



Celebrating 5 Years of Resilience and Service!

This year marks a huge milestone for Operation Freedom Paws on Vancouver Island – we are celebrating five incredible years of service and growth. As of today, 61 service dog teams of veterans, first responders, and civilians, have successfully graduated from the program.

What started as a simple visit to Operation Freedom Paws (OFP) in San Martin, California, and a generous invitation from Mary Cortani, OFP Founder and Executive Director, to launch the transformative program on Vancouver Island – the first in Canada. Mary’s mentorship, unwavering support, and belief in our vision have been instrumental in our success. We can say with full certainty that without Mary’s guidance, we would not be where we are today – providing vital support to those who need it most. Over five years, OFPC has blossomed into a life-changing program for veterans, first responders, and civilians.

We knew the road ahead would be filled with challenges, but as we launched OFP Canada during a global pandemic, they were not the ones we expected. We faced countless obstacles, from navigating the complexities of health and safety regulations to raising money to fund the program so that it could meet the needs of those we serve. Like many small businesses and organizations, we struggled. Throughout the adversity, our focus remained clear: saving lives on both ends of the leash.

Our donors and funders have helped us keep the vision of our core value of ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent anyone from accessing this life-changing support. That’s why the program is completely free for veterans, first responders, and civilians. Only through the generosity of our donors and community partners can we offer this vital service at no cost to those who need it most.

Looking back on the past five years, we are filled with gratitude. Our community has grown stronger, our impact has deepened, and we’ve witnessed firsthand the profound difference this program makes in the lives of our teams and their families. We are excited for the future and the many more service dog teams we will help create in the years to come.

To our supporters, mentors, volunteers, and everyone who has been a part of this journey, thank you. We couldn’t have done it without you!

Introducing Our Latest Certified Service Dog Teams! Congratulations to **Bryan & Willow, Dinah & Luna, and Lynne & Murphy**, our 59, 60 and 61 graduates!



Would you consider becoming a monthly donor to help OFP Canada all year long? This is one of the best ways to support us!

I'd like to help with my donation

Upcoming Events:

2025 Vancouver Island Dogs Calendar Contest

Entries open from **March 26th** at 9 AM to April 30th at 9 PM.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates and details on how to participate!

BOTTLE DRIVE APRIL 26, 2025

Courtenay Return-It Depot, 493 Puntledge Rd, Courtenay, BC
Every bottle makes a difference. Your support helps us continue our important work and makes a positive impact on both pets and people in our community.

Thank you for your generosity!

“Paws for Summer” Beer & Burger Event

Save the Date: Saturday, August 16th, 2025

We're seeking donations for our silent auction - if you or anyone you know are interested, get in touch at: grants@ofpcanada.org

A big thank you to the Happy Valley Stitchers for their generous donation of a beautiful quilt to Don & Gracie, one of our veteran service dog teams! Your thoughtfulness is deeply appreciated.





Four Paws, Two Feet, One Team

A BIG THANK YOU

OFP Canada would not be able to exist without the support we have received. We want to send a special thank you to all of you who have helped. The donations of time and money, coming from individuals or businesses, locally and beyond warm our hearts and we are all eternally grateful.

With deep appreciation, Barb Ashmead,
Founder & Executive Director

Please become a member of OFP Canada to show your support and your voice. It is especially important to some funders to see that we have a growing membership. It is only \$10!

Become a member of OFPC

We have made some changes to our system, so if you do not wish to receive future newsletters, please click on the **unsubscribe** button.

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