



BARKALERT

SPRING 2025



CANINE RECRUITMENT

FROM HOARDING CASE TO SEARCH AND RESCUE HERO: HARPER'S INSPIRING STORY MAKES HER 2024'S ASPCA DOG OF THE YEAR

Harper, the black Lab mix who was rescued from a hoarding situation in 2019, has come a long way from her unfortunate beginnings. Harper's journey started in South Dakota, where she was one of 22 dogs rescued from neglect. After saving the dogs, the Humane Society of the Black Hills contacted recruiters at the South Dakota Canine Center to find out if any had potential as working dogs. With her high drive and sweet disposition, Harper stood out among the pack and was recruited to join our disaster search program at the Search Dog Foundation.

Harper excelled as a search dog and was selected to join SDF's Human Remains Detection (HRD) pilot program, graduating as SDF's first HRD canine. In 2021, Harper was paired with Los Angeles County Fire Department firefighter/paramedic Edward Ruiz.

Ed and Harper trained diligently and achieved FEMA certification together in July 2022, allowing them to deploy with their task force, California Task Force 2 (CA-TF2), an internationally deployable task force comprised of physicians, HAZMAT specialists, rescue specialists, and canine search specialists. As its newest member, Harper would be an invaluable asset to the task force, using her incredible nose to provide families of disaster victims certainty and closure in times of crisis.

Since 2022, Ed and Harper have deployed multiple times to assist with disaster response close to their home in California and nationwide, including the aftermath of Hurricane Ian in Florida and the wildfires in Maui and New Mexico. Harper's dedication to her work and incredible abilities as a search dog have helped countless people in affected communities by ensuring that no victim of a disaster was left behind.

Harper's inspiring story of being saved from neglect and becoming a vital partner in disaster response caught the attention of the ASPCA and she was honored as Dog of the Year at its Humane Awards in 2024, an annual event that celebrates people and pets who have used their talents and kindness to positively change the lives of others and champion animal welfare causes.

At SDF, we have always been proud of Harper, who is a true testament to our mission of turning the rescued into rescuers. With a long and fulfilling career ahead, we are confident this sweet girl will continue to make a profound impact on the lives of others for years to come.

Harper is sponsored by Nanci Denney Bergin and an Anonymous Donor



LIFETIME CARE

SDF ALUM WALNUT FOLLOWS HIS NOSE TO HIS PERFECT LIFE



Walnut, a sweet black Labrador, arrived at SDF with a promising future. Donated by Kaiser K9, Walnut's adorable appearance quickly earned him the nickname "Woo-Nut," as he couldn't help but woo all his trainers with his sweet face! As charming as Walnut was, though, his charisma didn't yield a lasting enthusiasm for disaster search. Even though he had an excellent bark alert, one trainer noted, "He just didn't seem to possess the intensity and drive that indicate a passion for search."

No matter. Many dogs who come through our search program ultimately prefer a different career path. SDF's priority is finding the right job or home that makes each dog happy, so our Canine Placement team began exploring alternatives for Walnut.

Initially, a stint with conservation detection work seemed promising but wasn't quite right for Walnut. Like many humans feel but might not say, Walnut didn't really want to commit to a full-time job! Luckily, Walnut doesn't have bills to pay, so he was able to keep looking until he found a fulfilling role with his adoptive mom, Jennie, a nose work and dog sport trainer and volunteer with the National Park Service!

In their volunteer role with the National Park Service, they have conducted nest surveys of Western Pond Turtles in Yosemite and are currently participating in a study of canine detection of estivating turtles (a period of dormancy characterized by reduced activity).

As it turns out, this part-time gig is perfect for Walnut. He enjoys the less rigorous schedule and still gets to use his stellar detection skills to help protect pond turtles!

Recently, Jennie sent us an update on Walnut's fabulous new life:

"Walnut has been learning nose work - sport scent detection. Through the National Association of Canine Scent Work (NACSW), he passed his Odor Recognition Test (ORT) in February, earned his NW1 title in March (2nd place overall), his NW2 title in June (3rd place overall), and earned his first NW3 Qualifying Score in October. He also earned his Level 1 and Level 2 Interior titles."

When he's not working, Walnut stays active with his family, which includes a Golden Retriever "sister" and a Lab "brother." They

enjoy going shed hunting (finding deer and elk antlers that have been naturally shed in the wild), swimming, and, most recently, dock diving.

"Walnut was terrified of water when we started, but now he loses his mind when he sees the pool," Jennie laughs.

From his initial struggles with search work to his current success as a part-time conservation detection dog and nose work champion, Walnut's journey is a testament to dogs' adaptability and diverse talents. We are thrilled Walnut has found his niche, proving that a fulfilling life isn't always about a traditional career path but following your passion to the places your unique skills can shine.

DEPLOYMENT SPOTLIGHT

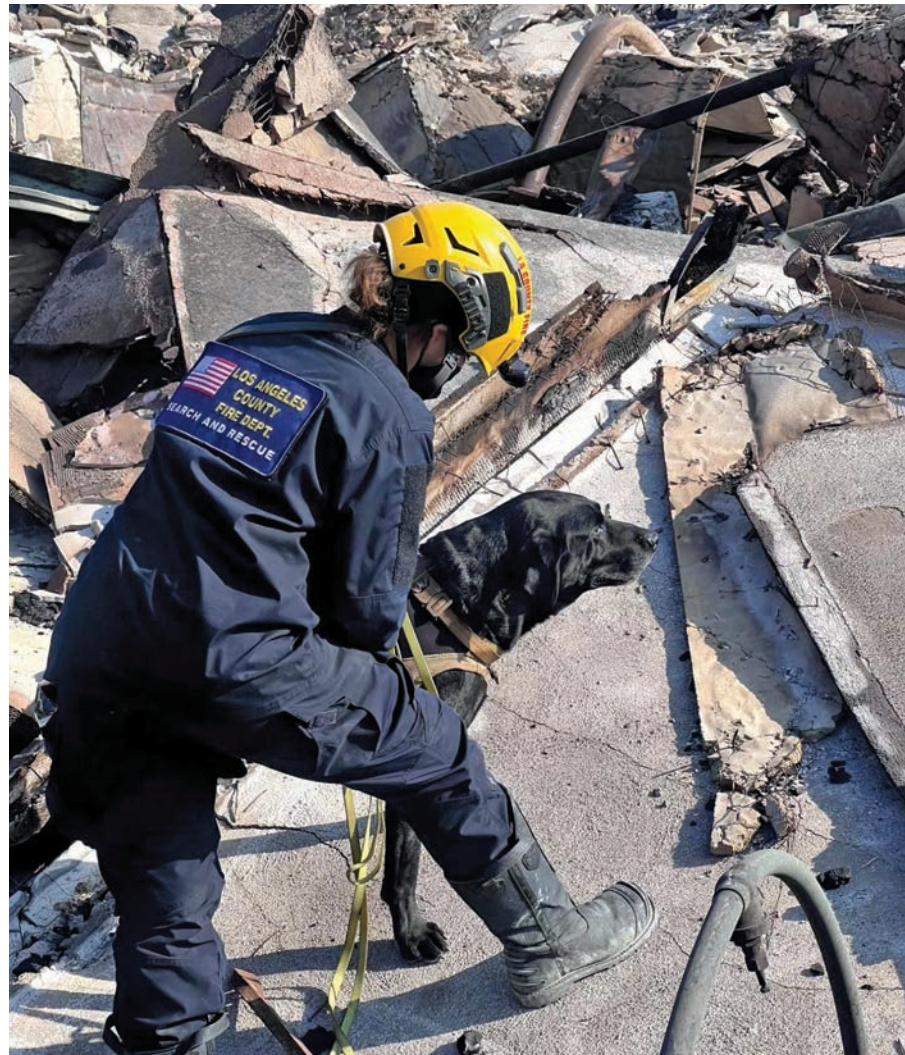
LOS ANGELES WILDFIRES

At around 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, January 7, the first incident in a series of Los Angeles area wildfires started in the Pacific Palisades area, with the Eaton fire in Altadena and the Hurst fire in Sylmar starting later that same day. Over the next week, numerous other wildfires ignited all over Los Angeles County, aided by dry conditions and driven by high-speed and erratic winds.

With gusts reaching 100 mph in some areas, air support to combat the fires was severely limited or grounded altogether in the first crucial hours after the fires started, hindering firefighting efforts and allowing the blazes to spread rapidly. High winds remained in Los Angeles County for the next several days, making containment extremely difficult.

Along with hundreds of local firefighters who answered the call to assist with these fires, our own SDF-trained teams also deployed to lend aid. Human remains detection (HRD) team Jon Munguia & Clifford of Los Angeles County Fire Department and live-find SDF-trained teams Josh Davis & Bosco and Garreth Miller & Reva of California Task Force 3 (CA-TF3), and Patrick Easton & Linus and Eric Lieuwen & Ridge of California Task Force 7 (CA-TF7) traveled to the area, along with their teammates, to assist in the aftermaths of the devastating blazes.

Due to the size and ferocity of the fires, Los Angeles County asked for and received help from numerous other agencies as well. According to the Governor's office, approximately 7,500 state personnel were on the ground in Southern California, working with local and federal partners to respond to these historic wildfires. Additional personnel, equipment, and support also arrived from other states, as well as from Canada and Mexico.



We extend our deepest sympathy to the thousands of people affected by these fires. The unprecedented size and intensity of this disaster will continue to impact this region for months, if not years, to come, and our thoughts are with everyone navigating this difficult time.

We also offer our sincerest gratitude to the dedicated firefighters, both local and from across the country, who worked tirelessly day after day to protect lives and property despite the extraordinary demands of this emergency. Their unwavering commitment to duty made a lifesaving difference to countless communities, and their service is deeply appreciated.

Bosco is sponsored by The Joel and Dena Gambord Family

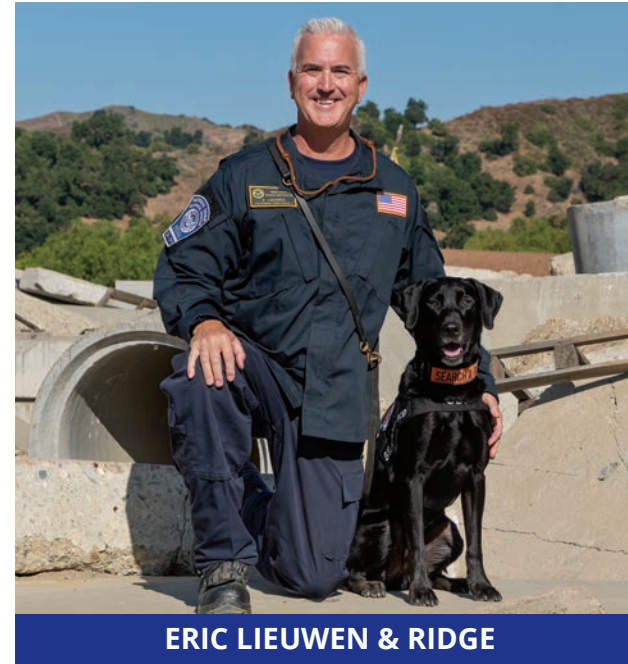
Reva is sponsored by Beth and Greg Apke, Jill Bee and Loren Glasser, and named after Reva Ferguson

Linus is sponsored by Nanci Denney Bergin, Nicole Lallande and an Anonymous Donor

Ridge is sponsored by David and Barbara Barnhart

NEW SEARCH TEAMS PAIRED

WE ARE THRILLED TO WELCOME THESE NEW TEAMS PAIRED BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2024, WHO HAVE WORKED HARD TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS AND TEAMWORK NECESSARY TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS. DURING THEIR CAREERS TOGETHER, THESE TEAMS WILL DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO ADVANCING THEIR TRAINING AND STRENGTHENING THEIR BONDS TO PROVIDE VITAL SUPPORT TO COMMUNITIES IN NEED.



ERIC LIEUWEN & RIDGE

Sacramento Airport Fire
California Task Force 7
Recruited from Tooele City Animal Shelter
Sponsor: David and Barbara Barnhart



CHRISTINE LOPES & OZZY

Berkeley Fire
California Task Force 4
Recruited from a previous home
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family



KRISTINE PRIEBE & EMMETT

Los Angeles City Fire
California Task Force 1
Recruited from Southern Oregon Humane Society
Sponsors: Anonymous, M. Lawrence Lallande and Nicole Lallande, Marnie, John, and Jesse Cahill



STEVE THOMPSON & TEX

Vallejo Fire
California Task Force 4
Recruited from South Utah Valley Animal Shelter
Sponsors: Jill Bee and Loren Glasser, Beth and Greg Apke

CERTIFICATIONS

EACH TEAM MUST PASS AN EVALUATION EVERY THREE YEARS TO MAINTAIN DEPLOYMENT READINESS WITH THEIR TASK FORCE. THIS ASSESSMENT FOCUSES ON THEIR MASTERY OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AS PARTNERS. WE ARE IMMENSELY PROUD OF THESE TEAMS FOR THEIR DEDICATION TO TRAINING, UNWAVERING DEVOTION TO THEIR CANINE PARTNERS, AND COMMITMENT TO SERVING THEIR COMMUNITIES. CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE TEAMS ON THEIR RECENT CERTIFICATIONS!



BRANDON ANDERSEN & TIMBER

Certification: December 2024
Sacramento Metro Fire
California Task Force 7
Recruited from Tooele City Animal Shelter
Sponsors: David and Barbara Barnhart,
Linda Heizer Seaman, Anonymous



JOSE ARTEAGA & SID

Certification: November 2024
San Miguel Fire
California Task Force 8
Recruited from Montana Belgian Malinois
and Dutch Shepherd Rescue
Sponsor: Joal Catt Miller



CORY BALDOVIN & DIVA

Re-certification: November 2024
Los Angeles County Fire
California Task Force 2
Sponsors: Mary and Jeff Kroll



ALMA LOWRY & LENNIE

Certification: November 2024
San Diego Fire-Rescue
California Task Force 8
Recruited from Tooele City Animal Shelter
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family



NICK MEDINA & MATTIS

Re-certification: November 2024
Los Angeles County Fire
California Task Force 2
Sponsors: Carol George and Roger Stewart



CLINT SCHEPE & GEORGIA

Re-certification: November 2024
Chula Vista Fire
California Task Force 8
Recruited from Union County Sheriff's Office
Animal Control
Sponsors: Mary and Jeff Kroll



ALYSSA CORSA & WHEELER

Certification: December 2024
Berkeley Fire
California Task Force 4
Recruited from Dogs for Better Lives
Sponsors: Ann Cooluris, Nahikian Family Foundation,
Anonymous



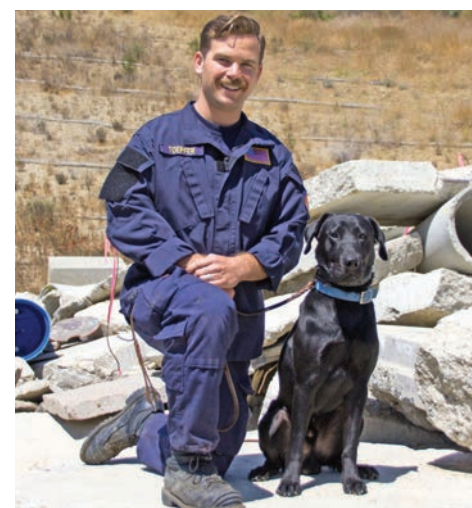
JP HILSABECK & BOND

Re-certification: November 2024
Los Angeles County Fire
California Task Force 2
Recruited from Dogs for Better Lives
Sponsor: Ann Cooluris



ERIC LIEUWEN & RIDGE

Certification: December 2024
Sacramento Airport Fire
California Task Force 7
Recruited from Tooele City Animal Shelter
Sponsors: David and Barbara Barnhart



MIKE TOEPFER & DEACON

Re-certification: November 2024
Los Angeles County Fire
California Task Force 2
Sponsors: Otilia and Emma Diaz
Named by Nancy M. Stone



SAMANTHA WILKINS & ARCHIE

Certification: November 2024
Lincoln Fire-Rescue
Nebraska Task Force 1
Recruited from Next Step Service Dogs
Sponsor: Arc Aspicio



JOE ZAKAR & DORA

Re-certification: November 2024
San Diego Fire-Rescue
California Task Force 8
Recruited from Sacramento County Animal Care
and Regulation
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family

RETIREMENTS

WE EXTEND OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO THESE INCREDIBLE TEAMS AS THEY CONCLUDE THEIR DISTINGUISHED CAREERS IN DISASTER SEARCH. WE WISH THEM A HAPPY AND FULFILLING RETIREMENT FILLED WITH JOY, RELAXATION, AND CHERISHED MOMENTS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.



IVAN

Years of Service: 2014-2024

Handler: Kristi Bartlet
 Fairfax County Fire & Rescue
 Virginia Task Force 1
 Donated by Kim Newman
 Sponsors: GJ and Rebecca Pelissero, Julie Brandau
 Community Service Memorial Project, Lucy and Stephen Swartz,
 Oluv C. Joynor Foundation, Arc Aspicio
 Named in Honor of Ivan Matesevac



SADIE

Years of Service: 2012-2024

Handler: Doug Van Iwaarden
 Orange County Fire Authority
 California Task Force 5
 Donated by Nona Bauer
 Sponsors: Fund for Second Nature, Dakota and J.C. Svec



RAINBOW BRIDGE

A LIFETIME WITH OUR BELOVED CANINE PARTNERS IS NEVER LONG ENOUGH, BUT WE CHERISH EVERY MOMENT WE SHARED WITH THEM. THESE EXTRAORDINARY DOGS WILL BE FOREVER REMEMBERED ON OUR CANINE MEMORIAL WALL, HONORING THEIR YEARS OF SERVICE, THE LIVES THEY IMPACTED, AND THE SPECIAL PLACE THEY HOLD IN OUR HEARTS.



GUNNER

May 20, 2010 – September 30, 2024

Handler: Alex Mengell
 Alameda County Fire
 California Task Force 4
 Recruited from Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society
 Sponsors: Marith Levers, Carol Marengo,
 Kira and Bradley J. Haas Fund



SADIE

October 4, 2010 – August 18, 2024

Handler: Doug Van Iwaarden
 Orange County Fire Authority
 California Task Force 5
 Donated by Nona Bauer
 Sponsors: Fund for Second Nature, Dakota and J.C. Svec



6800 Wheeler Canyon Road
Santa Paula | CA 93060
888.459.4376
www.searchdogfoundation.org



**Thank you
for being *Part of the Search!***