

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Canine Support Teams Receives Federal Grant to Provide Veterans with Service Dogs at No Cost**

On July 1, 2022, Canine Support Teams, Inc. (CST), a nonprofit that prepares service dogs for disabled individuals seeking enhanced mobility, independence, and companionship, was honored to be awarded a Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program (WWSDP) grant sponsored by the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences for its PAWZ for Wounded Veterans Program.

CST's PAWZ for Wounded Veterans Program was started in 2012 to address the increasing number of men and women who, after serving our country, require service dogs. Annually, CST places 30 dogs with PAWZ-eligible veterans who have various disabilities (e.g., multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, TBI, spinal cord injury, and PTSD). Each dog is trained to assist with tasks such as walking beside a wheelchair or walker, retrieving items, and barking to alert for help. The dogs also provide their partners with constant companionship. Through the PAWZ program, veterans receive their professionally trained CST service dog at no cost to them.

In 2015, Congress appropriated \$1 million for the Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program. Six years later, the budget has increased to a robust \$10 million. The WWSDP grant was created specifically to support service members and/or veterans across diverse geographic regions and population demographics. It provides funding to nonprofit organizations committed to advancing the service dog industry through continued learning, innovative training programs, and superior industry standards. The continued and increased investment in WWSDP by Congress is a testament to the valuable role that service dogs have on the health and welfare of our disabled service members.

"All of us at CST take great pride in every dog that we are able to partner with a veteran in need," said CST founder Carol Roquemore. "We are extraordinarily thankful to be selected for the Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program as it, together with the generosity of all of our donors, enables us to deliver expertly trained service dogs to eligible veterans."

"Being able to help people return to the activities that enrich their lives is what keeps the CST family motivated to do what we do best," said Brenda Martini O'Loughlin, President of the CST Board of Directors. "This grant will ensure that our dedicated staff and volunteers can focus on delivering our professionally trained service dogs to assist individuals with disabilities in their everyday lives."

The WWSDP grant, which will conclude on June 30, 2023, fully funds the high-quality medical care all CST dogs receive, as well as the extensive training process the dogs go through. At just eight weeks, puppies are placed with volunteer puppy raisers, who work directly with CST trainers to socialize the puppies through outings and experiences (e.g., navigating restaurants and shopping centers, using public transportation, processing through TSA, handling crowded events, etc.) At 18 months, dogs enter Advanced Training with CST's Inmate Trainers through its Prison Pup Program. Dogs are with their inmate trainers 24/7 for four to six months. During this period, the dog learns the specific tasks necessary to support a disabled client. Once the dog has graduated from training, CST matches the dog's

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particular strengths with an eligible veteran. The person and his or her dog then spend two weeks in CST's intensive Team Training program establishing their relationship. The veteran and their service dog remain together for the "working life" of the dog, which is approximately ten years. Throughout this time, the veteran clients are welcome to take advantage of additional training and social events at CST.

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