

Therapy Dog Inducted into Animal Hall of Fame

Award honors working dog Chester, whose actions exemplify the human-animal bond.

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Chester, a dog who was once neglected and homeless, recently joined the ranks of California Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Hall of Fame.

The 7- or 8-year-old dog, believed to be a mix of Dachshund and Pomeranian, has befriended thousands of veterans, abused children, psychiatric patients, and senior citizens throughout San Diego County. He earned certification as a pet therapy dog at Helen Woodward Animal Center four years ago.

Diane Erth, a pet encounter therapy assistant at the center and Chester's handler, said Chester is always willing to comfort people. "Every day he is eager to jump in the van and go visiting. All I have to do is pick up his 'therapy dog' bandana and he is at the door ready to make people smile," she said.

The California Animal Hall of Fame award celebrates companion and working animals in the state and the veterinarians who care for them. Dr. Jeff Smith, CVMA president, said Chester was selected for his goodwill, loyalty, and compassion.

"This year's California Animal Hall of Fame award winner exemplifies the human-animal bond at its best," he said.

Chester received his award at CVMA's annual conference in San Francisco on June 27. He then returned to his therapy duties Monday.