

Group looks to serve veterans' service animals

Anita R. Savio
IVN Contributing Writer

To Operation Rambo co-founder and Gulf War veteran Ray Rosa, the eponymous movie character represents the struggles of every veteran. So there was no question that Rambo was the perfect name for his German shepherd service animal. But when canine Rambo was 3 years old and needed expensive ACL surgery on two of his knees, Rosa knew of nowhere to turn for help.

"I felt devastated, lost," Rosa recalled. Rosa eventually was able to pay for the first knee via a GoFundMe account and a sympathetic veterinarian. But out of that experience, he and friend Heather Allen (also an Operation Rambo co-founder) concluded there was a need for an organization to help disabled vets pay for the medical demands of

their service animals. "There are a lot of vets who have service animals," said Allen. "What are the odds a vet can afford a \$3,000 to \$4,000 medical bill?"

Luckily Allen has the background to help make their project a reality, with three and a half years' experience as the training and development director for the Southern Oregon Goodwill Veterans Program as well as experience as a freelance grant writer. Operation Rambo now has official nonprofit status, a five member board, and is in the process of seeking grants, planning events and building community partnerships with other veterans and animal welfare organizations.

Currently the organization works closely with the Rogue Valley Humane Society and Dogs for the Deaf.

However, along the way the mission of Operation Rambo has broadened. A dog breeder in Selma donated a puppy to Rosa, and

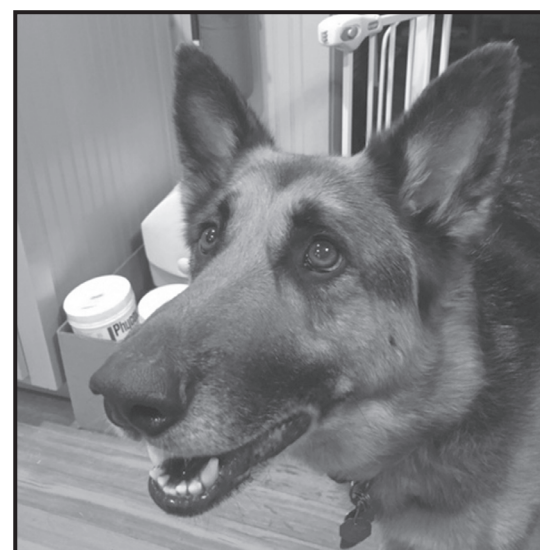
then someone else donated a second puppy. Now, with the help of Operation Rambo board member and dog trainer Ken LaFlamme, the organization has taken on the project of training the puppies, hopefully, to be service dogs, which will then be provided to disabled veterans at little or no cost.

"So many things have happened," said Allen, "we've kind of rolled with that."

But, she added, help with the medical expenses of service animals continues to be the primary focus, and where fundraising efforts are being directed.

This year, a major fundraiser is planned for the Ratrod -o-Rama car show, held yearly in Pottsville. Supporters can also donate via the website generosity.com. (Look for the little magnifying glass icon toward the upper right to search for Operation Rambo.) Dog food, treats and toys for the dogs they are raising are also appreciated. Operation

Rambo can be contacted at 541-441-0708 or OperationRamboUSA@yahoo.com.



Rambo

Plenty of ways to celebrate Earth Day 2017

Judy Hoyle
IVN Contributing Writer

It is time to awaken your green spirit with Earth Day activities, scheduled for April 22.

The Illinois Valley Garden Club will celebrate their 90th anniversary at Jubilee Park from 1 to 3 p.m.

Activities include a plant sale, displays, snacks, games and a special tree scavenger hunt.

The hunt is open to children from preschool to high school to join in the fun with the assignment of finding specific trees within Cave Junction.

Around 30 trees will be marked with two ribbons, one green and one pink to signify that the Garden Club was started by women with green

thumbs.

Each tree will have a bag attached to it with information specific to the tree – the type of tree, year it was planted and the name of the person it honors, if it is a memorial tree.

Beginning at noon, in advance of the 1 p.m. start, contest participants will be given color-coded cards and pencils on which to write information as they locate each tree.

Adults need to accompany young children for the activities and prizes will be awarded at 3 p.m.

"Previous years, the club has celebrated its significant anniversaries at club meetings, but this is the first time the entire community will be involved," said Kathy Lombardo, club

secretary.

One of the displays at the celebration will be entries from the club's annual photography contest.

The club was founded Feb. 12, 1927 and its actual anniversary was celebrated at the February meeting when members and guests were treated to a talk by local historian Roger Brandt.

"We had standing room only that day, as the public is always invited to our meetings," said Lombardo.

The club meets from 12:30 to 3 p.m. on the third Friday of the month, September through May at Immanuel Methodist Church, 200 W. Watkins.

The club is involved in many activities including spring and fall plant sales and assisting

with the community garden located south of the I.V. Safe House Alliance office at the corner of Kerby and Lister. Other club gardens around Cave Junction include locations at Laurel Cemetery, the I.V. Senior Center and the I.V. Visitor Center as well as providing plants and assistance to the library and the Smokejumper Base Museum at the I.V. Airport.

The group also awards one or two scholarships to I.V. High School graduating seniors each year, along with teaching the Master Gardener "Seeds to Supper" classes, planting memorial trees and picking up litter along their assigned portion of Caves Highway.

"We try to keep the community on a positive track," said Lombardo.

Another Earth Day activity will be the new March for Science event in Grants Pass and will also be taking place in Washington, D.C. and in 438 other locations around the nation.

The local march will begin at 10 a.m. at Riverside Park and is being organized by retired I.V. High School Principal Linda Hugle.

All are invited to join the march in support of scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Parks and the U.S. Forest Service, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and NASA who feel they are being silenced through budget cuts and censure.

"Let's show the work that Americans support science and are not fooled by 'alternative facts,'" Hugle stated.

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