



**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!