



BARKALERT

FALL EDITION 2020

**SIX NEW TEAMS JOIN OUR
GROWING NATIONAL ROSTER**

*The search for canine candidates continues:
How we recruit shelter dogs to be search dogs*

**ON THE JOB:
SDF TEAMS DEPLOY
ACROSS THE COUNTRY**



The search must go on—

Six new teams join the SDF roster!

On the morning of August 28, 2020, six canine disaster search teams graduated from the Search Dog Foundation (SDF) Handler Course. The handlers completed the course despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, observing distancing and safety protocols throughout their two-week stay on campus.

The graduating class was a combination of four brand new handlers from the Bay Area and Sacramento in California, as well as two veteran handlers from Lincoln, Nebraska, providing ample opportunity to learn, share experiences, and build lifelong friendships.

The new teams joining our nation's disaster response network are:



Felicia Lee & Jax

California Task Force 3
San Francisco Fire Department
Sponsors: Lenny and Squiggy



Kiegion List & Chloe

California Task Force 7
Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District
Sponsor: Anonymous Donor and
Nahikian Family Foundation



James McCandless & Mac

California Task Force 7
West Sacramento Fire Department
Sponsor: Patricia Snyder



Andrew Pitcher & Storm

Nebraska Task Force 1
Civilian
Sponsor: Julie Croker



Paul Sandigo & Cassie

California Task Force 3
San Francisco Fire Department



Mark Schroeder & Koda

Nebraska Task Force 1
Civilian
Sponsors: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family

During the first week of the course, each handler worked with a variety of canine candidates, not knowing which dog would eventually be their partner. Practicing basic commands and skills with the dogs, as well as perfecting their whistle work and understanding of scent theory, the handlers absorbed as much as they could from SDF's training team.

By the second week, the trainers could see relationships begin to form and began to have the handlers work with their potential partners. Their instincts were right, and all six new teams quickly began to bond—handler and dog—even before graduation day.

Though the graduation ceremony looked different without an audience, SDF's essential on-campus staff was there to cheer the new teams on from a distance and hundreds of friends, family and supporters watched via social media live stream feed.

For both handlers and dogs, this day marked months and even years of preparation for this moment, though it is just the beginning of their journey together. Each team will now continue training together to be ready for certification, which will permit them to deploy anywhere in the country with their task force when they are needed most.



FINDING OUR DIAMONDS IN THE "RUFF":

Transforming shelter dogs into search dogs

Since our beginning, SDF has committed to rescuing homeless dogs and giving them a renewed purpose in life. Whether a dog comes directly from an animal shelter, or is donated by a family prior to being surrendered to a shelter, we often hear the same stories, over and over again: "He's just *too much to handle*," "She won't sit still and is *untrainable*," or "He is *unadoptable*."

While these qualities make them difficult to manage in a pet home, they are exactly the traits that make them phenomenal working dogs—obsessed with toys, boundless energy and laser-like focus while searching.

Though not every dog is meant to be a search dog, SDF has always believed the ones we're looking for are out there, awaiting their chance for a new "leash on life." It can be difficult to cover the country's thousands of shelters and rescues, which is why SDF has enlisted the help of recruiters throughout the United States to find and help evaluate these special dogs.

Our screening process is geared toward dogs between one to two years of age that are primarily hunting and herding breeds like Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, German Shepherd Dogs, Belgian Malinois, Border Collies, Australian Shepherds, Dutch Shepherds and German Shorthaired Pointers—or mixes of these breeds!

Finding those special canines that possess all the needed attributes for disaster search is difficult—our recruiters and staff evaluate hundreds of dogs in the field each year.



Our initial evaluation consists of:

- A test to check for reactivity to other dogs or humans—since search dogs must interact in high-stress situations, we need to be sure they will get along;
- Testing for reactivity to loud or sudden noises—with heavy machinery at a disaster site, we need to be sure search dogs will be comfortable working in this environment, and;
- A retrieval and hunt test to be sure that their drive is high enough to complete their mission—search dogs navigate collapsed buildings with the only motivation being their beloved toy, so this is incredibly important

If a dog passes this initial phase, they will travel to our campus and complete a formal evaluation with our training team. However, even if they do not pass this test, they have a place for life within the SDF family and will either find a new career or a loving home through our Lifetime Care program (see page 7), guaranteeing that once rescued, they will never need to be rescued again! All dogs recruited by the SDF receive the highest level of care, comfort and support for their entire lives, whether they end up as a search dog or beloved family pet—it's the very least we can do for the dogs that enrich our lives each and every day.

With so many dogs across America in need, it takes an army to find those destined for the SDF family. If you or someone you know comes across a dog that fits our criteria, please contact us through our website form at: <https://searchdogfoundation.org/canine-recruitment/search-dog-application/>

Together, let's find those "diamonds in the ruff" and give them the helping paw they need to thrive!

ANATOMY OF A SEARCH DOG

WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN CANINE CANDIDATES

TAIL

Providing balance and stability during a search, the tail serves as a sort of rudder for a search dog constantly in motion.

LEGS

Strong and steady, the legs of a search dog propel them through a search area in his quest to find those missing after a disaster.

PAWS

Gripping every surface, search dogs' paws help them shift their weight, change direction and stay agile on difficult terrain.

CORE

Highly conditioned core muscles give search dogs the power needed to jump up to perform high searches, climb over pieces of concrete and steady themselves on moving surfaces to ensure they can complete their life-saving work.

EARS

Listening to the commands of handlers, ears help keep search dogs safe while searching a disaster site.

EYES

Quickly scanning their surroundings, search dogs' eyes allow them to safely navigate the rubble.

NOSE

With a sophisticated olfactory system, a search dog's nose can sniff out and pinpoint where someone is trapped beneath the surface.

MOUTH

The all-important "Bark Alert" that tells rescuers where someone is buried so they can receive the help they desperately need.



DEPLOYMENTS

CANINE TEAMS RESPOND IN WAKE OF HURRICANE LAURA

Four SDF-trained search teams—Marshia Hall & Lilah (Florida Task Force 4), Patti Krafft & Billy (Texas Task Force 2), Lee Culley & Tommy and Roxanne Bauman & Cole (both Utah Task Force 1)—deployed to the Gulf Coast in late August in response to Hurricane Laura.

These teams joined task forces from throughout the country that deployed to assist areas affected by this storm.

Hurricane Laura made landfall near the Louisiana/Texas border as a major Category 4 hurricane and caused widespread damage throughout the area due to 150 mph winds, massive storm surge, and flooding. Authorities reported the next morning that they expected search and rescue operations to continue for several days as many residents sheltered-in-place rather than evacuating and may now need assistance.

Though the storm was destructive and affected a large area of southern Louisiana, thankfully it was not as deadly as expected and the urban search and rescue teams on the ground did not have to stay as long as anticipated. While canines did search some to ensure no one had stayed behind when the hurricane hit, it was determined that they were not needed and the task forces were able to return home.

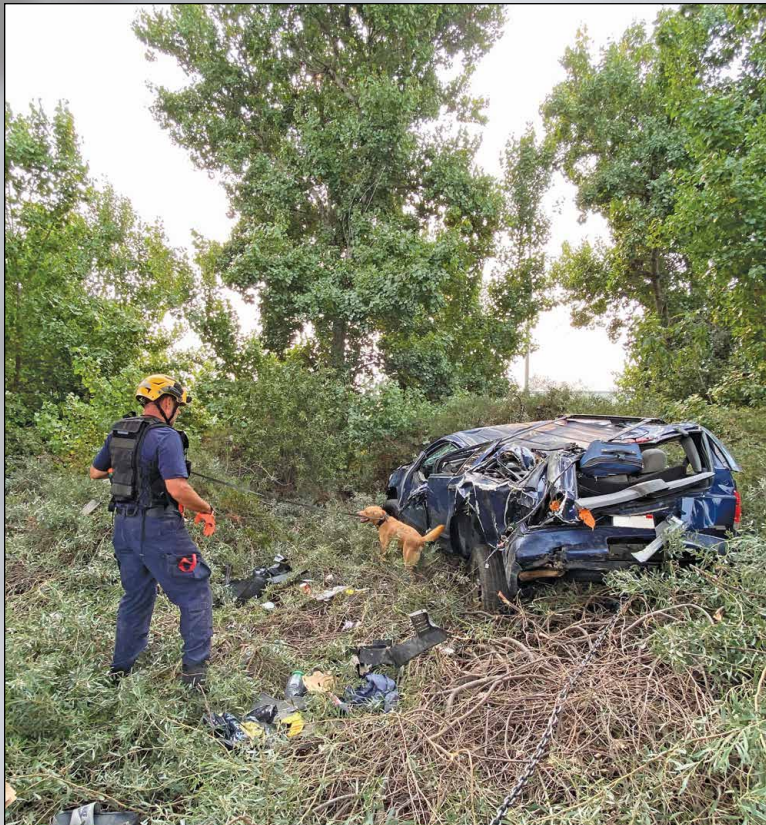
Patti Krafft & Billy responded with Texas Task Force 2 to the area of Beaumont, TX, to stage ahead of the storm and the entire team was moved to a storm shelter when the hurricane began to head in their direction. The team stayed safe and after the storm passed, they completed damage assessments and helping to determine no one in that area was reported missing.

Lee Culley & Tommy and Roxanne Bauman & Cole drove through the night from Salt Lake City with the Utah Task Force 1 convoy, arriving in Amarillo, TX, before being deactivated when it was clear that they were not needed. Though they drove many hours without searching, Handler Lee Culley reported, "The dogs traveled great and brought comfort to all the weary first responders."



Marshia Hall & Lilah, the first SDF team to deploy, conducted searches in the Lake Charles, LA, area and were the last SDF team to return home. They were able to help local authorities complete operations in the region, one of the areas hit hardest, where Hurricane Laura first made landfall, before returning to Miami, FL.

As former shelter dogs, Billy, Cole, Lilah, and Tommy have blossomed into experienced and skilled search dogs, each having deployed numerous times throughout their careers. We know you share in our pride in these teams and their dedicated service through the years.



SEARCH DOGS ASSIST AT SCENE OF LOS ANGELES VEHICLE ACCIDENT

On September 10, two SDF-trained live-find search teams, Gary Durian & Frisco and Mike Devine & Sonny, along with human remains detection team Jason Vasquez & Phenway, deployed for a call of a vehicle accident in Lynwood, CA. Unfortunately, the occupant of the vehicle was deceased and pinned underneath the vehicle, which firefighters discovered when one of the dogs indicated the person was there.

Though this is not the outcome we hope for in any situation, all three dogs did their jobs and ensured that no one was thrown from the vehicle and left behind, as well as helped give closure to the family.

These dogs are ready to help when called upon thanks to supporters like you, who ensure our work continues.

VETERAN SEARCH TEAM CLEARS SCENE OF FIRE IN 18TH CAREER DEPLOYMENT

Just before 8 p.m. on June 18, 2020, Handler Eric Darling received a call from the Ventura County Fire Department to assist in confirming no one was left behind after a fire in a drainage pipe in Santa Paula, CA.

The culvert is a space known to be used as a shelter by the homeless in the area, so it needed to be thoroughly checked.

Eric responded with his two FEMA certified search dogs—Mazie, a human remains detection canine, and Ben, a 12-year-old SDF-trained live-find canine. Because the fire department was unsure if anyone was in the area at the time of the fire, Eric would need to check for survivors or anyone deceased.

After checking the scene for safety, Eric released Ben first. The veteran search dog cleared the tunnels and confirmed that no one was left alive. Mazie followed shortly after, following a similar path, without alerting, meaning she, too, confirmed that no one was deceased in the search area.

Both canines searched well and made quick work of their mission. Eric shared that this may well be Ben's last deployment as he recently completed his fourth FEMA Certification in February and is already past the age when most search dogs retire.

Eric shared his thoughts on the deployment and reflections on his and Ben's impressive career, spanning a decade and 18 deployments together:



"On June 19, Ben and I may have completed our last deployment as a team. Ben is still very healthy and still excels at his job as a disaster search canine. The difference now is that Ben is almost 12 ½ years young, and still the most amazing partner I could ask for.

Interestingly, ten years and 19 days prior to this search, Ben and I were paired as a team by the Search Dog Foundation over the Memorial Day weekend of 2010.

The support by SDF during my career has been amazing. But not just by the staff and trainers—the amazing donors have also made this journey what it has been.

To know there are people that want to help by being a donor or sponsor, supporting a handler and canine they have never met is just so heartwarming. All of you have become part of the team each time we go out to train or deploy.

Every time we go out the door to work, I know that I am not only representing SDF, my task force, and the United States, but also each supporter. It is a badge of honor to have this responsibility and I do not take it lightly.

As anyone who has met him knows, Ben is a very unique dog and has a mind of his own. I would not have wanted any other partner and cannot imagine life without him. Here's to more time with Ben, searching until he decides on his own that it's time to retire.

Then, and only then, will he maybe, somehow slow down."

UTAH TEAMS SEARCH AFTERMATH OF DEADLY OREGON FIRE

On September 12, Utah Task Force 1 (UT-TF1) was activated to assist in the aftermath of the devastating Almeda Fire in Southern Oregon. SDF-trained live-find Search Team Roxanne Bauman & Cole responded alongside their UT-TF1 teammates, as well as human remains detection canines, other task forces and emergency crews from throughout the country and around the world.

Roxanne shared that the mission relied heavily on the dogs throughout this eight-day deployment: "In this year when we are practicing social distancing due to COVID, the dogs also provided a calming, therapeutic purpose for the families of the missing and those who had lost their homes, much like they did at 9/11 and the Oklahoma City Bombing."

With the increased use of canines in rescue and recovery missions, search dogs are responding more frequently to disasters like the Almeda Fire, which left a vast amount of structural damage in its wake. In these situations, live-find search dogs like Cole, that are trained to alert when they find survivors in the debris, are sent in to search areas first, followed by human remains detection canines to locate anyone already deceased.

While this may seem a grim mission, together, these teams ensure that no one is left behind, bringing closure to families and rescuers.




STAYING SAFE AND READY:

SEARCH TEAMS CONTINUE TO TRAIN FOR DEPLOYMENT AT SDF'S CAMPUS


Despite COVID-19 restrictions, SDF's training and canine care teams have continued to work with our search dog candidates on campus, observing strict sanitization and physical distancing protocols. As the virus continues to spread, things may not be back to "normal," but the work must continue.

After careful consideration, SDF graduated six new search teams in August, and has also begun to invite veteran teams back to campus to continue their training for deployments. This summer has proven that disasters don't stop for a global pandemic, and neither can we.


While we don't know what the next few months will look like in terms of COVID-19, we look forward to seeing more of our teams returning to campus for training and our next graduating class in the winter!



Geno is ready to search as his handler, Sean Quigley, releases him.



Frisco combs the rubble to find the hidden "victims" as teammate Bob George watches to ensure his safety on the pile.



Canines continue to train: training team members Alex Hill (left) and Abby Roeser (right) work with soon-to-be search dog Mattis and Search Dog Hank under the covered training arena.



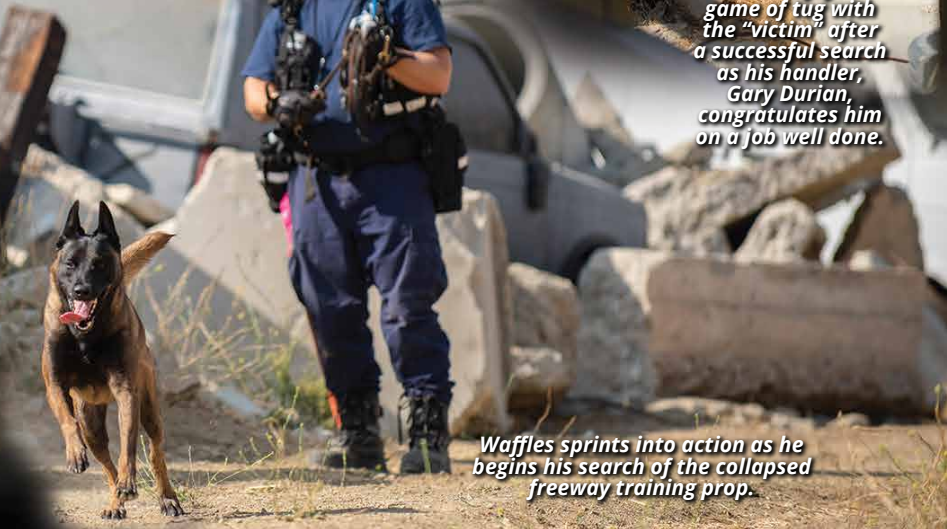
Hopper celebrates with her toy and handler, Travis Calka, after a successful search.



Frisco enjoys a game of tug with the "victim" after a successful search as his handler, Gary Durian, congratulates him on a job well done.



Shadow tugs with his handler, Bob George, as they revel in the completion of a challenging search on SDF's large rubble pile.



Waffles sprints into action as he begins his search of the collapsed freeway training prop.

OUR LIFETIME CARE PROMISE:

ONCE RESCUED, THESE DOGS WILL NEVER NEED TO BE RESCUED AGAIN

It takes a very special canine to work in the field of disaster search. When a dog is accepted into our training program and does not have everything needed for this highly specialized line of work, he or she enters our Lifetime Care community. Some of these dogs are trained for another career like drug detection or companion dogs to veterans suffering from PTSD, while others are destined to become beloved family pets.

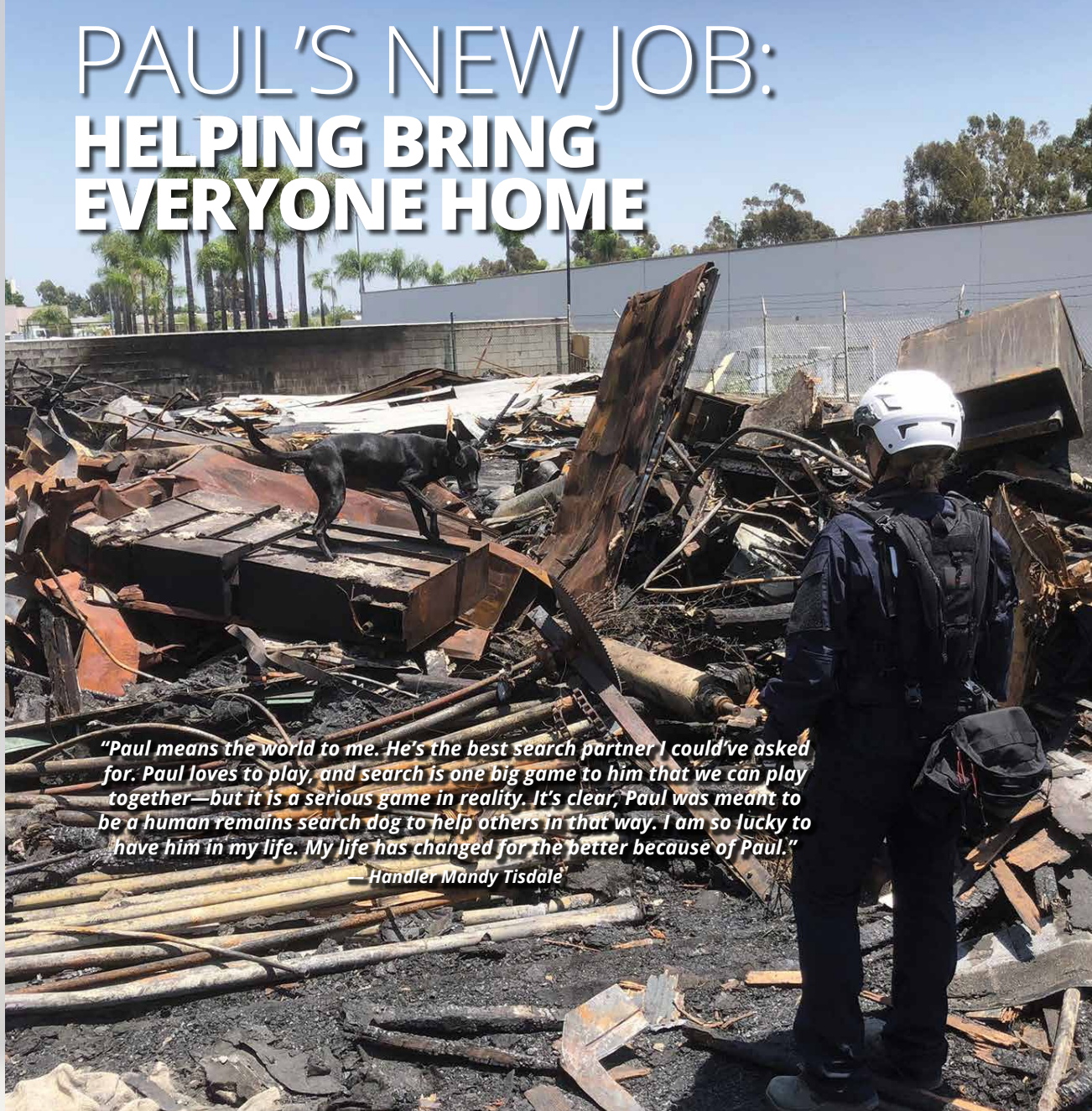
Originally named Carlos, this smart, energetic Malinois mix came to SDF from the Charleston Animal Society in South Carolina and was renamed "Paul" in honor of longtime friend of SDF, Petco Foundation Executive Director, Paul Jolly, who passed away in 2014.

Though Paul had plenty of drive, he did not seem to enjoy his interactions with the "victims" he found during searches, which made it hard to find motivation for him to continue searching for live victims in the rubble.

When the training team decided he should find another career through SDF's Lifetime Care program, Canine Training Manager Mandy Tisdale adopted Paulie, as he's affectionately known, and began his training as a human remains detection canine.

Paul thrived in this new career and no longer showed any hesitancy in accepting the reward from his handler, Mandy, rather than a stranger in the rubble. Achieving certification in 2019, Mandy and Paul deployed in coordination with Pasadena Fire Department in June 2020 to a burned building to ensure no one was left behind. (See deployment photo at right)

PAUL'S NEW JOB: HELPING BRING EVERYONE HOME



"Paul means the world to me. He's the best search partner I could've asked for. Paul loves to play, and search is one big game to him that we can play together—but it is a serious game in reality. It's clear, Paul was meant to be a human remains search dog to help others in that way. I am so lucky to have him in my life. My life has changed for the better because of Paul."

—Handler Mandy Tisdale



Pictures in this publication thanks to Susan Bollinger, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Dane Mehl, Amy Sandberg, Mandy Tisdale, Orange County Fire Rescue and Utah Task Force 1.



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