



## American Legion Auxiliary News Release

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### LORI STEVENS IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY'S WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

INDIANAPOLIS - Lori Stevens, Royse City, Texas, was presented the Woman of the Year award by the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) today at its 89<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention in Louisville, Ky.

Stevens, founder of Patriot PAWS Service Dogs, has more than 15 years' experience working with service dogs. In February 2005, a group of disabled veterans from the Dallas VA Hospital asked Stevens to assist them with training. This is where she learned about the plight of disabled veterans in need of service dogs. As a result, in February 2006, her 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Patriot PAWS, was born.

Patriot PAWS dogs are trained to perform various services such as getting help in emergencies, retrieving items, and pulling wheelchairs with the goal of increasing self-sufficiency for the disabled veteran. Since many disabled veterans also suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder along with depression, the service dog can play a crucial role in the emotional stability of the veteran, resulting in lifelong companionship.

"When I first started Patriot PAWS, I wanted to find a practical, yet positive way to train our dogs," said Stevens. "What happened next was a huge win for everyone involved." Patriot PAWS entered into a partnership with the State of Texas Department of Criminal Justice to train female inmates to become service dog trainers. Inmates learn an occupation that can be used immediately as a new career path when they are released. Ultimately, inmate service dog trainers and the volunteers of Patriot PAWS will help to give back the freedoms that were lost to disabled veterans.

Stevens and her No. 1 canine partner, Beau, have appeared coast to coast and on "The Late Show" with David Letterman and Animal Planet's "Pet Star." Stevens is married to Daniel Stevens and has three sons: Charlie, Don, and Rick. Charlie is in the U.S. Air Force and served during the Iraq War.

Founded in 1919, the American Legion Auxiliary is the world's largest patriotic women's service organization. With a membership of nearly 900,000, local ALA units have a strong presence in more than 9,500 communities nationwide. The ALA's mission to *serve veterans, their families and their communities* is carried out through its hundreds of outreach programs delivered by its members, volunteers and national headquarters.

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