



# BARKALERT

**SPRING 2024**





# CANINE RECRUITMENT

## BUILDING THE PARTNERSHIPS THAT SAVE LIVES

One of SDF's dearly held principles is recruiting canine search candidates for our program from among the homeless dogs in our nation's shelters, saving their lives and training them to someday save others. Finding high-drive dogs that possess all the characteristics of a successful search dog can be challenging, which is why collaboration with shelters and rescue organizations is vital.

From raising awareness to behavior assessment to performance evaluations, our Recruitment Team engages with shelters across the country to build and nurture meaningful relationships that may someday save lives. And because SDF has been around for decades, many of our partnerships have too.

First introduced to SDF in 2005, Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue and Sanctuary is one of our longest partnerships. Run solely by volunteers, Homeward Bound rescues Golden Retrievers and Golden mixes and finds them loving homes through a comprehensive adoption program. Like SDF, they offer a lifetime commitment to dogs who enter their

program, so if they're not adopted, they always have a home at the sanctuary. Homeward Bound also realizes that some dogs require a more dynamic environment than a typical pet home can provide. Happily, SDF has been able to help some of those dogs find their perfect place.

Baxter was found wandering the streets of Northern California by Homeward Bound's own founders, Mike and Jody Jones. He displayed extraordinary drive and strength—exactly the kind of dog we look for in a search candidate. Baxter joined our program, graduated from search dog training, and enjoyed a long career with Gary Durian of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, deploying multiple times to various local and national disasters, including Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. In 2010, the pair responded to the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti, combing the wreckage for 16 days and assisting other SDF teams to bring 12 people to safety. The duo deployed again to a tsunami in Japan before Baxter's retirement in 2011.

***Baxter was sponsored by Linda Heizer Seaman.***







Gizmo enjoys every minute of training, especially when the toy is involved! Photo credit: Dane Mehl

Gizmo is another Homeward Bound alum whose friendly personality won over staff, but his toy drive was the real stand-out. Gizmo's enthusiasm and natural talent earned him a place in our program, where he is currently in the senior class of search dog candidates.

Search dog training requires mastery of many skills, and often, canine candidates aren't comfortable performing them all, even if they have the aptitude to do so. For dogs who ultimately decide that urban search and rescue isn't for them, we look closely at their preferences to see if they would shine in a different job or be happiest in a pet home. Homeward Bound alum Asher is one of our recruits who decided against a career in search and is

currently looking for a family willing to help him thrive. You can read his bio and see photos of Asher and other dogs looking for a home on our website.

These are just a few of the countless dogs who have found purpose and a brighter future through collaboration between SDF and shelters like Homeward Bound. By working together to help high-drive homeless dogs achieve their potential, these partnerships safeguard not only the dogs' lives but also the lives of people in the communities where they serve.

***Gizmo is sponsored by Farmers Insurance and an anonymous donor.***



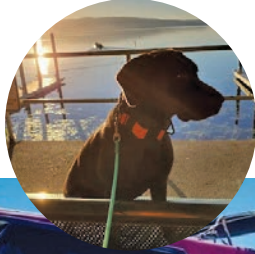
Asher decided disaster search was not for him, but he still loves to play and is looking for his "fur-ever" home! Photo credit: Dane Mehl



# CAREER CHANGE

## FORMER SEARCH CANDIDATES TURN THEIR NOSES TO CONSERVATION

Every year, SDF explores new detection careers for canine recruits who do not find their perfect fit in disaster search, including the growing field of conservation detection. As the range of conservation disciplines increases, so do opportunities for high-drive dogs to thrive while helping people and the environment. Thanks to partnerships with organizations that specialize in conservation detection, our former search candidates have found rewarding careers in the great outdoors, using their incredible noses on countless projects to improve efficiency, boost accuracy, or perform tasks that humans can't.



Moomba now uses her talented nose to help sniff out invasive mussels in California. Photo credit: Mussel Dogs

### Moomba – Mussel Dogs

This was the case for Moomba, who we recruited from Klamath Animal Shelter in Oregon after staff noted her toy drive. Ultimately, Moomba didn't like walking on rubble, so our team secured her a trial with Mussel Dogs, an organization providing canine detection of invasive quagga and zebra mussels in California waterways.

Native to Eastern Europe, quagga and zebra mussels hitch rides on watercraft and, with no natural predators, quickly establish colonies with catastrophic effects. Their swift proliferation can clog intake structures like water treatment facilities and power plants and destroy ecosystems by filtering plankton out of the water, robbing native mussels and fish of their food source. The threat these mussels pose is so grave that not even one must be allowed into pristine bodies of water, and that's where Moomba and Mussel Dogs come in.

By sniffing along the bottom of a boat, a detection dog's keen nose can determine if quagga or zebra mussels are present and prevent possible infestation. More impressively, these dogs can even detect *veligers*, the microscopic larvae of zebra mussels, so that invasion by the pesky mollusks can be averted as early as possible.



Aladar enjoys every minute of his work in the Pacific Northwest, helping conservationists learn about and protect plant and animal species. Photo credit: Conservation Canines

### Aladar – Conservation Canines

Another of our candidates, Aladar, was seized from his owners by Salt Lake County Animal Services after warnings for mistreatment went unheeded.

Aladar's love of playing ball got him into SDF's search program; his dislike of some aspects of disaster zones made him eligible for a career change. He was adopted by Conservation Canines, part of the Center for Conservation Biology at the University of Washington, and immediately began training to detect carnivore scat for a wolf migration project in the Cascade Mountains.

Because dogs can learn practically any scent, the projects they can assist with are endless, and lucky pups like Aladar remain engaged with their jobs by learning to identify new odors in novel environments. Aladar's most recent assignment is learning to detect illegal timber in vacuumed air samples from shipping containers, which will help port authorities screen cargo for environmental contraband with less impact on operations.





*Mamba spends many of her days in the field, making a “paws-itive” impact in the world of conservation. Photo credit: k9InSCENTive*

### **Mamba – k9InSCENTive**

Former stray Maggie entered search training with a serious ball obsession and great potential as a search dog—until her medical screening revealed the development of mild hip dysplasia. High-energy Maggie still craved a job, so she went for a trial with k9InSCENTive, LLC, to test her skills in a lower-impact environmental detection career. She excelled at the work and was added to the k9InSCENTive team owned by Lauralea Oliver, who renamed her Mamba.

Mamba and her canine coworkers assist their handlers with data collection for environmental impact studies at wind farms. Formerly done by people alone, a human data collector would walk sections of the wind farm in a grid pattern, looking for the remains of birds and bats killed by turbines. This was a slow process since wind farms can be thousands of acres in size. Accuracy was also an issue as identification was done visually, and animal remains were only sometimes intact.

Putting dogs on the job dramatically improved efficiency and precision. Lauralea, a veteran of these studies, says that detection rates increased substantially with dogs in this role.

Dogs are so much better at this than humans that the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Forest Service, and others have started making it a requirement that detection dogs assist in their studies, Lauralea shared.

Faster and more accurate data collection has made it easier to devise mitigation strategies that protect vulnerable animals. “[Wind farm operators] can make efforts to minimize impact based on migration patterns, season, and temperature,” Lauralea says, for example, temporarily shutting down turbines in a flight path of migrating birds until they are safely through.

**Whether sniffing out invasive species, preventing the transport of contraband, or saving avian lives, our career change dogs are using their unique talents to positively impact our world. Just as importantly, from their perspective, they are having the time of their lives doing a job they love. As the field of conservation detection evolves, we can’t wait to help even more high-drive dogs step into new and exciting opportunities that benefit us all.**



# DEPLOYMENT SPOTLIGHT

## TWO SDF-TRAINED TEAMS DEPLOY TO BUILDING EXPLOSION IN TIJUANA, MEXICO

On October 20, 2023, SDF-trained search teams Luis Garcia & Montecito and Fidel Gomez & Gemma of Baja California Task Force 3 responded to a building explosion in the Las Cumbres neighborhood of Tijuana, Mexico. The explosion, caused by a possible gas leak, occurred around 6:35 a.m., destroying a house in Privada Sierra Vizcaino and leaving the inhabitants trapped under rubble, according to authorities.

Rafeal Carillo Venegas, Director of the Tijuana Fire Department, confirmed that two victims died in the explosion. In addition to the destroyed house, the blast also caused damage to nearby properties, collapsing the fence at one home and breaking the windows of another. Search Team Luis Garcia & Montecito cleared the immediate area to ensure no survivors were trapped in the debris.

As we send our heartfelt condolences to those affected by this tragedy, we are grateful for our search teams' swift and efficient actions and their commitment to supporting their community in times of crisis.



Search Dog Montecito checks the rubble of a building destroyed by an explosion in Tijuana, Mexico. Photo credit: Fidel Gomez

## CANINE TEAMS JOIN SEARCH FOR HIKERS AMID TOUGH CONDITIONS IN CATSKILL MOUNTAINS



Brian Girard & Keila prepare to search the area for the missing hikers. Photo credit: NY-TF2

On August 18, 2023, SDF-trained canine search teams Brian Girard & Keila and Brook Rowley & Echo of New York Task Force 2 responded to a report of two hikers lost in the Catskill Mountains.

The two missing men, ages 18 and 20, were among a group of 16 hikers and four counselors from a camp in South Fallsburg, NY. The lost hikers, who both have autism, were separated from their group on Thursday afternoon, prompting an extensive search through mountainous terrain. The canine search teams joined dozens of state police, park rangers, volunteers, and members of the Orthodox Jewish community in the search for the missing men in less-than-ideal weather conditions.

Retired handler Greg Gould, who was supervising the canine search, reported it had rained hard the day before, and they began their search at around 10 p.m. on Thursday. Slippery, wet ground and dense fog made

the search conditions challenging and forced them to keep the search dogs on leashes at times for safety.

The canine portion of the search was called off at 5:30 a.m. because of an incoming thunderstorm, but the missing men were subsequently spotted by other search personnel and brought to safety, suffering only minor injuries.

Greg Gould shared, "The two canines and the handlers and spotters worked a very difficult search last night. It was extremely foggy, and the terrain was extremely difficult and slippery. They performed well above what was asked of them and conditions were anything but normal."

New York Task Force 2 remains one of our roster's busiest groups. This is the eleventh deployment for Brook Rowley & Echo since 2019, including seven missing person searches, one collapsed structure, and three hurricanes. Brian Girard & Keila have deployed 21 times since 2017, including thirteen missing persons, three structure collapses, one flood, and four hurricanes.

We are incredibly proud of these teams for their history of service and their consistent readiness to assist communities in need.

**Montecito is sponsored by Julie Croker.**

**Gemma was recruited from Save a Stray and is sponsored by Carol George and Roger Stewart.**

**Echo was recruited from the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society and is sponsored by Arc Aspicio.**

**Keila was recruited from the Brightside Animal Center and is sponsored by The DeMartini Family.**



# NEW SEARCH TEAMS PAIRED

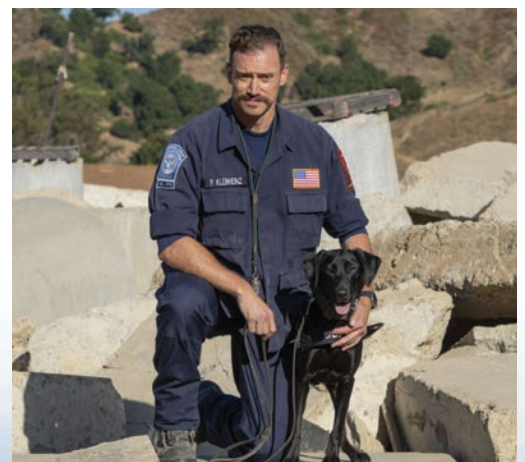
WE ARE THRILLED TO WELCOME THESE NEW TEAMS PAIRED BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023, WHO HAVE WORKED DILIGENTLY TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS AND FOSTER THE COLLABORATION THAT DEFINES SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS. DURING THEIR CAREERS TOGETHER, THEY WILL DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO ADVANCING THEIR TRAINING AND STRENGTHENING THEIR BONDS TO PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE SUPPORT TO COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE RECENTLY PAIRED PARTNERS AND NEWEST MEMBERS OF SDF'S ROSTER:



**BRANDON BUDD & OTTER**

Sacramento Fire Department  
California Task Force 7  
Recruited by Trevor Lawrence  
Sponsor: Maria Hindenes - Hindenes Animal Trust



**PHILLIP KLEINHEINZ & SASSAFRAS**

Santa Clara Fire Department  
California Task Force 3  
Donated by Kaiser K9  
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family





# CERTIFICATIONS

TO REMAIN ACTIVE AND DEPLOYABLE WITH THEIR TASK FORCE, EACH TEAM MUST PASS AN EVALUATION EVERY THREE YEARS, DEMONSTRATING THEIR MASTERY OF CRITICAL SKILLS AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AS PARTNERS. WE ARE INCREDIBLY PROUD OF EACH OF THESE TEAMS FOR THEIR DEDICATION TO TRAINING, DEVOTION TO THEIR PARTNERS, AND COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE TEAMS ON THEIR RECENT CERTIFICATIONS:



**EDWARD CHEA & NALA**

Certification: November 2023  
Los Angeles Fire Department  
California Task Force 1  
Recruited from Southern California  
Golden Retriever Rescue  
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family



**LEE CULLEY & TOM**

Re-certification: November 2023  
Utah Task Force 1  
Recruited from Los Banos Animal Shelter  
Recruited by Heidi Miller  
Sponsors: Jill Bee and Loren Glasser  
Named in memory of Tom McGrath



**JEREMY DEMOTT & CHIRP**

Certification: July 2023  
Chesapeake Fire Department  
Virginia Task Force 2  
Recruited from Rescue Ranch  
Sponsors: Doris and Howard Busloff



**ROBERT GEORGE & SHADOW**

Re-certification: November 2023  
Los Angeles County Fire Department  
California Task Force 2  
Recruited from Rescue Ranch  
Sponsors: Joyce and Alex Carasa



**LOUIS GUDIEL & GORDON**

Certification: November 2023  
Los Angeles County Fire Department  
California Task Force 2  
Recruited from Tooele City Animal Shelter  
Recruited by Trevor Lawrence  
Sponsor: Julie Croker



**STEVE MACDONALD & MOLLY**

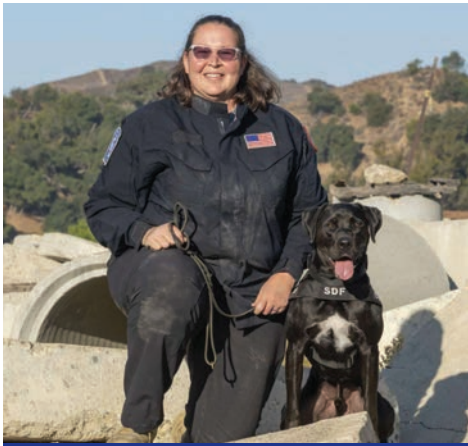
Re-certification: July 2023  
Nebraska Task Force 1  
Recruited from Salt Lake County Animal Shelter  
Recruited by Trevor Lawrence  
Sponsors: Tracy and Rascal



**SEAN MONVILLE & NANCI**

Certification: November 2023  
Orange County Fire Authority  
California Task Force 5  
Recruited from Bollinger County Stray Project  
Sponsors: M. Lawrence Lallande and Nicole Lallande  
Named in memory of Nanci Denney Bergin





**BRANDY OUTLAW & PLUTO**

Certification: July 2023  
Chesapeake Fire Department  
Virginia Task Force 2  
Donated by a private owner  
Recruited by Trevor Lawrence  
Sponsors: Nahikian Family Foundation, Anonymous



**ANDREW PITCHER & STORM**

Re-certification: July 2023  
Nebraska Task Force 1  
Recruited from Indiana K9 Learning Center  
Sponsor: Julie Croker



**SEAN QUIGLEY & GENO**

Re-certification: July 2023  
Los Angeles County Fire Department  
California Task Force 2  
Donated by a private owner



**PAUL REYES & NELLIE**

Certification: November 2023  
California Task Force 8  
Donated by a private owner



**MARK SCHROEDER & KODA**

Re-certification: July 2023  
Nebraska Task Force 1  
Recruited from Lab Rescue OK, Inc.  
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family



**MARK STEVENSON & RUGER**

Certification: November 2023  
Los Angeles Fire Department  
California Task Force 1  
Donated by a private owner  
Recruited by Trevor Lawrence  
Sponsor: Seline Karakaya



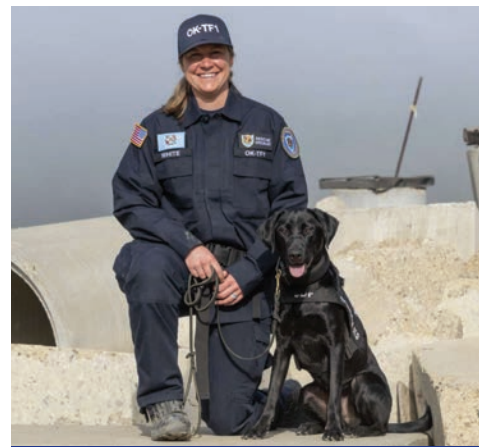
**KEVIN TATRO & DEMPSEY**

Certification: October 2023  
Iowa Task Force 1  
Recruited from Sioux Falls Area Humane Society  
Recruited by South Dakota Canine Center  
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family



**RUDY VALENCIA & TOPA**

Re-certification: November 2023  
Berkeley Fire Department  
California Task Force 4  
Recruited from Western Hills Humane  
Recruited by South Dakota Canine Center  
Sponsor: Ann Cooluris



**JESSICA WHITE & ALDER**

Certification: November 2023  
Oklahoma City Fire Department  
Oklahoma Task Force 1  
Recruited from Kaiser K9  
Sponsor: Julie Croker



# RETIREMENTS

WITH HEARTFELT GRATITUDE, WE THANK THESE TEAMS FOR THEIR EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AS THEY CONCLUDE THEIR CAREERS IN DISASTER SEARCH TOGETHER. WE WISH THEM A FULFILLING FUTURE AS THEY EMBARK ON A NEW CHAPTER AND ENJOY MEANINGFUL TIME WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.



**BAILEY**

**Years of Service: 2016-2023**

Handler: Robert Goertzen  
Los Angeles Fire Department  
California Task Force 1  
Recruited from Sioux City Adoption  
& Rescue Center  
Recruited by South Dakota Canine Center  
Sponsors: Linda Heizer Seaman, Nancy F. Link



**FRISCO**

**Years of Service: 2018-2023**

Handler: Gary Durian  
Los Angeles County Fire Department  
California Task Force 2  
Recruited from Columbia Humane Society  
Sponsors: Mary and Jeff Kroll



**GUNNER**

**Years of Service: 2012-2023**

Handler: Alex Mengell  
Alameda County Fire Department  
California Task Force 4  
Recruited from Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society  
Recruited by Heidi Miller  
Sponsors: Marith Levers, Carol Marengo,  
Kira and Bradley J. Haas Fund



**ROCKET**

**Years of Service: 2014-2023**

Handler: Michael Stornetta  
Sonoma County Fire District  
California Task Force 4  
Donated by the Bergquist Family  
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family





# RAINBOW BRIDGE

A LIFETIME WITH OUR CHERISHED COMPANIONS AND PARTNERS IS NEVER LONG ENOUGH, BUT WE'RE GRATEFUL FOR EACH PRECIOUS MOMENT WE WERE GIVEN. THESE EXTRAORDINARY DOGS WILL BE HONORED ON OUR CANINE MEMORIAL WALL AS A TRIBUTE TO THEIR YEARS OF SERVICE, THE LIVES THEY TOUCHED, AND THE SPECIAL PLACE THEY HOLD IN ALL OUR HEARTS.



**MAXIM**

**February 1, 2009 – August 12, 2023**

Handler: Luis Garcia  
Tijuana Fire Department  
Baja California Task Force 3  
Recruited from Humane Society of Del Norte  
Recruited by Laura Rathe  
Sponsors: Otilia and Emma Diaz



**SKYE**

**November 16, 2010 – November 11, 2023**

Handler: Andrea Sutcliffe  
Texas Task Force 1  
Recruited from Western Hills Humane Society  
Recruited by South Dakota Canine Center  
Sponsors: Herbert H. and Barbara C. Dow Foundation,  
Julie Brandau Community Service Memorial Project



**HOSS**

**October 17, 2017 – August 10, 2023**

Handler: Alex Wallbrett  
San Diego Fire-Rescue  
California Task Force 8  
Donated by a private owner  
Recruited by Trevor Lawrence  
Sponsors: Walt and Faith Kalback



**VITA**

**May 27, 2013 – November 27, 2023**

Handler: Garreth Miller  
San Francisco Fire Department  
California Task Force 3  
Recruited from Sioux City Animal Adoption  
& Rescue Center  
Recruited by South Dakota Canine Center  
Sponsor: The Joel and Dena Gambord Family  
Named after Vita Franco



**WINNIE**

**September 17, 2010 – August 22, 2023**

Handler: Brandon Andersen  
Sacramento Metro Fire  
California Task Force 7  
Recruited from Herding Rescue Dogs of Wyoming  
Recruited by South Dakota Canine Center  
Sponsor: The Lois and Al Friedman Family  
Named in memory of Winifred (Winnie) Freeman





6800 Wheeler Canyon Road  
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888.459.4376  
[www.searchdogfoundation.org](http://www.searchdogfoundation.org)



**Thank you**  
**for being *Part of the Search!***