MEET OUR
20
SEARCH DOG
RECRUITS
CURRENTLY
IN TRAINING!

DEPLOYMENT
SPOTLIGHT:
New York-based Teams
Search for Survivors
After Apartment Building
Collapses

SDF HOSTS
FIRST FULL-SCALE
DEPLOYMENT SIMULATION
at Our National Training Center!

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Greetings from Our Search Dog Family!

On behalf of everyone here at the Search Dog Foundation, we are excited to bring you closer to the action in this summer’s Bark Alert!

From our newest initiative with The Rachael Ray Foundation (see details below) to our first-ever Deployment Simulation at the National Training Center (NTC), we are thrilled to share these latest and greatest Search Dog stories and in-depth, behind-the-scenes features on our operations.

From all of us to each of you - Thank You for being Part of the Search! —The SDF Staff

We are honored to introduce The Rachael Ray Rescue Brigade, a special philanthropic partnership project for 2017.

The Rachael Ray Foundation has generously donated $150,000 to launch this funding initiative. Our goal, to raise $300,000 by August 31, will help cover the costs of:

- Connecting with over 150 shelter and breed rescue groups across the country to find, evaluate, and transport rescued dogs to our National Training Center.

- Caring for these special dogs throughout their entire lives. Our Lifetime Care Credo means that every dog in the SDF family, even those who are unable to complete our training program, will receive proper care in a happy and healthy home. Whether it is providing daily care and food, directly funding medical treatments and wellness exams, or finding a new permanent, loving home as part of our Lifetime Care Program, SDF actively assures they will never need to be rescued again.

Since our partnership began seven years ago, Rachael Ray has been and continues to be one of our most generous supporters. A portion of the proceeds from each sale of Rachael Ray™ Nutrish® Super Premium Foods and Treats is donated to help homeless pets through The Rachael Ray Foundation. These grants play a significant role in our capacity to recruit rescued dogs for the SDF training program, giving them a home and a job they love.

We’re thrilled that The Rachael Ray Rescue Brigade will shine a spotlight on this important part of our mission. And we’re excited by the fund’s ability to directly impact the number of dogs who will be given a new life, chock-full of TLC, as members of our SDF Family.

You can join The Rachael Ray Rescue Brigade by donating today.

To make a difference:

CLICK SearchDogFoundation.org/donate
MAIL 6800 Wheeler Canyon Road
Santa Paula, CA 93060
SCAN QR code at right

The Rachael Ray Foundation has generously donated $150,000!

Help us raise the remaining $150,000 by giving what you can before August 31.

Every dollar will count towards saving a life, both canine and human.
SDF Teams Search for Survivors After Texas Tornadoes

On the night of Saturday, April 29, members of Texas Task Force 2, including five SDF-trained Canine Disaster Search Teams, deployed to Canton, TX, to assist in searching for survivors following a series of deadly storms that left a path of destruction through three counties.

SDF Teams Derek Chaky & Scout, Robert Grant & Rocky, Patti Krafft & Billy, Laurel Pitman & Sonic, and Andrea Sutcliffe & Skye responded to the call for help. Shifts of rescuers searched through the night and all day Sunday and Monday, working tirelessly to find the people still unaccounted for after the storms.

SDF Handler Laurel Pitman described the scene: “Each team joined a squad looking for survivors living on rural farm roads, in heavily wooded areas or fields where homes were destroyed by the high winds. Many large trees were found in the paths of the rescue teams, all snapped like toothpicks or uprooted, blocking roads and driveways, slowing the search for survivors. Many homes were missing roofs, while some were partially collapsed or totally destroyed. Trailer homes and vehicles were tossed around, picked up off the ground and now unrecognizable.”

The teams completed their search on Monday evening, returning home safely to the Dallas area. Handler Andi Sutcliffe shared how their teams felt the operation was a success upon arriving home: “We all showed up to do what we know how to do and what the dogs know how to do. It’s worth every bit of sweat equity that we put into it.”

Two New York-Based Teams Respond to Utica Building Collapse

As rain fell on Monday, June 19, New York Task Force 2 deployed to a two-and-a-half story apartment complex that had collapsed in Utica, NY. Apparently abandoned, citizens feared that transients might have been inside the building at the time the structure gave way. With human life at stake, several Canine Disaster Search Teams responded, including two SDF-trained Teams, Greg Gould & Dax and Brian Girard & Keila.

Also called out were two SDF Handler Candidates, Adam Leckonby and Brook Rowley, and one Human Remains Detection Dog. The dogs confirmed that, thankfully, no one had been inside when the structure fell, enabling recovery crews to begin clean-up operations quickly.

“It’s hard to describe your partner’s first deployment other than sheer excitement... to see your dog launch with that intensity – even pushing debris out of her way with her front paws as she climbs stairs to go just a little bit further – is awe-inspiring. When she disappears out of sight into the debris pile, you have that terrifying instant where your heart stops. You forget about your safety and enter the unstable area to get sight of her again just to find her on the roof of the collapsed structure searching the rest of the pile and having a ball doing it.”

—Brian Girard, Handler of Search Dog Keila

Greg Gould & Dax gained access to the second story of the apartment building by climbing a fire truck ladder, putting Dax’s years of agility training to good use. Photo: Chris Gould

Brian Girard & Keila walk the perimeter of the building collapse. Photo: Chris Gould

SDF Search Teams Derek Chaky & Scout and Laurel Pitman & Sonic take a break while deployed to the Texas tornadoes. Photo: Courtesy of Texas Task Force 2

Scenes of devastation following the tornadoes in April. Photo: Andrea Sutcliffe
A Day in the Life of the Canine Care Team:
Keeping Our Canine Athletes in Top Shape for Training

Our incredible team of Canine Care Specialists (CCS) is on the front lines when it comes to looking after and caring for our amazing dogs – they are the first to notice a health issue, and the ones ensuring each dog is properly cared for every day. Take a peek behind the scenes to see what a typical day looks like for our dedicated CCS team:

Our Canine Care Specialists
Susan Bollinger
Jami Byrd
Alex Hill
Jenn Mueller
Monica Patrick
Samantha Yzaguirre

Making sure every kennel is cleaned and sanitized daily to prevent health issues amongst the Canine Candidates in-training. (Alex Hill and Samantha Yzaguirre) Photo: Kate Horwick

Bathing the Canine Candidates regularly is important for their overall health. (Jami Byrd) Photo: Dave Lindee

Engaging with the candidates in our multiple play yards between training sessions allows for some good old-fashioned fun during the day! Photo: Susan Bollinger

Grooming ensures these future Search Dogs are in top shape for their daily trainings. (Jami Byrd) Photo: Susan Bollinger

Feeding 20 dogs specific diets two to three times per day is a tall order but makes all the difference for our canine athletes. (Jenn Mueller) Photo: Kate Horwick

Walking each dog multiple times a day. (Jenn Mueller, Sylvia Stoney & Jami Byrd) Photo: Susan Bollinger

Giving unconditional love back to these amazing dogs builds their confidence and makes this “job” one of the best! (Monica Patrick and Susan Bollinger) Photos: Dave Lindee

U.S. Navy to Help Finish the National Training Center!
The IRT Program Returns to Campus for the Fourth Year in a Row

SDF once again has been selected to participate in the Department of Defense’s Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program. Since 2014, we have been honored to work with military reserve units to complete construction projects at the NTC. On June 5, we welcomed troops from the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 22, and new rotations of Seabee reservists will arrive each Monday to work with us for two weeks at a time throughout the summer.

The IRT program provides the opportunity for our troops to gain valuable construction experience that they will use during military deployment – and helps build the NTC. This “win-win” partnership achieves our core mission of strengthening disaster response in America and the world, as everyone involved will be better prepared when the call-to-action comes.

SDF staff and volunteers are enjoying bi-weekly lunches with the troops on campus, getting to know each service member. And a highlight for everyone is that some of the Search Dogs in-training join in too!

We are proud to be part of this special program, working hand-in-paw with our military service members!
It’s Not a Matter of If, But When the Next Disaster Strikes: SDF Search Teams Prepare for Deployment at the NTC

The first facility designed specifically for Disaster Search Dogs and their Handlers, the NTC continues to expand and improve with each passing month, increasing the opportunities offered for Search Dogs and their Handlers to practice their skills in a variety of scenarios.

The beauty of the NTC is its adaptability to the training needs of a group or a particular dog. Rubble piles are rearranged with new and complex places for the “victims” to hide, and there is plenty of room on our 125-acre campus to add training props as necessary. Every time a team returns from a deployment with lessons learned, we will have the capability to simulate those scenarios so that all Handlers can practice those specific challenges before facing them on a real deployment.

SDF canines have been training on the property since 2012 and Search Teams with Task Forces from across the country have visited, including:

- Baja California Task Force 3
- California Task Force 1 (Los Angeles Fire)
- California Task Force 2 (Los Angeles County Fire)
- California Task Force 3 (Menlo Park)
- California Task Force 4 (Oakland)
- California Task Force 5 (Orange County)
- California Task Force 7 (Sacramento)
- California Task Force 8 (San Diego)
- Colorado Task Force 1 (Denver)
- Florida Task Force 1 (Miami)
- Florida Task Force 2 (Miami)
- Florida Task Force 4 (Tampa)
- Nebraska Task Force 1 (Lincoln)
- New York Task Force 2 (Albany)
- Oklahoma Task Force 1 (Oklahoma City & Tulsa)
- Texas Task Force 1 (College Station)
- Texas Task Force 2 (Dallas)
- Utah Task Force 1 (Salt Lake City)
- Virginia Task Force 1 (Fairfax County)

Cleanliness is Next to “Dog-liness”...
When it Comes to Ensuring Proper Canine Decontamination During a Deployment

On June 20 and 21, SDF welcomed Dr. Erin Perry and her team to the NTC to conduct Working Canine Research for Southern Illinois University. Dr. Perry is testing a new canine decontamination (DECON) process for Handlers to use after searching each day on deployment.

Dr. Perry’s study seeks to demonstrate if Handlers in the field, with appropriate training and supplies, can provide more timely and perhaps more thorough DECON as compared to the traditional DECON experience. More effective decontamination may also reduce the cross-contamination of potentially deadly microorganisms from the disaster site to other team members and to the base of operations.

Over the two-day case study at the NTC, ten canines participated in two different testing groups. One dog at a time, Dr. Perry’s team applied a non-toxic contaminant (an invisible marker) to four locations on each dog’s body: the throat, between the shoulder blades, the inner flank and a hind paw. They then used an ultraviolet flash and black light photography to capture images of the contaminant. Each Handler then washed their dog and returned to Dr. Perry for post-DECON photos. Dr. Perry’s team used a software program to mathematically calculate the amount of reduction from the pre-DECON photos as compared to the post-DECON photos.

Dr. Perry is pleased with the results and believes that her study has begun to support her stance that Canine Handlers can do just as good a job protecting their canines as the currently recommended DECON process, if not better, due to their familiarity with their partners’ anatomies. This simple change, from running canines through a HAZMAT center (see photo at left) to allowing Handlers to carry their own lightweight kit, could save the Task Force time, money, and, more importantly, the life of a Search Dog during deployment.

SDF thanks California Task Force 2 for participation in this important study!

- Jake Armendariz & Clancy
- Dennis Clark & Rugby
- Bob George & Shadow
- Mike Toepfer & Canine Candidate Deacon
In May, SDF welcomed Virginia Task Force 1 (VA-TF1) to our NTC for our very first deployment simulation—an intensive two-night exercise using much of our staff and campus. In the training scenario, a devastating earthquake had struck South America, and VA-TF1 members were to establish an effective operation strategy and carry out their life-saving mission. As one of only two internationally-deployable Task Forces in the United States, the teams must be prepared for global mobility at any time.

To begin the simulation, VA-TF1’s Canine Disaster Search Teams were placed on a plane on the East Coast, not knowing where they were headed, and arrived in Southern California hours later. The teams then boarded a Blackhawk helicopter, provided by Los Angeles County Fire (California Task Force 2), that landed in the Disaster Training Zone at the top tier of the NTC—the area “affected” by the simulated disaster—and unloaded the as the sun began to set.

“I wanted to thank you for setting up and coordinating the best VA-TF1 canine drill I’ve ever worked. The brainpower and man-hours you guys obviously put into this is staggering. Not to mention your heart and souls. Thank you for making me think, challenging me and my dog and for the positive support. My dog and I are both better prepared to do our job as a result of your efforts. And that’s what it’s all about—thank you! P.S. And it was really fun, too!”

—Teresa MacPherson, Handler of Search Dog Port
Four sections of the NTC were utilized as disaster search areas during the exercise – Search City, Industrial Park, which includes both the Train Wreck and RV park, and a steep ravine that provided a wide-area search scenario. Nearly two-dozen SDF volunteers and most of our staff participated as “victims” buried alive in the aftermath of the faux disaster. Two FEMA-qualified SDF staff members evaluated the Search Teams’ response efforts and we are pleased to say the exercise was a huge success!

“Training for VA-TF1 at the NTC was a great experience for our canines and handlers. It offered our teams a chance to train on several props that are “real-world” and extremely difficult. A great experience and learning opportunity for the newest and most seasoned handlers and canines.”

—Chris Schaff, VA-TF1 Program Manager
Meet 20 Canine Candidates currently in training at the National Training Center...

- **Willy**
  Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Forever Home Dog Rescue in Mountlake Terrace, WA

- **Delta**
  Private Donor

- **Deacon**
  Private Donor

- **Georgia**
  Recruited by Greg Strickland from Union County Sheriff’s Office Animal Control in Blairsville, GA

- **Flyer**
  Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Haven Humane Society in Redding, CA

- **Fender**
  Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Southern Oregon Humane Society in Medford, OR

- **Frisco**
  Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Columbia Humane Society in Saint Helens, OR

- **Marley**
  Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Ginger’s Pet Rescue in Seattle, WA

- **Ozcar**
  Recruited by Charlie Freeman from Onslow County Animal Services in Jacksonville, NC

- **Bear**
  Private Donor

- **Bear**
  Private Donor

- **Willy**
  Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Forever Home Dog Rescue in Mountlake Terrace, WA
Blake
Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Jackson County Animal Care & Control Center in Phoenix, OR

Koda
Private Donor

Zeke
Private Donor

Gage
Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation in Sacramento, CA

Dora
Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation in Sacramento, CA

Hank
Recruited by Sheila Stern from Second Chance Pups in Lincoln, NE

Stella
Recruited by Greg Strickland from the Humane Society of Broward County in Fort Lauderdale, FL

Manny
Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Haven Humane Society in Redding, CA

Bode
Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from a Private Donor in WA

Echo
Recruited from Mohawk Hudson Humane Society in Menands, NY

Blake
Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Jackson County Animal Care & Control Center in Phoenix, OR

Dora
Recruited by Kirsten Fulk from Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation in Sacramento, CA

Koda
Private Donor
What is the length of a typical recruitment trip? Is there a “typical” trip?

3-5 days is standard. I come home when I have as many dogs as I am comfortable traveling with at one time. Usually, that’s two dogs, but sometimes I only have one especially boisterous dog and I need to drive home as soon as possible with him.

I’m sure you like them all, but is there a dog that has left an extra big impression on you?

King made a strong impression. When I found him, he was emaciated and weighed just 70 pounds. Nursed back to health, he weighed 100 pounds and was such a lover! I try not to bond with the dogs too much because I want them to be able to transition away from me easily for their training. King talked the entire way down to SDF from Oregon! He didn’t quite have all it takes to be accepted into SDF’s program but now lives happily with a family in their home.

What drives you to put all the time and effort into locating America’s next Search Dog?

I love to do this for the dogs. Lots of these dogs aren’t even on the adoption floor, they’re in the back and destined for euthanasia.

“I do this for the look in the dogs’ faces, the pure tears of joy in the kennel workers’ eyes when I say I’ll take a dog with me, and what I see in the Handlers’ faces when they are handed the leash on graduation day. Knowing the dog has a purpose in life and that I was able to help put them there is incredible.”

—Kirsten Fulk, SDF Canine Recruiter

From Death Row to Life-Saver In-Training:

Meet Search Dog Recruit Marley!

A few months ago, Marley was sitting on death row in a high-kill shelter in Texas. Thankfully, Ginger’s Pet Rescue of Seattle, WA, traveled to the area in the hope of saving canine lives and adopted Marley, bringing him to the West Coast to be fostered until a home could be found for him.

Meanwhile, a staff member named Jenny at Ginger’s Pet Rescue thought they had a Malinois mix that looked promising as a Search Dog candidate and called us. SDF Recruiter Kirsten Fulk went to evaluate the Malinois but determined she did not quite have all the characteristics needed.

Fortunately for Marley and Jenny, now had a better understanding of our evaluation and told Kirsten about “a Lab named Marley being fostered 90 miles north of Seattle.” Kirsten made the drive and Marley’s evaluation was spot on! As Kirsten told us, “Marley’s not fancy – he’s all business when it comes to the ball. But he’s hard working and does a solid job of hunting.”

Yet one more challenge still remained. Kirsten brought Marley back to her kennel in Oregon to make sure he was medically sound for Disaster Search work and discovered that he was heartworm positive. Luckily, it’s a treatable condition. Thanks to the excellent care of Kirsten, her kennel staff, and the veterinarian team at Oregon State University, Marley recovered and began his new life training with SDF in April.

And there’s no stopping him! Marley has excelled in SDF’s training program, showing progress each and every week. After Marley completed his first rubble search, Trainer Emily Hodges shared, “Marley does a great job of staying focused on the task at hand and follows his nose to the ‘victim’ well.” If Marley continues to advance through each stage of training at this pace, he is expected to graduate and be partnered with his First Responder-Handler this winter. Good job Marley!

Searching for Heroes:
Meet the Woman Helping SDF Turn Rescue Dogs into Rescuers

Kirsten Fulk first became interested in working with canines professionally when a German Shorthaired Pointer came into her life requiring training and a good focus for his excess energy. Fast forward nearly twenty years to her successful business, Field of Dreams Boarding and Training Kennel in Sweet Home, OR, and Kirsten’s passion for identifying homeless dogs with career potential has endured. As SDF’s Canine Recruiter in the Pacific Northwest, she is now making a huge impact on the lives of canines and Disaster Search, having recruited to-date four successful Search Dog graduates and ten Canine Candidates currently in training!

How did you first learn of SDF?

I met SDF’er Denise Sanders at an outdoor sportsman show in Medford, OR, in 2009. She explained what SDF looks for in Canine Candidates, in the hopes that I’d be able to keep an eye out during my trainings. [Field Trial and Search Dog qualifications are quite similar but Search Dogs don’t need to mark.] We kept in touch over the years and, in 2013, Denise called me and asked if I would be interested in being a Canine Recruiter.

What type of preparation goes into a canine recruitment trip?

The van is loaded with plenty of crates in various sizes, as well as all sorts of toys, bowls for food and water, packets of information for the shelters and rescues, and an overnight bag.

A trip usually begins with a call from a shelter or rescue that they have a dog worth evaluating. Then my kennel assistants and I go online and begin scouring listings for dogs that are the right age and breed within a 500 mile radius of the dog we’re planning the trip around. That’s how I chart the course. If there are no other canines that may have potential, then I plan the trip based on shelters and rescues I want more face time with, or ones that I’ve never visited and should begin building a relationship with.
Happy “Tails” from Our Lifetime Care Community:
Summit Reaches New Heights as Service Dog

In March 2015, SDF recruited a beautiful Yellow Lab named Summit into our training program. She had been posted on Craigslist when her family with two small children realized her over-the-top energy would be better suited for a job, not a family home.

Summit entered SDF’s training program and learned plenty before it was determined that Disaster Search work wasn’t quite what Summit was meant for. SDF helped Summit find a new career in 2016 when she was accepted into a non-profit program located in Eastern Tennessee.

Smoky Mountain Service Dogs, an Assistance Dog International (ADI) accredited organization, is on a mission to enhance the physical and psychological quality of life for wounded military veterans by providing custom-trained Mobility Assistance Service Dogs, at no cost to the veteran or their family.

Summit proved to be a reliable service dog candidate throughout her training. Smoky Mountain Trainer Heather Wilkerson shares, “Summit was highly motivated to perform, exhibited an outstanding work ethic, excellent social skills and unwavering environmental stability.”

We know that Summit and her veteran partner will both lead happier and healthier lives together!

Training Tips from SDF Head Trainer Sonja Heritage:
Helpful Hints You Can Use to Better Communicate with Your Four-Legged Family Members

Dog training is all about creating new habits. We all develop habits by doing things repetitively and consistently, and we tend to repeat the things that pay well and make us feel good. Everyone in the household needs to be on the same page regarding the new training commands, how to say them, and when to say them for your dog to be able to learn these new habits.

Dogs communicate verbally and physically, just as we do. Here are some helpful hints about communicating with your dog when you train together:

Commands: You are telling your dog to do something. Remember – it’s not a question, it’s a command. Speak clearly and purposefully.

Rewards: Find something that your dog LOVES; a squeaky toy, soft treat, ball or game of tug-o-war. When training a behavior, give the dog a reason to want to do it!

Praise: Should be warm and sincere. You are communicating APPROVAL, not affection. Praise your dog according to what he/she has just done. For example, “Good sit,” or “Good down.”

Corrections: Use a firm tone of voice but do not yell. Your dog is not deaf and, if they were, yelling would not do any good anyway. It is the behavior we are correcting, not the worth of the dog. Anger has no place in correction. Make the correction effective and timely so that the dog understands what you want and will remember the next time he or she is tempted to do that behavior again.

The key to training any animal is to establish a bond of trust and communication. Training sessions are not just an opportunity to create the good behaviors you want in your dog, but are the time to build a quality connection with your best friend. It might be easier if you remind yourself that your dog does not speak English and you must teach them your language. The better you understand another’s communication cues, the happier everyone will be!

Whether a veteran team nearing retirement, a newly partnered Search Team still forming their bond, or a brand new Search Dog in-training, these training principles apply to all and make for a happy, healthy working relationship between dog and Handler.

Photos above left to right: SDF Team Matt Kirk & Stella; SDF Team Jason Dobbins & Diva, SDF Trainer Lyz Gregory and SDF Candidate Fender Photos: Susan Bollinger and Kate Horwick
Every dog deserves the chance to fulfill his or her purpose in life.

SDF needs to raise $300,000 this summer to help cover the costs of finding, screening, and transporting rescued dogs to our National Training Center, as well as caring for these special dogs throughout their entire lives. Our friends at The Rachael Ray Foundation have generously donated $150,000... and now we need your help to raise the remaining $150,000 by August 31!

Visit SearchDogFoundation.org or see Page 1 inside for how you can join The Rachael Ray Rescue Brigade today!