

# Patriots With Four Paws

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A guest post from Maria Jones at Patriot PAWS



When asked for a definition of passion, Mother Teresa once said it was the one thing that drives and motivates a person to the very depths of their soul. For Lori Stevens, Founder and Executive Director of Patriot PAWS Service Dogs, passion didn't have to be discovered; it found her. Lori has been training dogs for over twenty years so when she was approached by a group of Veterans in 2006 seeking service dogs for disabled vets, it made complete sense to Lori that she take on the mission.

Patriot PAWS Service Dogs is a 501c3 non-profit organization providing service dogs to disable American Veterans. There is never a charge for the dog so their expenses are understandably continuous. It takes anywhere from \$20K to \$30 K to raise and train one service dog, and they rely solely on donations and grants to pay the bills. When forming Patriot PAWS, Lori Stevens believed these men and women had sacrificed enough for their country. They deserved to have a service dog, and she would not charge a fee. Veterans are not the only benefactor; the inmates who train the dogs have found renewed value and self-respect through their affiliation with this program also.

Recently Lori had a conundrum. She needed transportation for a Veteran to be introduced to his service animal. She quickly realized Southwest Airlines and Patriot PAWS would be a perfect match: Both groups share a strong commitment to serving Veterans, and both LUV animals! Lori reached out to Southwest's Charitable Giving Team and inquired about the possibility of Southwest providing tickets to Patriot PAWS, and a mutually beneficial relationship was formed. Today, Southwest and Patriot PAWS combine resources for the benefit of our Nation's Hero's and their service animals.

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