



Liberty Hall's Newest Duo

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During Bob's first four months as a Liberty Hall resident, he has had the opportunity to begin pursuing a long-desired career path – one he is not traveling alone.

His companion is Zoey Marie, a three-month-old purebred German Shepard, being trained by Bob as a service dog.



Bob, Liberty Hall resident

Zoey Marie is quite popular at Liberty Hall, Cazenovia Recovery's community residence for male military Veterans on the grounds of the Batavia, NY Veterans Administration Medical Center. The program serves homeless Veterans in recovery while supporting their mental health and physical well-being.

Bob, who worked in a canine security unit while serving in the Air Force, wanted to start a not-for-profit to match service dogs with Veterans who have PTSD and other health issues. A big step toward making his

dream come true was the generous donation of Zoey Marie (valued at \$1500) by Cripple Creek German Shepards' owners Fred and Barbara Echtner. They said Bob's intentions "touched our hearts." Bob refers to the Echtners as "my heaven-sent angels."

"I've always been calmer and happier with a dog," Bob said, noting that Zoey Marie gives him "help and hope" in his own recovery. "And, I want to give back to Veterans."

He will soon begin a 24-week course from the Animal Behavioral College to become a nationally-certified PTSD therapy service dog trainer. Bob's tuition is covered by an educational program for Veterans. He is already training Zoey Marie, who will stay with him permanently. He intends to have her puppies become service dogs.



Zoey Marie, Bob's service dog

Liberty Hall staff members support Bob's efforts and are delighted by Zoey Marie, for

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Staffing Info

Let's Congratulate:

Ashley Skubis is now a Residence Monitor at Casa Di Vita

Ricardo Wright is now a Counselor at Supportive Living

Let's Welcome:

Ashley Barnes, Facility Asisstant at Casa Di Vita

William Harris, Intern at Cazenovia Manor

Christopher Morgan, Residence Monitor at Turning Point House

Cazenovia Creators & Catchers:

Ed Cichon and Andrea Ocasio nominated Tangela Watson-Bogan for her consistent dedication.

Claudia Rejman nominated Carolyn Hutchen for keeping her positive attitude while training new staff, staying on top of her former responsibilities, and learning an entirely new position.

The winner of this quarter's gift card is Greg Fulgham. Congratulations!

Our next quarterly drawing will be held in June. Be sure to nominate your fellow employees to enter them to win a \$25 gift card!

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whom they bring in stuffed animals and treats. “She’s the queen here at the VA,” he said. “Everybody loves her. It’s a blessing to see her make people smile.”

Bob enjoys this puppy’s attention and affection each day and wants fellow Veterans to benefit from similar match-ups. He is strongly motivated to do so. “It makes my heart whole,” he said. Bob’s long-range plan is to have a farm that welcomes abandoned animals. “I would like to help them find their forever homes,” he said.



Zoey and Bob outside of Liberty Hall

Wellness Committee Challenges

Agency employees have just finished participating in the Wellness Committee’s most recent challenge, Stress Less. It promoted self-care and relaxation, both of which are important for trauma-informed organizations. Stress Less evolved over eight weeks and helped employees focus on getting enough sleep. It also sought to engage employees in exercise and self-development. Up next is Five and Fit. This challenge will encourage employees to eat five servings of fruits or vegetables a day and exercise for 30 minutes or more five times a week. Agency employees will learn more about Five and Fit next month.



Governance and Leadership

In order for an agency to become trauma-informed, there are many changes that need to occur at various levels in accordance with the five principles of trauma-informed care (safety, trust, collaboration, choice, and empowerment). The most important factor needed to initiate and sustain system change within an organization is whether those in leadership and governance support and invest in a trauma-informed approach. Sue Bissonette, our Executive Director, continuously demonstrates her support and investment in creating and sustaining a trauma-informed agency. In the past three months alone, Sue has created an email that encourages collaboration and empowers employees to send her their ideas. She has also supported the implementation of a suggestion box that allows employees to make anonymous suggestions to ensure emotional safety, trust, and support. Most recently, Sue has announced the first agency-wide “Discuss Plus” meeting to converse with staff about the changes that are coming to Cazenovia, and what that will mean for them. From these few examples alone, it is clear to see that our Executive Director is leading by example.

