



## **The Petco Foundation Honors the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation** *Santa Paula-based organization recognized for transforming animals into heroes*

San Diego, CA (June 8, 2018) The Petco Foundation recently honored the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation at the Petco Foundation’s annual awards gala on June 8. The Search Dog Foundation was presented with the Helping Heroes award, which recognizes organizations that are transforming animals into heroes helping others.

The Petco Foundation gathered more than 450 guests at this year’s “Celebration of Love” Lifesaving Awards, which recognized seven organizations and individuals from across the country for their dedication, determination and actions to create lifesaving impact for pets in need.

The Search Dog Foundation was honored for strengthening disaster response by rescuing and recruiting shelter dogs and training them to work with first responders to find people buried alive in the wreckage of disasters.

“The Petco Foundation’s Lifesaving Awards are a way to celebrate and recognize the incredible, lifesaving work that takes place across the country,” said Susanne Kogut, president of the Petco Foundation. “The individuals and organizations honored this year are changing the landscape of animal welfare and setting an example for others. We’re grateful for all they do to save lives and are thrilled to bring their work into the spotlight.”

“The Search Dog Foundation is humbled to receive this Lifesaving Award, but, truly, the dogs that we rescue and train to become rescuers are the life savers who will go on to do just that in the aftermath of disasters,” shared Founder Wilma Melville, who accepted the award on stage. “We have had the privilege to work with the dedicated folks at the Petco Foundation for many years now and have been able to grow both our operations and our National Training Center during that time, thanks to their belief in our mission. We look forward to continuing our work together to save the lives of shelter dogs who will go on to save the lives of others as search dogs.”

### **About the Petco Foundation**

At the Petco Foundation, we believe that every animal deserves to live its best life. Since 1999, we’ve invested more than \$200 million in lifesaving animal welfare work to make that happen. With our more than 4,000 animal welfare partners, we inspire and empower communities to make a difference by investing in adoption and medical care programs, spay and neuter services, pet cancer research, service

and therapy animals, and numerous other lifesaving initiatives. Through our Think Adoption First program, we partner with Petco stores and animal welfare organizations across the country to increase pet adoptions. So far, we've helped more than 5.5 million pets find their new loving families, and we're just getting started. Visit [petcofoundation.org](http://petcofoundation.org) to learn more about how you can get involved.

### **About National Disaster Search Dog Foundation**

Founded in 1996, Search Dog Foundation (SDF) is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization based in Santa Paula, CA. Its mission is to strengthen disaster response in America by partnering rescued dogs with first responders to find people buried alive in the rubble of disasters. SDF pledges to support each of these teams through training and medical coverage for the entire life of each canine, all provided at no cost to their task forces and departments. The organization was founded by Wilma Melville, a retired school teacher who was deployed to the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 with her FEMA-Certified Search Dog, Murphy. Returning from the deployment, she was determined to do something about America's severe shortage of Canine Disaster Search Teams, and created SDF to address this problem. Since then, SDF has recruited hundreds of rescued dogs, and trained over 150 Certified Search Teams that have deployed to 169 disasters and missing person searches.

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