



# WOUNDED WARRIORS CANADA

## SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS, FIRST RESPONDERS & THEIR FAMILIES

September 2019

In April 2018, The Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Provincial Command partnered with Wounded Warriors Canada (WWC) following the launch of the national WWC PTSD Service Dog Program. The announcement came on the heels of years of work in the field and in response to the absence of credible National Standards and guidelines for Service Dogs – something both Dominion Command and WWC have been urging and working towards for years.

Great outcomes begin with great partnerships. The Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Provincial Commands, "Operation Service Dog", through its partnership with WWC, is beginning to see the desired results intended. Since the initial donation by, Wounded Warriors Canada has been able to facilitate the placement of 11 PTSD Service Dogs to Ontario Veterans, with approximately 30 others currently situated in the training process.

### **How does Operation Service Dog work and what are the benefits?**

The WWC PTSD Service Dog program establishes consistent and transparent National Standards for all WWC Service Dogs which includes:

- The identification of WWC Certified Service Dog Providers from coast-to-coast that meet or exceed the published standards and are willing to work cooperatively together.
- The implementation of clinically informed Mandatory Service Dog Prescriber Guidelines.
- A regionally based application process for Canada.
- The identification of all WWC Supported Service Dogs with a distinctive Red Vest featuring both the WWC Supported Service Dog patch and the The Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Provincial Command patch.

For a complete outline of the program visit:

<https://woundedwarriors.ca/our-programs/ptsd-service-dog-program/>

Operation Service Dog ensures that Veterans in Ontario are paired with dogs that meet nationally set standards and criteria taken from the best available standards practices in the country. Specifically, we are ensuring ethical training standards for dogs, clients and service dog teams as well as client service and aftercare. We are ensuring financial transparency and insurance coverage from our training partners. In Ontario, there are two WWC Certified Service Dog Providers at this time: National Service Dogs and Paws for Thought.





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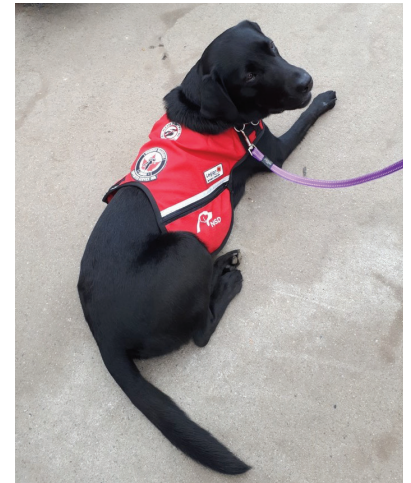
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### IMPACT:

These incredible animals do in fact change and save lives. As one beneficiary (Molly) reports: In the summer of 2019, National Service Dogs, based in Cambridge ON, placed a petite, docile black Labrador with Molly, a Canadian Veteran. For this team it was love at first sight. According to Molly, "NSD Whitney has made more of a difference in my life than I ever thought possible" and the change was immediate.

PTSD Service Dogs impact lives in many ways:

- They reduce hyper vigilance and help to reduce anxiety in public settings
- They provide reality affirmation and redirection: The dogs are trained to recognize the individual's anxious behaviour and physically redirect them to more positive activities i.e. petting the dog or syncing their breathing pattern with the relaxed breathing of their dog.
- They provide nightmare interruption to help stabilize sleep patterns.



According to Molly, when she is having a nightmare; "I toss and talk in my sleep and NSD Whitney hops up on the bed and licks my neck and she will lay over my legs and feet until I've calmed down."

According to the VAC PTSD Service Dog study completed last year; "Having a service dog increased the Veteran's outings to carry out daily living activities and also increased participation in family-oriented activities."

For Molly this has been one the biggest benefits of having her service dog. Where she once only ventured out a couple of times a month accompanied by a family member, she is now going out alone with NSD Whitney several times a week; including the recent Climate Change Strike. Whether she is shopping, going to appointments or taking her young granddaughter out

for some one-on-one time, "It is so much fun for all of us to be out together with Whitney taking care of all of us".







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“Operation Service Dog” and the incredible partnership with WWC is profoundly impacting not only the lives of our Veterans but also the lives of their families. Together, we are giving individuals like Molly hope for a future in which they feel empowered to do things the rest of us take for granted. As Molly stated, “She can start taking the GO train to Toronto for day trips to Museums, as I am originally from Toronto and love to adventure around the city.”

We send our sincere thanks to the leadership of The Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Provincial Command and all branches across the province for working with us on this life-changing program. Partnerships are the definition of what it means to be #InThisTogether for the mental health of our Veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

Philip C. Ralph, CD  
Captain (Ret'd)  
National Program Director.



#INTHISTOGETHER