



## Repeatedly abandoned dog becomes Afghanistan veteran's best friend

Josh was not looking for a best friend when he decided to adopt a companion pet. But the Marine Corps veteran got just that when he met and adopted an abandoned dog who had been cast aside by others.

### **PART OF THE STORIED 1/9**

Josh has spent his adult life in service to others.

"I am a 911 dispatcher for multiple counties, and a Medevac flight communicator, and an emergency medical technician (EMT) for a local township in New Jersey," he says. "If I'm not working a paid shift at either job, I'm volunteering as an EMT."

There is not doubt that Josh is a hero to his local community. But it was not that long ago that he put his life on the line in one of the most dangerous places on the planet. He served in Afghanistan with the Marine Corps 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, nicknamed the 'Walking Dead.'

The 1/9 was formed in WWI and de-activated in the mid-2000s before being temporarily reactivated again during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

"I served from 2009-2013 as a Military Policeman in the United States Marine Corps. I deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 with [the] 1/9. I was stationed at Camp Lejeune for the majority of my contract."

Josh's most enduring memories center on the camaraderie he experienced during his military career. Many veterans struggle to recreate those intensely close bonds after they separate, but find it lacking when they **transition to civilian life**.

"Most if not all of my memories revolve around the brothers I made while serving," he shares. "My buddy getting his truck stuck on a tank trail and getting pulled out by a Gunny in an LAV is one of the funniest."

## FILLING THE VOID

By any measure Josh leads a busy and fulfilling post-military life. Yet the death of his mother's dog left him feeling empty and motivated him to think about what he was missing.



"After my mom's dog passed away, even though he didn't live in my home, I felt a void," he shares. "I knew that having a dog that relied on me, and showed me unconditional love when I needed it the most, would fill that void."

It was by chance that Josh learned about Pets for Patriots and our **companion pet adoption program** for military veterans. He picked up a flyer about us at a local veterans fundraiser – and liked how we help veterans, shelter pets, and animal welfare organizations alike.

“I felt like it was the right fit,” he says.

## **AFGHANISTAN VETERAN MEETS ABANDONED DOG**

The Marine Corps veteran was approved into our program in mid-April 2019. But it was nearly a month later that he found his new best friend: an abandoned dog named Kale.

It is not unusual to have little or no backstory on a homeless animal. Many are found as strays, or are victims of neglect or abuse. Still others are surrendered by people who may not be forthcoming about why they are giving up their pets.

But this was not entirely the case for Kale.

“They actually had his whole history,” Josh says. “He was brought up there from a shelter in the south and was adopted by a family. The family’s schedule changed and he was re-homed to a family member, who then lost him.”

Kale spent some time as a stray before he was found and taken to the **Monmouth County SPCA**. The shelter scanned his microchip and notified the family, who did not want him back.



The abandoned dog spent about two weeks in the shelter before meeting Josh.

Since 2012, Monmouth County SPCA has partnered with us to help dogs and cats in their care find loving military homes. They reduce adoption fees for veterans in our program, all in addition to the **benefits we offer**.

So in the middle of May 2019 Josh and Kale – aptly renamed Bud – were adopted.

## **“I AM BEYOND LUCKY TO HAVE HIM”**

No one will ever know how Bud came to be in a Southern shelter. Or why his two subsequent families gave him up and did not want him back. By all accounts he is a terrific dog.

“He’s well trained and well behaved, but he was abandoned twice so he’s a bit clingy. I wish he understood when I tell him he won’t be abandoned ever again.”

Despite his anxieties Bud quickly became Josh's closest companion. The veteran did not realize how much he missed having a best friend since separating from service. And the abandoned dog seems to have missed simply being wanted and loved.

"He always has to be by my side, he's always ready to play, but he's happy to just sit there with me and relax," Josh says. "He just wants to be with me and get belly rubs. I love how he just wants to hang with me and be happy."

Luckily, it did not take long for Bud to adapt to his new life. He has visited Josh's workplace and met his co-workers. And even when he is at home he is well-behaved.

"I am beyond lucky to have him," the Afghanistan veteran says. "When I am at home we are inseparable and he makes my days so much better. Thank you again for this opportunity."

## **SERVING VETERANS, SAVING PETS**

There is a saying that one person's trash is another's treasure. Bud is an abandoned dog who was shunned not once, but three times in his relatively young life. Yet to Josh he is irreplaceable.

"My job can be stressful and depressing most days, and no matter what mood I'm in when I get home he's always there, at the door, beyond happy to see me," Josh says. "He reminds me that I'm not alone and there is a living thing that depends on me and would follow me to the ends of the earth. He's become my best friend."





At Pets for Patriots we follow up with every single adoption for at least one year.

Our outreach is critical to help prevent pets from being surrendered when routine, minor adjustment issues arise. But equally important is letting our veterans know that they are not alone – and that we are here to help if they need us.

Josh appreciates how we stay connected, and take a personal interest in him and Bud.

“It is an amazing program, and they need to know that even after adoption, it’s not over,” Josh shares. “[They] have reached out on numerous occasions just to check in, and make sure we’re doing good. It’s not just a program that sets you up for adoption, it’s one that ensures that you will be in good company for a long, long time.”

Ironically it was the passing of his mother's dog that made Josh realize that he felt a certain emptiness. But that sad event inspired him to take the positive step to adopt an abandoned dog who needed to be made whole, as well.

"He's such a loving, goofy, amazing dog," he says. "He saved me as much as I saved him."