



PUPS FOR PATRIOTS

I WAS AFRAID OF BEING ALONE. I WAS AFRAID OF GOING PLACES BY MYSELF. THE PUPS FOR PATRIOTS PROGRAM TAKES CAREFULLY IDENTIFIED DOGS WHO ARE UNWANTED AND IN NEED OF A HOME. WE TRAIN THEM, THEN WE PAIR THEM WITH VETERANS WHO HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS AND TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY. GOOD GIRL. WE LEARN THAT TWENTY VETERANS COMMIT SUICIDE EVERY SINGLE DAY. WE SAW AND WITNESSED A SERIOUS CRISIS OF UNWANTED PETS. THE MORAL IMPERATIVE WAS TO SAVE LIVES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LEASH. EVERYTHING THAT P-T-S-D STRIPS FROM YOU, THESE DOGS HELP TO GIVE BACK. WE ALWAYS KNEW P-T-S-D WAS A HIDDEN ILLNESS, SOMETHING THAT NO ONE'S EVER GOING TO SEE EXCEPT YOU, AND YOU REALLY HOPE THAT NO ONE ELSE EVER SEES IT AND NOW WE ARE EXPOSING THAT. WE'RE MAKING OURSELVES MORE VULNERABLE TO PEOPLE COMING UP AND APPROACHING US BUT WE'RE ALSO LEARNING HOW TO TAKE THAT IN STRIDE AND BE MORE CONFIDENT. SERVICE DOGS FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS ARE ACTUALLY HELPING TO MITIGATE DEPRESSION, TO HELP WITH STRESS AND ANXIETY AND, IMPORTANTLY, TO ALLOW THESE VETERANS TO HEAL. I FOUND THE PROGRAM THROUGH MY THERAPIST AT THE VET CENTER. YOU'RE ALREADY PAIRED WITH THE DOG BEFORE YOU GET IT. I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY DID IT, BUT IT WAS LIKE MAGIC. WE TEACH THEM BLOCKING AND GROUNDING, WE CAN TEACH THEM TO ALERT THE VETERANS WHEN THEY'RE HAVING ANXIETY. SHE'LL BE AWARE RIGHT WHEN I NEED HER TO BE AWARE OR SHE'LL BLOCK, AND I DIDN'T EVEN ASK HER TO BLOCK. I LOVE THAT. THE DOG IS THERE TO HELP BUILD THAT CONFIDENCE, TO HELP THEM NAVIGATE THE WORLD. I'M CONFIDENT WITH HER BEHIND MY BACK. SHE LEANS HER BODY WEIGHT INTO ME, INTO THE BACK OF MY LEGS, SO I CAN FEEL HER. I DON'T HAVE TO TURN AROUND. WHAT WE WANT THE VETERANS TO KNOW IS, I CAN GET THROUGH THIS, EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE O-K. IT'S LIKE THEY'VE GIVEN YOU EVERYTHING THAT YOU COULD HAVE LOST, BACK. THESE DOGS DIDN'T HAVE AN OWNER BEFORE. THEY NOW HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT PURPOSE AND A MISSION, AND THEIR LIVES ARE SAVED JUST AS THEY'RE SAVING THEIR VETERANS' LIVES. I SEE JOY THAT'S COMING OUT OF DARKNESS. THIS IS LIKE MY SUPERHERO. GOOD GIRL. I'M SO GRATEFUL TO OUR FRIENDS, OUR DONORS, HALLMARK CHANNEL, EVERYONE WHO'S GOTTEN BEHIND PUPS FOR PATRIOTS WHO BELIEVE THAT SECOND CHANCES AT LIFE ARE SO WORTHWHILE. THEIR WORLDS ARE NO LONGER PREDICTABLE. OUR GRATITUDE IS IMMEASURABLE. I'M SO GLAD TO HAVE MET YOU AND SEE HOW FAR YOU GUYS HAVE COME IN JUST TEN DAYS. WE'RE SO PROUD OF YOU GUYS. IF WE CAN JUST HELP EVERY VETERAN WHO'S IN NEED AND PAIR THEM WITH A SERVICE DOG, THAT IS AN INCREDIBLE ACHIEVEMENT. TALK ABOUT RESCUE, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT AN UNWANTED DOG THAT'S BEEN RESCUED BUT, GUESS WHAT, THAT DOG RESCUES A HUMAN. THEIR JOURNEY HAS JUST BEGUN BUT WHAT I ALREADY SEE IS HOPE.