Submitted by: Laura Barker, heropupsinc@yahoo.com
Company/Organization: Hero Pups, Inc.
Type of organization: Nonprofit
Number of Employees: 50 volunteers
Category: community

Challenge or Opportunity:
Veterans and first responders with PTSD and mental health struggles can have a difficult time asking for help, but these issues affect more than just the individual. PTSD, depression, anxiety, etc affect the entire family unit in a number of ways. Some people deal with this by isolating themselves, which is an unhealthy, damaging coping mechanism.

Approach or Solution:
We "use" pups to open the lines of communication. On one occasion, we had a veteran reach out who had been isolated in his basement for 4 days. He felt alone, betrayed by the system and was in a very dark place. The idea of a service dog got him to reach out for help and start to let someone in to help him start a path toward getting his life back.

Impact:
That same veteran ended our call with a "thank you". He explained that he was thankful to us for the hope we had given him. Hope was a feeling he had not had in a long time. That veteran then checked in for in-patient treatment and is working with professionals to address his PTSD and his future is looking much brighter. All be cause of a dog!