



Honoring Our Dogs Who Serve

The History of K-9 Veterans Day in Virginia and the U.S.

Dogs for Defense

In January 1942, one month after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into World War II, a group of dog-minded individuals established "Dogs for Defense."

The organization was created to encourage civilians to donate their K-9 pets to the war effort to serve as sentry, scout, patrol, mine and messenger dogs. Response was overwhelming and two months later, on March 13, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson authorized the Quartermaster General to include dogs in war plans and in August, the first War Dog Reception and Training Center was established near Front Royal, in Warren County, Virginia, at the U.S. Army's Remount Station. A few months later, a K-9 Quartermaster Corps training center was created at Fort Robinson, Nebraska.

Dogs accepted into the program underwent a rigorous 8-12 week training program similar to the basic training of human recruits. Upon completion, each dog was sent to one of four specialized programs to become a sentry dog, scout or patrol dog, messenger, or mine dog.

By 1944, the War Department had created Quartermaster Dog Platoons each consisting of 20 enlisted men, 18 scout dogs and six messenger dogs. Seven of these platoons were deployed in the European theater and eight in the Pacific.

One of the most famous of these World War II dogs was Chips, a German Shepherd trained in Front Royal. Chips saved countless lives when he attacked an enemy machine gun nest and despite being wounded, continued to attack forcing the enemy crew to surrender.

A Proud History of Service

Thousands of these trained dogs have continued to serve our U.S. Military with honor, dignity and valor in the decades since World War II serving in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan and in other conflicts. Today, dogs also serve as custom dogs, search and rescue

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dogs, border patrol dogs, and secret service dogs helping to protect our citizens at home and abroad.

In fact, thousands of dogs from throughout the U.S. and even our allied nations continue to be trained in Front Royal at what has evolved in the Combined Enforcement Training Center now under the management of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Honoring These Heroes

After serving as a military dog handler during the Vietnam War, Joseph J. White pioneered a national effort to designate the anniversary of the founding of the K-9 Quartermaster Corps, March 13, as K-9 Veterans Day – a day to honor the loyal dogs that faithfully serve and have served our communities and our country.

White had personally witnessed how dogs saved thousands of lives in combat and he felt that they deserved to be recognized. He has since passed away but others, such as the Hanover Hounds K-9 Search and Rescue Team in Virginia, have continued White's quest.

In 2012, the Hanover Hounds was successful in asking the Hanover County Board of Supervisors to recognize K-9 Veterans Day throughout the county. In 2013, Delegate John Cox, who represented Hanover County in the Virginia House of Delegates, was the chief patron of a resolution to proclaim March 13 as K-9 Veterans Day throughout the entire Commonwealth each year.

The resolution, co-patroned by Del. Richard Anderson of Woodbridge in the House and Sen. William Stanley, Jr. of Moneta in the Senate, was passed without any opposition in the 2013 Session of the Virginia General Assembly – thus making the Old Dominion the 13th state to do so.

Now and in the future, K-9 Veterans Day will be officially observed in the Commonwealth to honor and celebrate the past and continued service of our K-9 heroes.

(For more information, please visit www.hanoverhounds.org)

