

LIFE notes

LIFE prides itself on helping those in need and for being the champion for those who cannot speak but who enrich our lives and everyday make us a little more... human.

Issue 48, May 31, 2018

Heroes' Honor Edition



Spotlight Board Member: Simone Bunutti



A resident of Manalapan since 2004, Simone Bunutti is an integral part of the community. She has been a Manalapan Town Commissioner since 2014 and has served as Manalapan Mayor Pro Tem since 2017.

A mother of six, Simone chooses her charitable causes carefully, but she knew right away that LIFE was something she wanted to give her time to, "I have limited time for volunteering and giving back to the community. But I was drawn to Lois Pope's LIFE Center for Military Affairs and inspired by all her hard work with both the disabled Veterans and military animals. Realizing that over 90% of all the donations actually go directly to those in need. I haven't had a lot of experience with disabled veterans but my love for animals made the LIFE Center the perfect choice."

Simone also volunteers with the Gulfstream School. She and her husband, Peter, are the very proud parents of Mia, Marc, Margaux, Mary, Martina, and Michael.

Upcoming events

- Saturday, September 29, 2018
8th Annual Hero Dog Awards Gala
The Beverly Hilton Hotel
- Friday, October 5, 2018
**American Veterans Disabled for Life Day
Celebrating the National Day of Honor
for Disabled Veterans**
VA Hospital Medical Center
- Thursday, November 15, 2018
**Cocktail Reception in Honor of
LIFE's 25th Silver Jubilee Gala**
at the Home of Lois Pope
By Invitation
- Wednesday, December 12, 2018
**Pre-Gala Reception
at the Home of Jan & Chip Malley**
By Invitation
- Friday, January 4, 2019
**LIFE's 25th Silver Jubilee Lady in Red Gala
Starring Diana Ross**
The Breakers, Palm Beach
6:00 PM

To learn more or to donate, visit
www.life-edu.org or call 561.582.8083.

Dear Friends:

I shake a lot of hands and give a lot of hugs in the course of my work thanking supporters, striving to attract new donors and attendees to the Annual Lady in Red Gala, and expressing gratitude to disabled veterans for their heroism and sacrifices.

On May 22, I still gave a lot of hugs, but rather than to humans, I gave them to dogs. And I still shook a lot of hands, well, actually, paws in thanking four courageous canines for their selfless and valiant service to our great nation.

The happy and heartwarming occasion on Capitol Hill in Washington DC was the Annual Presentation of the Lois Pope K-9 Medal of Courage, the highest honor than can be bestowed on Military Working Dogs. With top military leaders and members of Congress in attendance, I had the honor of draping the medal over the furry necks of these remarkable heroes. And, they are remarkable, not to mention inspiring, valiant, and, of course, lovable!

Jag is a 12-year-old Labrador who served in the U.S. Army as a Specialized Search Dog for seven years, helping sniff out hidden weapons caches and deadly improvised explosive devices. With his human soldier partner Army Sgt. Dennis Dow, Jag deployed to Afghanistan and Germany, where they worked to locate lethal bombs and other security threats during hundreds of missions and thousands of searches. Off the battlefield, Jag boosted morale and brought comfort to our brave soldiers far away from home. Jag retired in 2013 and was adopted by Dow. Today, the pair volunteers at local fire departments, helping provide comfort to the community after fires and other tragic incidents.

Taba is a nine-year-old Dutch Shepherd who searched for IEDs and participated in countless raids during her two years of service as an Army Special Forces Multi-Purpose Canine in Afghanistan. She was particularly adept at locating explosive devices. Upon her return home, she was adopted by a former K-9 police dog handler and his family, who affectionately call her their "baby." As the family helped Taba adjust to retirement, a previous injury in her rear leg began to flare up, eventually requiring amputation. She is healing from the surgery and currently living out the rest of her days free of pain - just as she deserves after serving our country so admirably.

Summer, a seven-year-old Labrador Retriever, courageously served as an Explosives Specialized Search Dog with the U.S. Marines Corps, conducting patrols, discovering weapons caches and IEDs, clearing routes and coming under fire during her years of service. Today, in retirement, she continues her selfless dedication to protecting our country. She works with the TSA K-9 team for the Amtrak Police Department in Washington DC, with her partner, retired Air Force Sgt. Micah Jones. The inseparable pair provide coverage and security for VIPs and foreign dignitaries, and work each day to play a vital role in the war on terrorism.

Taker is a 12-year-old Labrador Retriever who served as an explosives detection dog in the U.S. Marine Corps in Iraq and Afghanistan, where he uncovered deadly IEDs - the leading cause of death of American and allied troops in the war on terror. He saved countless lives, and risked his own, in this service. After retiring from the military in 2012, Taker was adopted by his former handler, retired Marine Corps Sgt. Kevin Zuniga, and now serves as Zuniga's service dog, helping mitigate his symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

Just meeting these amazing animals was a highlight of the year for me. Being able to shake their paws and give them hugs made the day even more special. They perform vitally important and life-saving work, while putting their own lives on the line for our country. They are so well-deserving of the K-9 Medal of Courage, and I was honored to be able to present it to them and recognize their heroic sacrifices and contributions to our nation at the highest level.

With Love,

Lois

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