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Press Release

Pets for Vets Ventura County Announces First Successful Match

Thousand Oaks, CA, October 30, 2015, Pets for Vets Ventura County Chapter (PFV-VCC) announced today its first successful match between veteran Allen J. Ghimenti and Jetstar, a Lab/German Shepherd mix. “The PFV-VCC launched May 1, 2014, and in just over a year, the organization has been approved as a 501c3 organization, assembled a team of volunteers and trainers, been active in various military-focused outreach events, and secured an initial donation pool enabling its first successful match,” said Mardu Lydick, PFV-VCC Chapter Director. “Despite the accomplishments we made as a team this year in building our chapter, the true reward came when I saw the look on Allen’s face as we first introduced him to Jetstar.” Jetstar was adopted from the Lancaster Animal Care Center, one of six centers operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control.

Allen J. Ghimenti, a Thousand Oaks resident and a Vietnam veteran who served in the 101st Aviation Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army and was past National President of the 101st Airborne Association, first learned of PFV VCC when a friend told him about the organization after his dog of 15 years passed away. “I was looking for a companion, a dog who could go on walks with me to help me lose weight,” said Allen. “While it’s a lengthy process to get a emotional support dog because of all the training and protocol involved, I would definitely recommend Pets for Vets to other veterans out there who may be in need. Having a dog -- another living creature who helps me focus on today -- is very important because Jetstar has needs, it forces me to live in the now and keeps me in touch with reality.”

“Many veterans suffer from physical and emotional injuries relating to their time in service, making it difficult to transition back to civilian life,” explained Mardu. “Pets for Vets can assist because studies have shown that companion animals significantly improve mental and physical health. At the same time, many shelter dogs face euthanasia and our trainers can rehabilitate these dogs and find one that’s a perfect match for the veteran’s personality, lifestyle and other needs. It’s a win-win situation, saving two lives at once.”

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The match process can take one to three months, depending on the veteran's needs and the dog. Once the application is received, it is thoroughly reviewed by the Chapter Director and approval is sought from the veteran's therapist to ensure he or she is ready to care for a pet. The trainer then meets with the veteran to assess his or her needs and pet preferences. Upon completion of that step, the trainer searches shelters and pet rescues to find the right breed, size, temperament and behavior that would be best suited for the veteran. "This part of the process can take a lot of time," explained Bob Horrell, volunteer dog trainer who matched Allen and Jetstar. "We try to ensure we aren't picking a pet that has any existing behavioral, aggression or anxiety issues that need correcting before the training can commence."

All out of pocket costs from adoption fees, veterinary care, licensing, microchipping, spay/neuter is paid for by PFV-VCC. In addition, PFV-VCC provides the veteran a Welcome Kit that includes everything from a collar/leash to a bed, crate, toys, treats and grooming items with a value of nearly \$500.

About Pets for Vets – National Organization

The Pets for Vets program -- founded by animal trainer and graduate of Cornell University, Clarissa Black -- is dedicated to supporting veterans and providing a second chance for shelter pets by rescuing, training and pairing them with American's veterans who could benefit from a companion animal. During her experience in working with therapy dogs in the company of America's veterans and wounded soldiers, Clarissa saw firsthand how important animals can be in recovery. Her own experience with PTSD has given her a unique perspective on the training each dog receives, as well as being able to recognize what each veteran needs from his or her companion animal. Pets for Vets now has 33 chapters located across the country. Veterans in a chapter area who could benefit from a companion animal and are able to care for one are eligible for the program. For more information, visit www.petsforvets.com.

About Pets for Vets – Ventura County Chapter

A serendipitous melding of their two passions – veteran causes and animal rescue -- Mardu and Ron Lydick founded the Ventura County Chapter of Pets for Vets on May 1, 2014. Longtime supporters of the Soldier's Project, the Gary Sinise Foundation, and Wounded Warriors, as well as being involved with animal rescue for over 15 years, the Lydicks sought to build an organization that would provide a win-win way to give back to America's troops who have given so much for us. The Ventura County Chapter serves the cities of Thousand Oaks, Oxnard, Camarillo, Simi Valley, Moorpark, Fillmore, Ojai, Port Hueneme, Santa Paula and Ventura. For more information, visit www.ventura-ca.petsforvets.com

About County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Control

The County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Care and Control is one of the largest and most progressive animal control agencies in the United States. Our six animal care centers (Agoura, Baldwin Park, Carson/Gardena, Castaic, Downey and Lancaster) serve unincorporated Los Angeles County and 48 contract cities with a combined total population of over 3 million residents. The animal care centers offer a wide variety of potential pets for people to choose. Most of their animals are either strays or pets turned in by owners who are no longer able to keep them.

