



AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

IN SESSION

AKC'S CONGRESSIONAL NEWSLETTER

The American Kennel Club's Newsletter for Members of Congress and their Staff

PERSPECTIVES

*We're more than champion dogs...
We're the dog's champion.*

Healthy Pets, Healthy Families

Welcoming a new pet into your family is one of the most important commitments you can make. As a prospective pet owner, you want to make sure that your dog will be healthy, and that you have a full and clear record of its medical history. For Americans who get their dogs from responsible breeders that they know and trust, this information is readily available. Similar information is also available for pets from retailers that source from USDA-regulated professional dog breeders.

Sadly, local and state laws that prohibit the sale of purpose bred pets from regulated pet retailers, along with gaps in current import laws are contributing to an increase in sick dogs imported from overseas puppy mills and other random sources. In many cases, a large number of these dogs supply the U.S. retail "rescue" pet industry, which in 2016 accounted for 44% of dogs acquired in the U.S.¹

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CONGRESSIONAL CANINE SPOTLIGHT

Congressman Denver Riggleman



Photos courtesy Congressman Denver Riggleman

Congressman Denver Riggleman never intended to get into politics. But now that he has – and although he claims the great support of his wife Christine and three children – he says his biggest cheerleaders go by the names Chewbacca, Midas, and Leo.

Growing up in Manassas, Virginia, Rep. Denver Riggleman's love for dogs began with his shepherd/lab mix named Lancelot. The two were so close that the Congressman notes "it was like we were attached at the hip." The Congressman notes, Lancelot was a member of the family. From playing with him and his friends to accompanying him to football practice, the pup was always by his side.

Lancelot inspired the Congressman's lifelong passion for dogs. His family now has three, a brown Newfoundland (Chewbacca aka Chewy) and two Samoyeds (Midas and Leo), after his third Sammy passed away. The three dogs are AKC registered and come from small breeders in the Northern Virginia area. The Congressman says that registering his dogs with AKC has been "incredibly rewarding and helpful" when it comes to raising his dogs.

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According to 2019 estimates from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately one million dogs are imported into the U.S. each year², coming from countries like Turkey, China, and South Korea. Many of dogs receive few or no health checks or verification upon entry, and many of those that do are found to have invalid or falsified health records. The danger from these animals is two-fold: These owners do not realize these dogs lack the health checks and oversight of U.S. professionally raised pets that help assure suitability as pets. Additionally, some have been found to be vectors for parasites and illnesses that can impact public health, the health of pets, and livestock.

As a result, we've seen a rise in canine diseases and parasites previously believed under control, including rabies, certain types of influenza, screwworm, and brucellosis. In 2019, after three cases of rabid dogs being imported from Egypt for the U.S. "rescue" pet market, the CDC placed a ban on all dogs from that country. New reports about contagious zoonotic animal diseases such as African Swine Fever and Coronavirus (even without reports of direct transmission from dogs), are making the threat increasingly real and alarmingly dangerous.

There have been some successes in addressing these issues: the 2018 Farm Bill required that the U.S. Department of Agriculture keep more detailed numbers on dog imports and strengthened federal cooperation on the addressing the potential public health risks posed by imported dogs. But more needs to be done.

Members of Congress are now looking at a proposal to ensure that all pets coming into the country have been fully immunized, and are free of infection, parasites, and diseases; to allow for specific, region-appropriate vaccination requirements for dogs coming from specific geographic regions; and ensure valid health certificates for all dogs coming into the U.S. This is a start, but much more needs to be done. Federal agencies tasked with checking for imported disease risks sorely need more resources to meet the challenges they face daily, and we urge members of Congress to address these concerns.

All the best,



Sheila Goffe

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¹ APFA

² Federal Register



When Rep. Riggleman is not in Washington, he enjoys walking his dogs in the woods, taking them on runs, or letting them be ambassadors of the distillery he owns with his family. And, the Congressman's love of dogs doesn't stop at home: The distillery often hosts adoption days where the local shelter brings in dogs for adoption in the hopes of finding them good homes.

Although the Congressman hasn't had the opportunity to bring his pack to the Capitol, he does bring his love for dogs. Rep. Riggleman is a Co-Sponsor of the PUPPERS Act. As introduced, this bill would outlaw the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Research from conducting experiments on dogs that would cause significant pain or distress.

The Congressman takes his responsibility as a pet owner very seriously and believes the decision to own a dog is not something to be taken lightly. He wants new owners to remember that when you bring a dog into your home, it is a lifetime commitment. He and his family selected the breeds they have chosen because they know they have the characteristics that will thrive in his family.

"If you choose to have a pet, that responsibility is tremendous, and you should always make sure that they are taken care of and loved," says the Congressman.



Did You Know?

- The Samoyed has been used for generations as a sled dog, constant companion, and to herd reindeer.
- Queen Alexandra was an ardent Samoyed fancier, and descendants of her dogs appear in many English and American kennels today.
- Samoyeds accompanied Ronald Amundsen in his successful landmark exploration to the South Pole in 1911.
- The Newfoundland is large enough to bring drowning victims ashore; with a lung capacity that enables long-distance swimming.

Sully The Service Dog Honored With 2019 AKC Paw Of Courage

The American Kennel Club (AKC®), the world's largest purebred dog registry and leading advocate for dogs, is proud to honor the late President George H.W. Bush's service dog, Sully, as the recipient of the 2019 AKC Paw of Courage award. This award is in recognition of his loyalty, dedication and distinguished service.

Sully, a two and a half-year-old Labrador Retriever, is a highly trained service dog who was paired with the former President and Navy veteran in June 2018 and was specifically matched to provide assistance and companionship to President Bush in his daily activities.

America's VetDogs, a national not-for-profit service dog provider based in Smithtown, New York, was recommended to the former President through VetDogs' relationship with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. The Bush family worked with America's VetDogs to find a dog that would meet the President's needs. Sully assisted with everyday tasks such as retrieving items, summoning help, and most importantly providing companionship to President Bush in his daily activities.

A year ago, Sully joined the Walter Reed Bethesda Facility Dog Program as a Navy Hospital Corpsman Second Class (HM2), where he will provide interactive care for patients and staff using innovative Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) during their road to recovery.



“The devotion and comfort that dogs provide their owners goes unmatched,” said AKC President and CEO Dennis Sprung. “Sully served the late President George H.W. Bush honorably; providing him support and assistance, but even more importantly, love and companionship. The **2019 AKC Paw of Courage** gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to the devotion that Sully brought to the late President in the final months of his life.”

The Labrador Retriever even has an Instagram account ([@SullyHWBush](https://www.instagram.com/SullyHWBush)) where he has grown his following to more than 250,000.

Sully will be honored with a 2019 AKC Paw of Courage medallion and an engraved plaque in honor of his notable service to the late President George H.W. Bush.

“It’s an honor for America’s VetDogs to accept the AKC’s Paw of Courage Award on behalf of Sully,” says President & CEO John Miller, America’s VetDogs. “America’s VetDogs is very proud of Sully and his service to President Bush. Sully is a wonderful example of all of the service dogs that we provide to our nations veterans and we look forward to him continuing his mission at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.”

Any working dog is eligible to receive an **AKC Paw of Courage**; the award is not specific to purebred dogs. ■

American Kennel Club Launches AKC B.A.R.K. Program To Get Kids Excited About Reading

The American Kennel Club (AKC®), the world's largest dog registry, leading industry authority and advocate for dogs, is pleased to announce the launch of the AKC B.A.R.K. Program.

The AKC B.A.R.K. (Be A Reading Kid) Program is a program designed to get children excited about reading. The goal of the AKC B.A.R.K. Program is to provide children with a fun, educationally enriching experience that also allows them to bond with a canine companion.

In this program, children will read to a dog of their choosing and a parent or guardian will assist them in logging their hours on the AKC website. If a child does not own their own dog, their parent/guardian can find a local AKC Canine Ambassador and arrange a visit. Canine Ambassadors are members of AKC clubs and support



their club's public education efforts by visiting schools and youth organizations, often with their own dogs. They promote purpose-bred dogs, responsible dog ownership and safety around dogs. After reaching certain milestones, children will receive incentives for the hours they have read.

Dogs participating in the program will be acknowledged with a certificate for their volunteerism. The AKC B.A.R.K. Program is rewarding for both the children and dogs involved.

“One of AKC Public Education’s most important goals is ever strengthening the human-canine bond and we are excited to see the B.A.R.K. Program assist in that,” says Meredith Saraceno, AKC Public Education Manager. “With the help of our valued AKC Canine Ambassadors, we will be able to offer this program nationwide.” ■

Five Heroic Dogs Honored with 2019 AKC Humane Fund Awards for Canine Excellence (ACE)

In December, the AKC® Humane Fund announced the winners of the 20th annual AKC Humane Fund Awards for Canine Excellence (ACE). These awards celebrate five loyal, hard-working dogs that have significantly improved the lives of their owners and communities.

One award is presented in each of the following five categories: Uniformed Service K-9, Therapy, Service, Search and Rescue and Exemplary Companion dog. This year's winners range from a family pet who teaches fire safety to children throughout the country to a Doberman Pinscher who dedicates his life to search & rescue work despite his own physical disability.

"The extraordinary stories of the 2019 ACE Award winners illustrate how dogs touch our hearts and lives every day," said Doug Ljungren, President of the AKC Humane Fund. "Each of these five

dogs have changed the life of a person, and in some cases an entire community and deserve to be celebrated. The ACE Awards give us an opportunity to show our appreciation for all that dogs do in the service of humankind."

Each ACE recipient receives \$1,000 to be awarded to a pet-related charity of their choice, a one-year pet insurance policy from AKC Pet Insurance, a one-year supply of Eukanuba dog food and an engraved sterling silver medallion. Each of these items were presented to the winners in person at the AKC National Championship presented by Royal Canin in Orlando, Florida.

The 2019 AKC Humane Fund Awards for Canine Excellence are proudly sponsored by EUKANUBA™ Pet Food.

This year's ACE winners are:



UNIFORMED SERVICE K-9: "Summer," a Labrador Retriever handled by Sergeant Micah Jones of Washington D.C.

"K-9 Summer" is a nine-year-old Labrador Retriever serving the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) as an Explosive Detection Dog (EDD) with the Amtrak Police Department in Washington D.C. With her handler, Sergeant Micah Jones, Summer is responsible for the protection and safety of passengers and personnel onboard trains as well as at the stations and infrastructure. She conducts K9 sweeps for VIP's, Dignitaries, special and national athletic competitions, provides mutual aid to surrounding police departments and much more.

In addition to the incredible work K9 Summer does with the Amtrak Police, she is also a retired Military Working Dog. While deployed to Afghanistan with the Marine Corp in March 2012, Summer put her life on the line to keep the troops safe and comfort warriors on the battlefield. She conducted routine patrols, swept and cleared routes for the troops, and was even involved in

fire fights with insurgents. Summer is credited with positively identifying countless weapons caches and improvised explosive devices. While on duty with the Amtrak Police, K9 Summer wears several ribbons, proudly displaying her time served with the United States Armed Force.

When K9 Summer is not busy protecting her community, she conducts several educational demonstrations for local schools, summer camps and for other Law Enforcement Agencies that are creating a canine program. K9 Summer and handler Sgt. Micah Jones have dedicated their lives to protecting their community.



THERAPY DOG: "Gunther," a Rottweiler owned by John Hunt of Blackwood, New Jersey

"Gunther," officially known as Bang's Aleutian Sky CD RE THDD CGCA CGCU, is a six-year-old Rottweiler, certified by the Alliance of Therapy Dogs and owned by John Hunt. In 2016, John Hunt and Gunther deployed as a therapy dog team to Orlando, FL to provide comfort to the grieving victims and families of the Pulse Nightclub shooting.

Since then, they have deployed to: Las Vegas, NV in the wake of the Mandalay Bay Hotel/Route 91 Harvest Festival-mass shooting, Sutherland Springs, TX after the First Baptist Church-mass shooting, Parkland, FL following the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School-mass shooting, Pittsburgh, PA after the Tree of Life Synagogue-mass shooting, and most recently the incident at the municipal building in Virginia Beach, VA. During deployments, John and Gunther spend long days working with the victims and their families and spend their nights comforting the EMTs, Police, Firefighters, and on-site support crews.

When they are not busy traveling the country supporting victims of our nation's tragedies, John and Gunther can be found working within the AtlantiCare health system and Regional Medical Center providing smiles and love to patients and their care-givers. They also provide local visits throughout NJ supporting celebrations of life at high-schools and colleges and giving educational presentations to a range of organizations on the deployment management of active shooter cases.

In December 2018, Gunther's owner, John co-founded the non-profit group, Crisis Response Canines, to provide training and organization

to build a nationwide network of highly-trained crisis response canines who would be ready to deploy for support and assistance when other mass tragedies occur. Gunther's work as a therapy dog has helped victims across the nation, and the bond that John and Gunther share brings smiles to faces in the most difficult of times.



SERVICE DOG: "Polly," a Labrador Retriever owned by Rachel Husband of Sparks, Nevada

"Polly" is a five-year-old Labrador Retriever owned by Rachel Husband of Sparks, Nevada. Rachel has a rare health condition called Dysautonomia, a disorder of the autonomic nervous system which causes fainting, leaving her wheelchair-bound.

When Rachel got Polly as a 9-month-old puppy, she already knew how to stack for the Conformation ring, but she wasn't quite tall enough to keep showing. Polly and Rachel have ventured across the dog sport world, competing in various AKC Sports including: Rally, Obedience, Fast CAT, Barn Hunt, and some Hunt Test training, but her most important role is being Rachel's service dog.

As a service dog, Polly picks up dropped objects, retrieves items, helps pull Rachel's wheelchair and is even able to use a K-9 button to call 911 in an emergency. The duo has achieved so many things that Rachel never imagined she'd be able to accomplish before Polly. They've snowm-bled in Alaska, road-tripped from Virginia to California, and competed in Rally in 18 states so far. The pair is working to achieve their goal of competing in Rally in all 50 states. Polly enables Rachel to be able to work full-time and helped Rachel regain her independence. She has transformed Rachel's life for the better and is a fine example of how service dogs improve the lives of their people.



SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG: "JoePete," a Doberman Pinscher owned and handled by Cris Bean of Eaton Rapids, Michigan

"JoePete," also known as "JP" is an eight-year-old Doberman Pinscher owned and handled by Cris Bean. Together they volunteer with the Michigan Search and Rescue.

Cris rescued JoePete in 2010 and he progressed rapidly through the human remains training program. However, just prior to achieving certification, JoePete received a very early diagnosis of Wobbler's disease, a catchall term referring to several possible malformations of the cervical vertebrae that cause an unsteady (wobbly) gait and weakness in dogs and horses. Despite his diagnosis, JoePete achieved certification with Michigan Search and Rescue and went on to achieve certification with two national organizations as well. He has since participated in 29 missing person searches, helping to bring closure to many grieving families. He has also aided in local graveyard reconstruction projects by Historical Societies and landowners by helping to locate burial sites in forgotten cemeteries in and around the state of Michigan.

In addition to his search & rescue work, JoePete has participated in countless educational demonstrations with children, adults, and individuals with special needs. He earned his AKC Canine Good Citizen certification and has become a certified therapy dog through Alliance of Therapy Dogs. Despite JP's battle with Wobblers, his strength, work ethic, determination and loving spirit shine through every single day in his search & rescue work.



EXEMPLARY COMPANION DOG: "Molly," a Dalmatian owned by Dayna Hilton of Clarksville, Arkansas

"Molly," a seven-year-old Dalmatian owned by Dayna Hilton is more than just a family pet – she is a Fire Safety Dog, the mascot of the Keep Kids Fire Safe Foundation (KKFSF). KKFSF is a public charity dedicated to reducing fire related deaths and injuries among children and their families. Since just nine weeks old, Molly has been working tirelessly to help educate children about fire safety.

As the KKFSF mascot, Molly helps make fire safety presentations, and travels over 25,000 miles a year to appear at educational events across the United States. During the fire safety program, Molly demonstrates many of the tricks she has learned, including how to "test" a smoke alarm with her nose and how to crawl low under smoke. Molly also helps her owner and local Firefighter, Dayna by turning pages of a children's fire safety book and raising her paw to help make children Jr. Firefighters.

For the children Molly can't reach physically, she actively participates in the KKFSF's popular fire safety Skype program, "Learning about Fire Safety is Fun." She has Skyped almost 500 times with more than 17,000 children and 1,800 adults. In addition to serving as the official mascot for KKFSF, Molly is also the honorary fire dog for the Little Rock Fire Department.

Losing one child to fire is one too many, and Dayna and Molly hope to continue their mission to keep more children fire safe. Molly's loyalty and dedication to her work and community are an inspiration to children and dog lovers everywhere.

AKC Canine Health Foundation and AKC Reunite Support Canine Health Research Related to Natural Disasters



The American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation (CHF) is pleased to announce that AKC Reunite has donated \$50,000 to research and grants support related to infectious diseases that are on the rise in dogs concurrent with natural disasters, especially floods and hurricanes.

AKC Reunite is North America's largest not-for-profit pet identification and recovery service. In addition to reuniting pets with their families one at a time, they have several charitable initiatives such as the AKC Pet Disaster Relief Program.

"At AKC Reunite, we are proud of our support of the pet community through microchip and scanner donations, the AKC Pet Disaster Relief program, and our many other charitable programs," states AKC Reunite President and CEO, Tom Sharp. "By investing in infectious disease research on the rise from natural disasters, we are continuing our company's commitment to improving the health and well-being of dogs."

The studies supported by AKC Reunite will add to knowledge of infectious diseases and will become an important component of managing the health effects of disasters that impact people and their pets. This generous donation will support research into leptospirosis, antimicrobial-resistant infections, heartworm disease, and tick-borne disease. These focus areas for research tackle important health concerns on the rise in circumstances of standing water and other effects on pets and owners following natural disasters.

"The AKC Canine Health Foundation is honored to continue our collaboration with AKC Reunite, and pleased to acknowledge their Champion level sponsorship," states Dr. Diane Brown, CHF CEO. "Their support of canine infectious disease research will make a lasting impact on the health of all dogs."

Both CHF and AKC Reunite were founded in 1995 as affiliates of the American Kennel Club. This collaboration marks an important next step in working together to advance the health of all dogs and their owners.



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