



A NEW LEASH ON LIFE

The K9s for Warriors Story

Captain Louie Belluomini served in the Army for 9 years. He worked as a psychological operations specialist and military police officer during his time in the Army. He was honorably discharged as a Captain in 2015 after serving tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Louie suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

(PTSD) and a traumatic brain injury after his deployments and had decided to pursue a treatment plan involving a K9 when medication or counseling didn't completely solve the issues or failed. Louie and Star were paired together by K9s for Warriors, the largest K9/Veteran pairing organization in the United States, a non-profit program out of Ponte Vedra, Florida that connects service dogs with veterans suffering from the same things Louie does. Star performs tasks for Louie that he cannot do on his own. 90% of the dogs from the program are rescue dogs. Their motto is "put a new leash on life"! Star acts mostly as a bodyguard protecting Louie from any possible threat that would normally startle him and cause him to react in a negative/scary manor. Louie has worked as a paramedic in the local communities for the past 13 years. He currently works at Hanco EMS in Findlay, Ohio and as a paramedic at Putnam County EMS in Ottawa, Ohio. Louie has worked as a flight medic in his career and has deployed to Hurricane Katrina as a paramedic. Star is also very comforting to certain patients on the squad calls. Star is his sidekick, a 4-year-old golden retriever. Louie and Star are side by side every day. They are never apart. Star works on the ambulance with him and is constantly attending to Louie's needs. Star is the first dog in the country to actively work on an ambulance with her handler. Since Star works on the ambulance, she is also cross trained to track and search for people in case they have a lost victim they respond to. She has been the medication for Louie since September of 2016 when they were paired. Louie and Star have been featured in a film documentary that was produced by DNA films following their day-to-day activities along with 2 other graduates out of over 550 graduate K9 teams that had gone through the program. The film tells each of their stories and how they have worked through their issues as a team. The film can be viewed on Amazon

Prime or purchased at www.anewleashonlifemovie.com. Amazon has also made this documentary into a series where you can view Louie and Star's journey in their own episode. The film has won 4 Emmy awards and 3 Telly awards. Star and Louie have not only traveled around Ohio sharing their story and spreading the importance of awareness in the employment environment, but they have also spread their knowledge across the United States in their fight to see a better life in their fellow Veterans as well as awareness to the topic.

Louie is married to his wonderful and supporting wife Jessica and together they have a son, Silvio who was born at Promedica Toledo Hospital in November 2016. Louie and Jessica were married in 2015 when Louie was struggling with his PTSD issues severely, but Jessica stood by him through every step of it all and has helped provide awareness to the struggles that PTSD brings, but also and more importantly provides a voice for the struggles that the loved ones deal with as well. She has been outspoken about providing support to the loved ones and significant others of the Warriors battling PTSD. PTSD does not just affect our Warriors but also the loved ones around them. Jessica currently works as a nurse and case manager at Lima Memorial Hospital and she has worked as a nurse for over 15 years. Louie and Jessica met when they were both working in a flight program together when Louie first returned from Iraq in 2009. She has worked in all kinds of nursing and is also passionate in spreading awareness about first responder and hospital staff PTSD in our healthcare providers. Jessica has experience working in the emergency room, ICU and flight medicine. Together they make a great team and all though it is not always easy with PTSD in their lives, they lean on each other and get through it together which we all need a similar support system to get through the tougher times.

K9s for Warriors Considerations:

A donation box will be present as an option for anyone to donate to K9's For Warriors. Donations would be completely voluntary and by no means required or forced on anyone. Donations can be accepted by cash or check. If donations are made by check, the individual or company can make the check out to "K9's For Warriors."

Since K9's For Warriors is a nonprofit organization they work completely off donations. The waiting list for a Veteran right now is 18-months because of the need for more donations in order to put more Warriors through the program. As more donations come in, the more Warriors they can put through the

organization faster. Dogs are ready on site for these Warriors they are just waiting for financial support since everything is covered for the Veteran.

There is also the opportunity to sponsor a dog. Individuals, companies or organizations can sponsor a dog. In other words, anyone can sponsor a dog, but sponsorship of a dog is broken down to \$15,000.00 for an individual and \$20,000.00 for companies or organizations. The awesome thing about being able to sponsor a dog is that you get constant updates throughout the training process, but best of all you get to name the dog whatever you want. Once the Warrior dog team is complete, the Veteran has the opportunity to get in touch with the sponsor if they so choose. Also, you have the opportunity to attend the graduation if you decide to do so. Best of all that money goes towards saving the life of a dog and a Veteran. These dogs are rescued, and the Warriors have severe PTSD. Twenty-Two Veterans a day commit suicide, so you literally are saving a dog from a kill shelter and a Veteran from possible suicide. There are other ways you can support the program without a financial commitment by donating gifts! Instead of giving a monetary contribution to the program, you can also gift items that can be used in the kennels or in the clubhouse.

Items that are always needed:

- Creamy peanut butter (unopened)
- Large KONG chew toys • Nylabones
- Jolly Balls (8" hard plastic without handles)
- Petco or PetSmart gift cards
- Magic Erasers
- Household items such as paper towel, toilet paper, plastic cups and utensils
- Office supplies including copy paper and envelopes

Please do not bring dog treats or dog food to donate to K9's For Warriors due to the service dogs being on a strict diet and eating a certain type of food that is already donated from the company. Thank you for considering that, but it would not be able to be used. However, if you would like to bring things like that to the presentation, we will be sure to donate it in Star's name to the local shelter in your community.

Any goods or items listed above can be brought to the speaking event. Louie and Star will ensure it all gets to the campus in a timely manner.

Program Enhancements:

K9s For Warriors is always looking for special ways in making the program experience for the Warriors better. The Veterans spend three weeks on campus, making Camp K9 their home during that time. The majority of their experience involves training with the Warrior trainers, but there are often times when their time needs to be filled with other, more relaxing activities. For example, there has been art classes held and even had professional masseurs come in and give our Warriors massages. We've also been able to accept handmade items that provide additional comfort for the Warriors and dogs. Others have offered their professional services, such as dog grooming and veterinary care, to assist us as well. The staff does an amazing job in trying to keep the Warriors minds off of things during the time that they are on campus. I know it's hard to believe, but these Warriors are dealing with a lot of stress so the staff does all they can to minimize that as much as possible.

There are a number of ways to use your talents to enhance the program. If you are interested in giving back in this way, please let me know and I would be happy to coordinate in making it happen.

CPT. Louie and Star-K9 Contact Info:

Main Contact-C: 440-241-4967

Secondary Contact-Email: louisb410@gmail.com