mike Stornetta & Rocket

(Windsor Fire Department, California Task Force 4)

A firefighter in his native Sonoma County since 2002, Mike Stornetta first expressed interest in joining the SDF family in November of 2011. Training weekly with CA-TF4, Mike is so excited to bring Rocket home to join his team!

When he was discovered by volunteer SDF recruiters at the Sacramento SPCA, Rocket had been deemed unadoptable due to his high energy level and was on the euthanasia list. Our volunteers adopted Rocket and brought him home where they saw his great potential as a Search Dog since he had incredible focus and toy-drive. Aptly named Rocket Booster (Rocket for short) by our volunteers' four-year-old son, he continued to thrive in training, sailing over the rubble with ease.

"After attending an event where these amazing dogs were training, I knew that I wanted to be directly involved. Seeing them work, and the bond that they had with their handler, was like nothing I'd ever seen before in my life. Being paired with an SDF Search Dog is beyond awesome and I can't wait to see what the future holds." – Mike Stornetta

Upcoming Search Team Pairings in 2015

- 🐾 California Task Force 1 (Los Angeles City)
- 🐾 California Task Force 2 (Los Angeles County)
- 🐾 California Task Force 3 (Menlo Park)
- 🐾 California Task Force 5 (Orange County)
- 🐾 California Task Force 7 (Sacramento)
- 🐾 Utah Task Force 1 (Salt Lake City)

Meet 3 of our Canine Candidates in training at the National Training Center.



Jake
*recruited from the Nebraska Humane Society
in Omaha by Tim Matthews
of the South Dakota Canine Center*

Jake

Jake (originally named Jessie) was recruited from the Nebraska Humane Society in Omaha by Tim Matthews, who was on a recruitment trip with SDF founder Wilma Melville. Because Jake entered the shelter as a stray and no owner came to claim him, we don't know anything about his history. The staff felt Jake had Search Dog potential in him, with his high energy and intense love of fetch and water games. When Tim and Wilma arrived, the staff presented Jake as a candidate and he did indeed show lots of promise.

Tim's wife, Kellee, told us: *"He's a sweet, innocent, honest boy, who found his way to SDF training at a perfect time in life to have a long working career! He is extremely exuberant and loves the game!"* Jake is on track to graduate in the Spring of 2015.

Josie



Josie
*from Lassen County Animal Services
in Susanville, CA
(recruited by Penny Woodruff)*

This high-spirited, toy-crazy Black Lab mix was recruited for SDF's training program by volunteer recruiter Penny Woodruff in March 2014. Penny had received a call from a staff member at Lassen County Animal Services in Susanville, CA, who thought she had a potential SDF candidate. Sequoia (the dog's name at the time) had been surrendered to the shelter by a local farmer who said she was not well suited for farm life and hoped a Lab rescue would be able to find a good home for her. The day after she received the call, Penny drove through wind, rain, and sleet to meet the dog.

Penny remembers: *"Sequoia stood on her back legs, ball in mouth, as happy as could be. She was driven, focused and ready for action. After evaluating her, I knew we had a winner! It was very hard for me to part with her. She has a special gentleness about her that won my heart."*

We renamed her "Josie" in honor of Josie Willett, whose family owned the historic ranch that has become the National Training Center. Canine Josie is an awesome candidate, set to graduate in February 2015.



Vita
*from the Sioux City Animal Adoption
& Rescue Center by Tim Matthews
of the South Dakota Canine Center*

Vita

This Black Lab was discovered at the Sioux City Animal Adoption & Rescue Center by Tim Matthews of the South Dakota Canine Center. Picked up as a stray, the dog had been admitted by Animal Control and given the name Sammie, but was never claimed by an owner. Tim frequents this shelter and had adopted another Search Dog, Ripley, from the same location. Tim's wife, former SDF Canine Trainer Kellee Matthews, worked with Sammie until she could be flown to California in June of 2014.

Says Kellee: *"This dog is beautiful inside and out...all drive but sweet and focused. She rose to every challenge we put before her, enjoys every minute of training, and makes it look so easy!"*

Renamed "Vita" in honor of dedicated SDF volunteer Vita Franco, this dog has excelled in training and is scheduled to be partnered with a handler in the Spring of 2015. SDF Trainer Emily Fisk reports, *"Vita is VERY intense. She LOVES training, and the game of Search!"*

Thanks to the generosity of SDF supporters across the nation, our campaign to build a National Training Center for America's Search Teams has made great strides during the past six months. Construction is in full swing!

Currently Under Construction

On October 21, 2014, we began pouring the foundation of our 13,256 sq. ft. Canine Pavilion, a beautiful kennel and state-of-the-art learning center for canines and humans. The "Canine" side of the building will accommodate 40 dogs in double-occupancy kennels, each complete with indoor and outdoor runs. The "People" side will include offices for our Program staff, lodging for overnight canine caregivers, a veterinary area where we can provide basic medical care for our canines, and classrooms where our handlers can advance their knowledge of training and deployments and share crucial information related to disaster response.



Laying block at the Canine Pavilion site Photo: Kate Horwick



Wilma supervising the Canine Pavilion concrete pour Photo: Serenity Nichols



As of this printing, rebar for the Pavilion footings has been set, and work is underway on laying down the slabs. Within two months we'll see the Canine side of the Pavilion take shape above ground.

Army and Navy Troops at the NTC

Army Reservists and Navy Seabees have become integral partners in the construction of the Training Center, lending their labor, expertise, and equipment to the project since April of this year. Recently the Army and Navy worked to pour the initial footings for the Canine Pavilion. The Navy is now constructing Search City Shade Structures.

We're honored that the U.S. Department of Defense has selected the NTC as a construction training site for the troops. We're delighted to announce that the partnership is being renewed for another year! In 2015, the Army Reservists and Navy Seabees (and possibly the Marines) will assist in the development of Disaster Training Zone props and grading roads and trails. They'll be a great help to us, and advance their own skills, in grading, carpentry, concrete work, masonry, plumbing, electrical and interior finish work.

The SDF-Military partnership is a win-win-win relationship:

-  **SDF Donors win**, as we save money we can reallocate elsewhere in the construction budget
-  **The Military wins**, as troops sharpen their construction skills for their next deployments
-  **The Nation wins**, gaining skilled Troops and Search Teams to respond to disasters





Wilma with Lauren Dachs of the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation Photo: Lalita Segal

Bechtel Foundation Challenge Match

On October 22, 2014, SDF was honored to announce the largest donation in our history: a \$500,000 Cash Gift and \$1,250,000 Challenge Grant from the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation to help complete the Training Center. Thanks to the Bechtel gift and donations made by our supporters across the country, the campaign is now at \$18,874,678 against our \$20 million goal to be completed by December 31, 2015. Once we surpass this goal, we'll be able to go to our "Wish List" projects including the Disaster Dome, a one-of-a-kind indoor training space which will simulate variable environmental conditions encountered during actual deployments.



Scouts working under the shaded covering in the DeMartini Training Arena Photo: Tracy Darling

Eagle Scout Salute

SDF is extremely grateful to Eagle Scouts Chase Salustri and Andrew Wright for choosing to design and build complex agility equipment for our National Training Center as their Eagle Scout Projects this year. This equipment is essential in helping Search Dog candidates to learn coordination and balance while allowing seasoned Search Dogs to brush up on these basic skills and stay sharp for deployment. Thanks to Chase, Andrew, their Boy Scout Troops, friends and family who all volunteered to help make these projects possible!



Chase Salustri & Asta on agility equipment Photo: Susan Bollinger

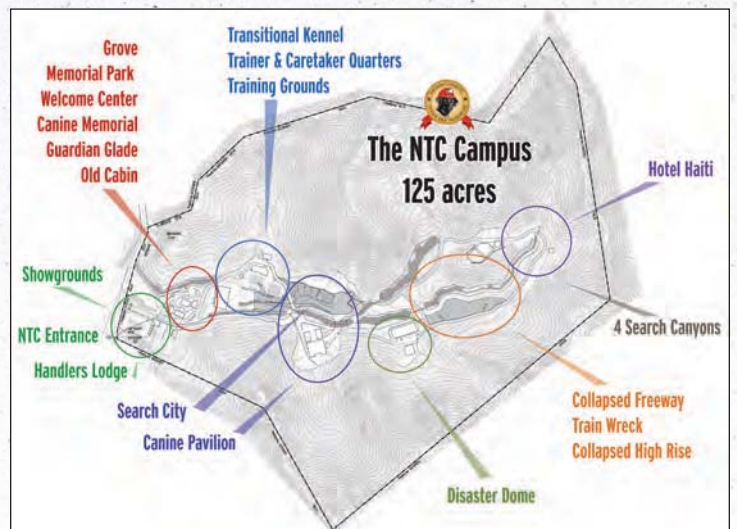
2015 Construction Plans



**Search City:
3 Search Props
completed, 7 to go!**

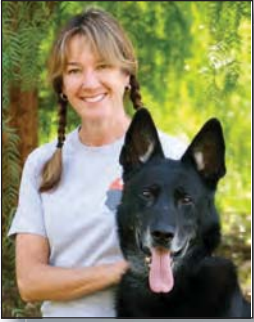
If we are able to complete the Bechtel Challenge (see at left), we'll embark on these building projects in 2015:

- 🐾 Frank McGrath, Jr. Family Welcome Center - SDF staff offices and the first stop for visitors and handlers
- 🐾 Bechtel Handlers Lodge - a home away from home for handlers
- 🐾 Renovation of The Marie and David Morrisroe Trainer & Caretaker Quarters
- 🐾 Maintenance Annex
- 🐾 Collapsed High-Rise in the Disaster Training Zone
- 🐾 Train Wreck Prop
- 🐾 Hotel Haiti
- 🐾 Search City:
 - Two-Story Tilted House
 - Seismic Store
 - Vehicle Search
 - Tornado Trailer Park
 - Murphy's Firehouse (façade)
 - Jessie's Cyclone School (façade)
 - Typhoon Townhouse (façade)



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Time is flying by at the National Training Center (NTC)! We're already rocking and rolling and we aren't even officially "open" yet! We have had six Handlers Courses and 14 handlers have been paired with their canine partners. That's what it's all about!

Each week we have several follow-up trainings for newly paired teams, and offer "tune-up" work for teams already deploying.

In addition, future handlers are now coming out to work with us and get a head start on preparing to be partnered with a canine. This allows them to get more hands-on experience working with the dogs, as well as learning how to be a better decoy for the dogs as they search, which helps their teammates. Having novice and veteran handlers on site gives our dogs in training an endless supply of new "victims" to find, which they love!

We're thrilled to have three new training structures on site: Search City's The Lois and Al Friedman Family Hurricane House, Quake House, and Monsoon Motel. Building Searches are now part of our Candidates' training regimen.

Looking back to June of 2012 when I joined SDF, the progress at the NTC has been incredible, and there is so much more to come as construction continues and our program expands!

— Sonja Heritage, SDF Master Trainer



Eight teams learn new skills in the Drive & Decoy Workshop Photo: Wilma Melville

Drive & Decoy Workshop

In May, SDF hosted a three-day Drive & Decoy Workshop taught by Sonja Heritage and SDF's new Canine Recruitment Manager Darrell Wilkerson. The course was jointly hosted by SDF and the USAR (Urban Search & Rescue) Foundation based in Tennessee, and was attended by eight teams from California, Utah and Baja California. The purpose of the course was to teach handlers how to properly decoy, or be a victim, for different types of dogs, adjusting their reactions to the actions of the dog they are working. This allows the dog to learn and progress in its highest level of drive and focus!

"The workshop was an amazing experience! First, because the instructors have the knowledge and experience to back up the information shared in class. Second, everything we needed, including a great rubble configuration and challenging agility equipment and props was all there at the NTC. My teammate Luis Garcia and I feel so fortunate to have been part of the first Search Team Workshop at the NTC!"

— Fidel Gomez, Tijuana Fire, Baja California Task Force 3

Foundation Skills Assessment

We held our first FEMA Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) in August, a test that all FEMA handlers must take prior to the Certification Evaluation (CE) which makes them eligible to deploy.

"Going to the NTC is essential in our progression to become Certified and deployable. We're able to work on every element of the FSA and CE testing, often in the same day, to help us get there as soon as possible. The training staff is so in-tune with what we need to work on to become a better team. We're looking forward to the vast training opportunities that the NTC will offer—a one-stop shop for all our training needs, with real-life disaster sites that mimic any number of deployments we could actually encounter!" — Donovan George, Orange County Fire Authority, California Task Force 5

"It's hard to say what I like the best about the NTC. I think my favorite part is being able to watch the landscape and training scenarios change each time I go down and train. Crockett [the first canine fully trained at the NTC] rocked the FSA! I was very proud of Crockett. I knew he could do it!" — Tim Robertson, Sacramento City Fire, California Task Force 7



Handler Donovan George & Ollie search the rubble during a "tune-up" training as Trainer Lyz Gregory looks on Photo: Denise Sanders



Handler Tim Robertson prepares to release Crockett to search during the FSA Photo: Sonja Heritage



SDF's new Canine Recruitment Manager Darrell Wilkerson instructs handlers during NTC's first Search Team Workshop Photo: Susan Bollinger



Sonja "HIGH-FIVES" Asta on a job well done Photo: Kate Horwick

SDF provides deployment readiness training to our Search Teams throughout their careers. This means bringing them to the National Training Center for "tune-up" exercises, and sending our trainers to their home turf to ensure they are fully supported as training challenges arise. Here is a snapshot of the visits our trainers have made this year:

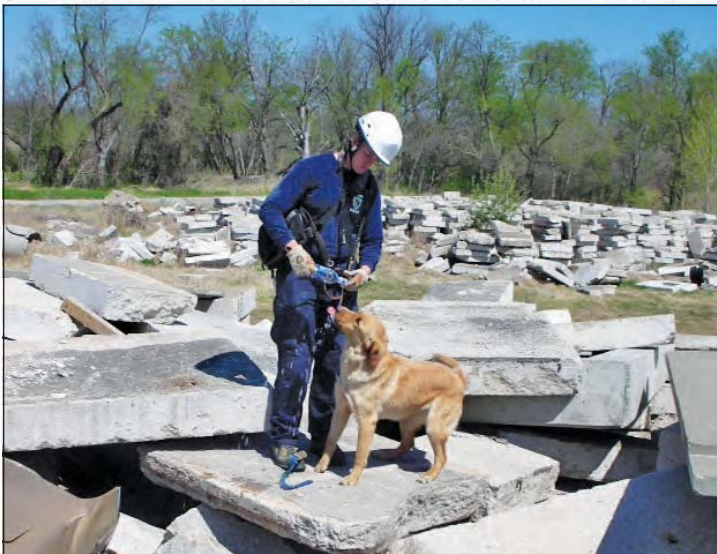


John Stewart & Sadie training with Pluis Davern in Albany, NY Photo: Nancy Castaldo

Albany, New York

Jason Geary & Marsi
 Greg Gould & Dax
 Bill Simmes & Bonnie
 John Stewart & Sadie

SDF Founding Trainer Pluis Davern braved the East Coast winter to train with our New York Task Force 2 teams. Despite bitter-cold weather, the group trained for three of the four days. (One day was declared a "snow day" after 12 inches fell overnight!) The Task Force recently moved its headquarters to a new building, and the teams took advantage of the huge warehouse space for building searches. There were many distractions: construction equipment, personnel, and vehicles in constant motion which caused a big fluctuation in scent flow and an awesome challenge for the dogs!



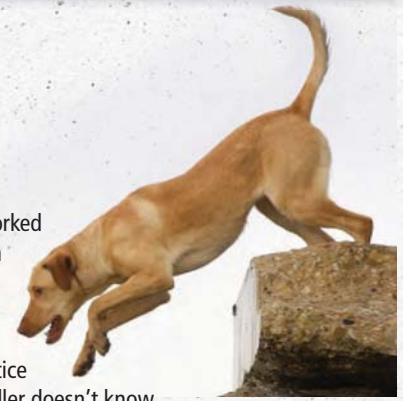
Adrienne Seibel & Gunny take a water break during Sharon's visit Photo: Sharon Hanzelka

Salt Lake City, Utah

Roxanne Bauman & Cole
 Lee Culley & Brutus
 Trevor Lawrence & Taylor
 Madison Warner & Tanner

Pluis Davern and Sonja Heritage worked with our Utah Task Force 1 teams in April to brush up on the basics and begin preparing these teams (partnered in December 2013) for deployment. Pairing bark alert practice with blind searches (when the handler doesn't know how many victims are buried in the rubble) and learning how to read the wind direction and adjust their strategy accordingly, the trainers helped the teams hone their search skills and reminded them of the key to canine disaster search: "Trust your dog."

"Tanner and I still have challenges to work through and the dogs always test us. We love having the trainers visit because it helps us continue moving up to the next level. Training is not over just because we pass a test – we will continue to train throughout our career." – Madison Warner



Taylor, fearless jumper
 Photo: Fitzgerald Peterson



Taylor tugs with victim during rubble search in Utah Photo: Laura McClain Madsen

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA CITY

Chet Clark & Elvis
 Mark Edwards & Taz
 Brent Koening & Moxie
 Jason Smith & Jagger
 Dane Yaw & Salsa

TULSA

Jeff Leon & Justice
 Adrienne Seibel & Gunny
 Vincent Stoops & Magnum
 Judy Zinn & Royce

TEXAS

Keri Grant & Tucker
 Patti Krafft & Hula

Trainer Sharon Hanzelka visited our Oklahoma Task Force 1 and Texas Task Force 2 teams in April. She challenged the teams with complex search problems in rubble, a school building, a Quonset hut and a heavily wooded area, simulating distractions and situations that the teams face on deployments.

"It was wonderful to see the seasoned dogs still loving their job and being so excited to work, the intermediate dogs ready to learn and do more, and the rookies excited to try new things. The handlers are always wanting more information and asking, 'What can I improve on?' I love seeing them looking outside the box to create every training opportunity they can to keep themselves and the teams ready to go out the door with the confidence that no one will be left behind when disaster strikes." – Sharon Hanzelka

Canine Disaster Search Teams train intensely so that when disaster strikes, they are at full deployment readiness. Every call-out is a chance to make sure no one has been left behind, aid rescue crews in their work, and help families and communities cope with the situation. Each deployment—small or large—also gives handlers and their dogs the chance to fine-tune their search skills for the next disaster.

So far this year, 24 SDF Search Teams have been deployed to 14 incidents, including a house explosion, an earthquake, a mudslide, and multiple missing person searches and building collapses.

Parking Structure Collapse – Century City, CA

Cynthia Sato & Roxy
Los Angeles City Fire
California Task Force 1

Just after 8:00 am on July 25th, Cynthia Sato & Roxy and Mike Gross & Journey responded with L.A. Firefighters to a partial collapse of a subterranean parking structure. Cynthia and Roxy searched a 50' x 100' area with very unstable surfaces, Roxy searching the lower levels and crawl spaces while Journey searched the top levels.

"I was beyond excited when I got a phone call from my captain to deploy. When we arrived on scene, we split the pile into top and bottom. Neither of the dogs alerted, and we later found out there were no victims: all residents and employees were accounted for. Roxy worked well... all her training and hard work paid off!"

– Cynthia Sato



Cynthia Sato & Roxy prepare to search after a briefing from L.A. City Fire Department personnel Photo: Haus Detmer



Search Team Cynthia Sato & Roxy training Photo: John Warren



Greg Gould & Dax are eager to search a house after a gas explosion in Schenectady, NY Photo: Lori Van Buren / Times Union



Bill Simmes & Bonnie step off the debris pile after searching for survivors in the wreckage of a house explosion in Schenectady, NY Photo: Lori Van Buren / Times Union

House Explosion – Schenectady, NY

Greg Gould & Dax, Bill Simmes & Bonnie
NY State Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services Office of Fire Prevention and Control
New York Task Force 2

At 3:00 pm on August 10th, Greg Gould & Dax and Bill Simmes & Bonnie were called out to a house explosion. The house was abandoned but it was being used by homeless people and the water and gas were still on. When the teams arrived, they learned that a woman was possibly inside the home at the time of the explosion. Dax and Bonnie searched all sides of the collapsed building whose first and second floor were pancaked onto each other. They also searched the basement and attic. The dogs searched well and were able to confirm that no one had been trapped inside.

"The two-story house we were searching had blown up and out, coming straight down to create a one-story pancake collapse with some voids under the roof and basement areas. We split the search into two: Dax went to the roof and searched the house from above while Bonnie went in through the attic window and through the house. Then Dax went in through a hole in the back wall of the house and Bonnie went to the basement. They completed the search in about eight minutes. There was some tough climbing for the dogs, but they both did awesome. How cool is it to see your partner walking along the peak of a roof and disappear into an attic window, knowing that his training would guide him. We knew, after the dogs completed the search, that there was no one in there. Our canine partners make this possible. Thanks to SDF and to Pluis for that!" — Greg Gould

SDF's Lifetime Care program was developed to ensure that no dog recruited for our program will ever re-enter the shelter system. If, for any reason, a dog is released from training, he or she is either found secure job placement in another field or is united with a loving Lifetime Care Family with ongoing support from the Search Dog Foundation. Sometimes we have to try more than once to find the perfect home for the dog, but we stand by our promise of giving Great Dogs the Great Homes they deserve.

If you live in Los Angeles, Ventura, or Santa Barbara Counties and are looking for the ultimate in love, loyalty, and companionship, become a member of our Lifetime Care community and give a **Great Dog** a permanent, **Great Home**.

For more info, contact Kate Horwick: Kate@SearchDogFoundation.org or (888) 459-4376 x109



Woody (far right) completes his new family's colorful Lab collection Photo: Watt Webb

Woody Finds His "Fur-Ever" Home

In February of 2007, SDF handler Jeff Ivy of the Sacramento City Fire Department told us about Woody, a large Black Lab with Search Dog potential he had found at the Nevada County Animal Shelter in Grass Valley, CA. After several months in training, Woody was bored by the toy game and was no longer making progress in the program. In July of 2007, SDF trainers decided to find Woody a Lifetime Care family.

We found Woody a nice home, but the owner's work schedule changed and Woody came back to SDF so we could find him a new family that could give him the time and attention he deserved. He found that love and dedication with a couple in San Diego and for seven years was a cherished family member. When their life situation changed drastically last August, they made the difficult decision to do what was best for Woody and contacted SDF to arrange for his return.

Woody was fostered by SDF volunteer Terry Erickson for a few weeks, and had a happy time as part of Terry's "pack" until Lab lovers Watt and Wendy Webb stepped forward to adopt him. The Webbs had recently lost a beloved canine family member and welcomed Woody with open hearts. They now enjoy daily hikes together, keeping each other in shape! We wish Woody a wonderful lifetime with the Webbs, and we will always be there for him.

Mimi Plus Baby Makes Four!

In December of 2007, longtime SDF supporter and volunteer Laura Rathe was asked to help re-home a beautiful Yellow Lab named Mimi into SDF's training program. This high-energy, toy-obsessed dog did great until her third month of training when she was presented with a slippery floor she refused to walk on. Trainers were unable to train her away from this fear and, sadly, had to release Mimi from the program.

With her soft and loving nature we felt she would make a wonderful pet, and Mimi was welcomed into a nearby family in Paso Robles, CA. For five years she enjoyed life at their beautiful ranch property. But in April of 2014 her owner moved to New Mexico and couldn't offer Mimi the lifestyle she had loved. In May we placed her with Paul and Morgan Stine. Morgan regularly sends wonderful photos of Mimi and it's clear that this great dog has found her place in a great family. We recently learned that the family will be welcoming their first child later this year. Congratulations to the Stine's on their TWO new family members!

Career Change Dog Cody Makes a \$14,000 Find

In July of 2013, a handsome Black Lab named Cody was recruited from the Cheyenne Animal Shelter in Wyoming by Tim Matthews of the South Dakota Canine Center and accepted into our program. Cody had been surrendered to the shelter because the owner said they simply did not have enough time to dedicate to the high-energy canine.

As he progressed to new levels in the training program, he just was not finding enough joy in the rubble search. But he still showed potential as a working dog, and was a good fit for detective work.

He was placed with Mary Ann Sampson of Far Fetched Retrievers in Santa Ynez, CA who works with the California Narcotic Canine Association. Mary Ann has guided several dogs from SDF's program into successful careers with police and sheriff's departments, and she quickly secured him a spot as a member of the Ceres Police Department in Modesto, CA, on a narcotics task force.

Cody's nose most recently located \$14,000 in the dashboard of a car during a routine traffic stop. Mary Ann stated, "Cody alerted from outside the vehicle, then did a strong alert on the dashboard air vent inside. Everyone is thrilled with his performance!"

We're delighted that Cody has found the right career that makes him happy. He and his human partner are making the world a safer place for us all and we can't wait to see what they do next!



Cody and his handler pose with his latest find as part of Ceres Police Department's narcotics operations



Mimi and her new Lifetime Care parents, Morgan and Paul

From recruiting dogs with all the "right stuff" for disaster search, to providing the highest level of training and care to every canine in our program, it takes a village to turn a rescued dog into a rescuer. We are proud to introduce you to the team that gives the Search Dogs and their handlers the resources and support they need.

Meet Our Canine Trainers

Sonja Heritage: Master Trainer

Sonja joined the SDF Training Team in 2012 after serving for 15 years with the Fairfax County Urban Search & Rescue Team in Virginia. As a FEMA instructor, trainer and handler, Sonja brings a wealth of experience to SDF. Her numerous deployments to national and international disasters include the U.S. Embassy bombing in Kenya, the earthquakes in Turkey and Taiwan in 1999, the 2001 Pentagon attack, the Space Shuttle Columbia explosion, Hurricane Katrina, and the Haiti earthquake. Sonja leads the training of new Search Dog Candidates at our National Training Center and oversees the training of our Search Teams, locally and nationally.



Darrell Wilkerson: Canine Recruitment Manager

Darrell is our newest addition to SDF's Program Staff, joining the team as a Canine Recruitment Manager in October 2014. He served with the U.S. Navy in the Gulf War in 1994 and spent 20 years as a firefighter in Tennessee. Since 2007, Darrell has dedicated his life to canine training. He was a Canine Instructor for Auburn University's Canine Detection Research Center, is a FEMA instructor, and currently serves on the Advisory Council for the University of Tennessee's College of Veterinary Medicine's Canine Arthritis & Rehabilitation Center. As a FEMA-certified handler and member of Tennessee Task Force 1, Darrell deployed with his dogs to many disasters including Hurricanes Gustav, Hannah and Ike in 2008 and the Alabama and Missouri tornadoes in 2011. Known for his keen ability to select dogs best suited for service, Darrell is proud to bring his experience and expertise to SDF's canine recruitment and training program.

Emily Fisk: Canine Trainer

Emily started training and competing with animals at a young age. She began riding horses at the age of five and continues to actively compete in equestrian sports such as Extreme Cowboy Racing and Cattle Sorting. She started raising puppies for Guide Dogs for the Blind in 2001. She has competed in canine agility, obedience and field trials with her own dogs, and worked for the San Diego Humane Society as an Animal Control Officer before joining SDF's training team in 2014.



Lyz Gregory: Canine Trainer

Lyz began her animal career at Magic Mountain's Animal Farm in 1998 as an animal care attendant. In 1999, she attended the Exotic Animal Training and Management program at Moorpark College. Since graduating in 2001, she has used her skills in animal care as a zookeeper and veterinary technician. Lyz joined SDF as a Canine Recruiter in 2010. She is now one of our Canine Trainers, working with Search Dog Candidates and Lifetime Care dogs awaiting their forever homes.



Sonja Heritage with Canine Trainers Lyz Gregory and Emily Fisk
Photo: Janet Reineck

Meet Our Canine Care Team

Jessica Kendrick: Lead Canine Care Specialist

Born and raised on Cape Cod, Jessica moved to California in 1999. Her father was a Law Enforcement Canine Handler in Massachusetts, which gave her a great appreciation for working animals and the contribution they make to society. Jessica started working in canine care 18 years ago, volunteering at shelters and vet hospitals. In her spare time, she assists in agility and herding trials. Helping people and dogs has always been her goal in life so it was a perfect fit when she joined SDF in 2013.



Daron Johnson: Canine Care Specialist

Daron grew up working with many different species of animals from dogs and cats to reptiles and amphibians, and graduated from Moorpark College's Exotic Animal Training and Management Program in 2009. She has experience as an animal caretaker, zookeeper, animal wrangler, reptile manager, and vet assistant, making her a great addition to SDF's Canine Care team, which she joined in April 2014.



She leads our Canine Care team that works daily with the dogs—exercising them, assisting with training, and doing socialization, feeding, and grooming.



Barry with Ivan
Photo: Kate Horwick



Barry Portnoy: Canine Care Specialist

Barry attended Drury College and Missouri State University. He worked in radio and then as a personal trainer which allowed him to share his love of exercise while helping others. In 2011, Barry began working with the Canine Adoption and Rescue League (C.A.R.L.) in Santa Paula, CA. Barry finds that caring for animals is his calling at this point in his life. We welcomed him to our Canine Care team in 2013.

Meet Our Program Staff

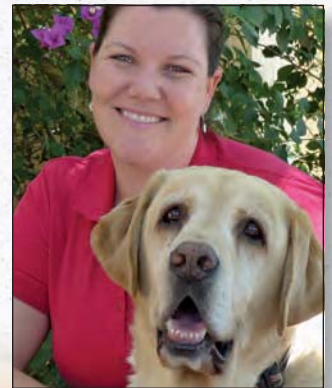
Denise Sanders: Program Communications Manager

Denise received her degree in Telecommunications/Broadcast Journalism from Pepperdine University, and worked as a Communications Dispatcher with the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department before joining SDF in September 2008 as Program Supervisor. Now serving as Program Communications Manager, she's responsible for making sure our stakeholders are up to date on our program, and for developing new Search Team training and education enrichment opportunities at the NTC.



Kate Horwick: Program Manager

After earning a Bachelor's degree in History from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2003, Kate earned MBA's in Project Management and Executive Management from Colorado Technical University in Denver. She joined the SDF team in January 2011. She is the Search Team Liaison and coordinates the Canine Training Program, Canine Recruitment, and Lifetime Care.



Chelsi Woolwine: Program Assistant

Chelsi started volunteering at the Ventura County Humane Society at a young age and continued her work there through high school. She studied Canine Certification Training through the Animal Behavior College in Santa Clarita, CA. With two high-energy rescued dogs at home, Chelsi jumped at the opportunity to volunteer at SDF and officially joined our staff in March 2014, providing support to the Program department.



Denise with
Shasta and Diesel
Photo: Tony Panzica



SEARCH DOG FOUNDATION

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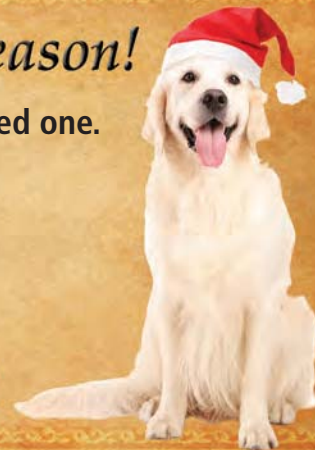
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