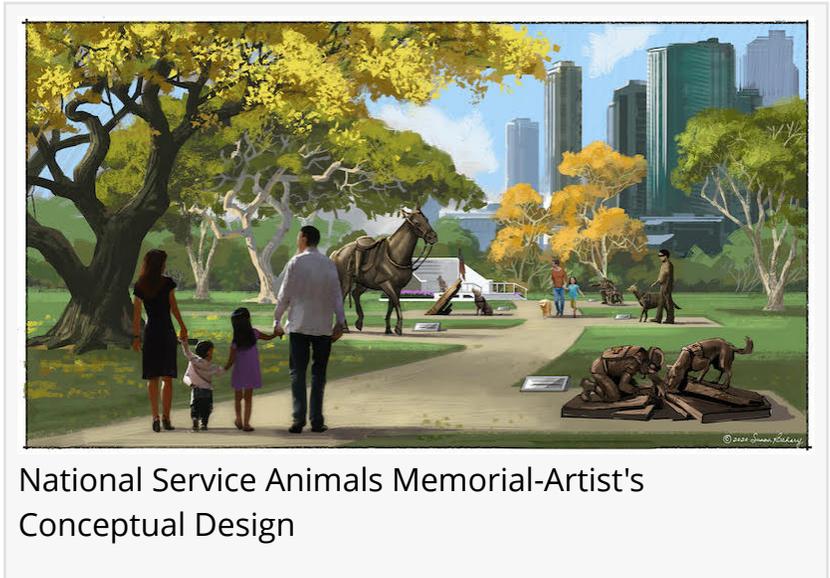


# NSAM Inaugural Awards go to Great Animals, Organizations, & Individuals throughout U.S. History

*National Service Animals Memorial is Authorized by Congress to Build a National Memorial in the Nation's Capital for Service Animals and their Handlers*

SAN RAFAEL, CA, USA, September 29, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Contact: Susan Bahary  
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National Service Animals Memorial-Artist's Conceptual Design

Group authorized by Congress to create National Service Animals

Memorial in DC announces national award winners at their inaugural event honoring great animals and handlers of past and present and celebrating the passage of their bill.

-National Service Animals Memorial is building a national Memorial in Washington D.C. to Service Animals and their Handlers

“

The National Service Animals Memorial will be a place of honor, inspiration, education, and healing and will finally give service animals and their handlers the recognition they have long deserved.”

*Susan Bahary*

On September 28th, the National Service Animals Memorial, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (NSAM), held its Inaugural Purple Poppy Awards and Fundraiser where they announced nine outstanding national award winners to a captivated crowd and celebrated the passage of their bill authorizing them to build their Memorial in Washington, D.C. The memorial honors both the service and sacrifice of service animals and their handlers since the founding of our country and the human-animal bond

- Person of the Year went to Dr. Bonita M. Bergin for inventing the concept of service dogs Dr. Bonita M. Bergin said, “I’m deeply honored for this award, more so because it really honors Kerry and Abdul, the first service dog partnership: Kerry, a severe quadriplegic willing to try my insane

idea when everybody else said it couldn't be done, and Abdul, a Golden Retriever/Lab cross, for his generosity of spirit, opening life's possibilities for Kerry as her helpmate and best friend."

- Animal of the Year went to Ricochet the first surfing therapy dog in the U.S. "Judy Fridono, owner and trainer of surf dog Ricochet wrote in an acceptance letter, "The connection Ricochet had with service members and veterans with PTSD defied present-day scientific understanding. She knew what they needed, and she provided it. She balanced lives and balanced boards! Thank you for this beautiful and meaningful award."

- Organization of the Year went to Canine Companions. "As the first organization to train service dogs for people with physical disabilities, Canine Companions is looking forward to a permanent site honoring the life-changing work of assistance animals with the National Service Animal Monument," said Paige Mazzoni, Canine Companions chief executive officer. It's truly an honor to receive the inaugural Purple Poppy Award on behalf of Canine Companions and all assistance animals across the country."



NATIONAL  
SERVICE ANIMALS  
MEMORIAL

*Honoring All Service Animals and Their Handlers*

National Service Animals Memorial -Logo



NSAM Inaugural Purple Poppy Awards and Fundraiser-L-R: Susan Bahary, Laurie Greenhut, Pam Rice, Kathi Pugh/dog Zola, George Haynes, Bonita Bergin, Jim Hands, Chelsea White/dog Brooke, Toni Kiser, Christina Ramos, Paige Mazzoni, Colleen Shannon/dog Amador,

The Six Hall of Fame Award recipients included:

- George Washington and his horses Nelson and Blueskin accepted by Christina Ramos, Vice Regent of the California State Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution who gave an insightful overview of animals serving our country during war.
- The Seeing Eye® as the first seeing eye organization in the U.S. accepted by CFOO James Hands who said, "In 1929, The Seeing Eye became the first organization in the U.S. to train and provide citizens with Seeing Eye® dogs. Since then, more than 18,000 matches have been made between people and Seeing Eye dogs."
- Carrier pigeon GI Joe's award was accepted by the Sr. Registrar and Director of Collections Management at the National WWII Museum, who expressed gratitude for The National WWII Museum's support and recognition of animals in war and for the award and all it represents.
- The family of the country's first dog of service Stubby of WWI expressed their appreciation for

this important award, the mission of the National Service Animals Memorial, and the meaning of the Purple Poppy for service animals.

- The U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program Director, Mark Xitco wrote in a letter of appreciation to NSAM, "Over the decades, over 600 bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions have served. The animals allow us to do what others can't—missions too tough for men or machines alone."
- A four-pound Yorkshire Terrier of WW2, Smoky, who was the first therapy dog on record and an unofficial war dog hero whose award was accepted by Toni Kiser of The National WW2 Museum on behalf of the Wynne Family, who she has known for years.

NSAM Founder, Susan Bahary said, "The National Service Animals Memorial will be a place of honor, inspiration, education, and healing and will finally give service animals and their handlers the recognition they have long deserved. We are honored to be able to create this national treasure in the nation's Capital."

NSAM also formally announced their campaign to raise funds for Site Selection and to build the memorial.

More details are available on NSAM's website:

<https://nationalserviceanimalsmemorial.org/nsam-inaugural-purple-poppy-awards-and-fundraiser/>

To schedule an interview with Susan Bahary and/or some of the awardees, please call Susan Bahary at 415-531-9212, or email her at [Susan@NSAMProject.org](mailto:Susan@NSAMProject.org). NSAM Website:

[www.NSAMProject.org](http://www.NSAMProject.org)

During an interview, Susan Bahary, Founder and Chair, and the awardees can talk about:

- Why this Memorial is so important and what are the next steps toward its completion?
- The special bond between service animals and their handlers and human companions
- The vital work of war, search and rescue, law enforcement, assistance, guide, and other service animals.
- The Purple Poppy® campaign and its relationship to NSAM

As a nation of animal lovers, Americans will want to honor the canines and other animals that fought for our country and help veterans and civilians achieve independence every day.

Susan Bahary

National Service Animals Memorial

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