

My Dog Is a Hero Contest Winners

Announcing the winners of this year's My Dog Is a Hero Contest.

Thank you to everyone who entered and voted for their picks for the most heroic dog! We received so many heartwarming stories of dogs who mean the world to their devoted owners. As chosen by DogChannel visitors, we're pleased to announce this year's top hero dogs.

1st Place

Name: Apples
Breed: Labrador Retriever
Owner: Veda Kipp
State: New York

Apples is a now-retired Seeing Eye Dog. He has served my husband faithfully for seven years. During this time he saved my husband's life many times putting his own life at risk. One time Apples was crossing the street with my husband, and a car turning right on a red light started turning even though Apples and my husband were in the crosswalk. Apples pushed my husband back quickly to the curb, and almost got hit himself! He also has pushed him back from buses coming through crosswalks without stopping. Apples retired at age 10, due to arthritis. After his career ended, he became a Therapy Dog at the Veterans Administration Hospital in the daycare program, until he started going blind. He is also a service dog, alerting me to my seizures, and pushing me back to the couch or chair before they start so I won't fall down. This dog is a true hero to our family, and admired by many in our community. He really deserves this great honor!

2nd Place

Name: Baby
Breed: Mixed Breed
Owner: Diane Gorham
State: Texas

We named her Baby. She came into our lives as a rescued puppy right after we'd gone through an unexpected loss of a baby in our family. The comfort she gave to all of us was so amazing. It's hard to believe that was almost 12 years ago. However, looking at Baby today you can see the beauty of aging gracefully taking place in her life. She used to run right up to the top of our 6-foot cedar fence and take her post looking into all the neighbors' backyards. She's always been a true caretaker. Three years ago she was diagnosed with diabetes and had to start receiving insulin shots twice a day. Less than six months later she lost her vision. It felt so sad to have that happen to our dear friend! She still goes to the park and swims and runs off leash. She listens to the jingle of her fur siblings tags to keep the pace. Of course we watch over her like good shepherds – just as she used to do for us. It's our turn now to give back to her for all she's given to us. She's our hero!

3rd Place

Name: Little Miss
Breed: Bichon Frise
Owner: Kim Szabo
State: Pennsylvania

My dog is my hero because she saved my life. Not by pulling me out of a lake, or attacking a mugger, not even by barking to let me know the house is on fire. No, she saved my life by just being herself. I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1997, and my disease advanced in 2003. I was forced to retire on disability after working nearly 20 years in higher education. I had 4 more classes to go to earn my Master's degree and I had to withdraw from school. You see, the MS affected my brain, not my spine. I have cognitive problems. I had a real problem with that and became very depressed. My husband worked away and I was home alone all day long. I did nothing. I stayed on the couch for days. I did not want to get up. I had no reason to.

Then my husband suggested getting a puppy to keep me company. Neither of us ever had one before, nor was I too thrilled about the idea. But when we went to the breeders, I fell in love with her immediately. She sat on my lap the whole way home, she was scared. Something different was happening to her. She has never been in a car before and it was an hour-long drive. I never had children of my own, but I think I realized at that moment how they felt. I was now responsible for this little girl's life. The bonding and protective feeling was so incredible. I had to feed her, take her out, play with and

train her. She gave me a reason and a purpose in life again. I do not think I would still be here on earth if it were not for Little Miss, so she is not only my hero, but also my family's and friends' hero. She saved my life. She is my best friend and companion for life.

4th Place
Name: Brie
Breed: Labrador Retriever
Owner: Marla Johnson
State: Florida

I, unfortunately, am disabled due to a severe seizure disorder. I'm no longer able to work and my independence and quality of life has greatly diminished. My first service dog, Hatrick, died in June 2005 leaving an unbelievable void in my life. It wasn't long before cabin fever set in. Immediately I began the search for a replacement dog, but you can't rent them like you can a car when yours is in the shop. The trainer began the search and finally Brie came along in Nov. 2006. She was only 10 months old and was the youngest service dog my trainer had ever placed. It seemed like she immediately knew what to do and what I needed. We weren't sure she would learn to alert me to the seizures, as that is a skill that can't be taught. The ability and drive to do so is either there or not. It was there. Within 4 weeks Brie was alerting to both type of seizures that I have. And the unbelievable thing is that she alerts differently to each type so I know what's on the horizon for us.

Brie, like all service dogs, is on duty 24/7, 365 days a year. She seems to enjoy what she does and my life is free of "cabin fever" as she provides me with the independence I was missing before she came into my life. She has kept me from enduring some terrible falls by steadying me or just stopping her "heel" when she senses my balance is going to be compromised. She's an unbelievable asset and extremely important part of my life.

To me she's a hero every day. In fact she knows how to rescue me from our pool. One day I was floating on a raft and she was lying next to the pool. I guess I must've moved in a different manner and Brie soared into the pool, swam to the deep end where I was, grabbed the float itself and swam back to the shallow end by the steps leading down to the water. I was amazed that this dog was so in tune with my every movement. Now, my family feels comfortable leaving me in the pool alone, but only if Brie is there. It only took her 3 weeks to really master her water rescue skills. She's smart and constantly seems to enjoy learning new things. This invaluable dog becomes my hands when I'm unsteady and brings me the phone, remote control, removes clothes from the dryer, and actually gets anything I might drop. She also recently began helping to bring in the groceries. It's like she mimics what I do. She watches for a bit then begins doing it herself. The reward? Love and affection. She's not one to beg for a specific toy or beg for her ball to be thrown. She knows I'm not able, so she's even very accustomed to the treadmill for her exercise; just gets right on in the center and walks her heart away for me. Hero? Yes, though I'm admittedly prejudiced, Brie IS a hero.

Honorable Mentions
Name: Bear
Breed: Mixed Breed
Owner: Mya Brooks
State: Washington

Name: Mya Marie
Breed: Bernese Mountain Dog
Owner: Cyndie Moody
State: Michigan

Name: Cocoa
Breed: Miniature Australian Shepherd
Owner: Robert Routten
State: Virginia

Name: Louie
Breed: Shih Tzu
Owner: Darlene Balduini
State: Nevada

Name: Cheyenne Silvermoon
Breed: German Shepherd Dog



Owner: Paulette Trenca
State: New York