

# **K9 Care Montana, Inc.**

## **Annual Report for the year 2025**



**I watched a bit of this year’s Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show and was reminded of a quote made by a former host, the late Roger Caras. He said, “Dogs are not our whole lives, but they make our lives whole.” I doubt he was thinking particularly about service dogs, but Griz here may have been the best example in the world of the point he made. Some of you may have experienced his kindness.**

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**This is the annual report for the calendar year 2025. Its purpose is to update our board and supporters regarding our accomplishments in 2025 and lay out our lines of effort in 2026.**

**Remembrance:** “Hoppers Grizzly of Rock Creek”, that was the registered name of Griz who became my fourth personal service dog and ultimately shared his unique personality and service skills as K9CMT’s ambassador for more than a decade at gatherings and with individuals around the state. Griz could sense a person’s need for help and would consistently provide just the right response whether in a home, a hospital room, on the street or afield. He passed in 2025 having made his mark. I miss that dog.



### **Just a few of our 2025 highlights**

**2025, a fulfilling year.** In 2024, I continued to recover my health and was focused in part on consolidating our lines of effort. We did just that and set ourselves up to push a bit harder in 2025. Let’s look at what we could fairly call a “banner year.”

**Lines of effort.** If you hang around veterans enough you might hear one talk about “lines of effort” at his old outfit. Savvy businesses use the concept and K9CMT does too. It’s especially important since we are relatively small that we act intentionally and responsibly with the resources our donors and supporters provide. We must be clear-eyed regarding what we are trying to achieve, how we will get there, and how we ensure our dogs remain among the finest available.

**The importance of breeding.** We wrote about this in last year’s report, but this review speaks to a different aspect. When you look at our expenses you will notice that veterinarian costs are up. There were two dogs, drawn from separate breeders that developed the same disease and required expensive surgery. We chose to cover the cost since neither the veterans nor the pup’s environment was the cause. These two pups were selected from breeders with exceptional credentials. Still, it happened despite our ridged vetting process. Regrettably, it comes with the territory, and we work hard to minimize the occurrences. As added security we present the new service dog to the veteran with a paid two-year health insurance policy. We encourage the recipient to continue the coverage throughout his partner’s life.



**We are in the business** of producing premier service dogs for our beneficiaries and in 2025 we started eight new service dog projects. We think of them as “projects” since each takes a year or more and there are lots of moving parts to get from pup to trained service dog. This cohort of pups includes one white in color golden retriever who will with time and training become a key element the therapist uses in the patient’s autism treatment. This is a three-year project as the dog learns added skills and matures. Because of the time required and the rigor of the effort, I think we are the only folks in Montana that embrace the task.



**Increased public awareness** is an endless task, but it is critical. We want folks, organizations, places of business and public accommodation to know what a service dog is, the benefits it provides and the rights the individual teamed with that service dog is entitled to by law and common courtesy. Our efforts are working and have broadened the base of potential volunteers and donors. Win-win. Prominent examples include the Park County Give a Hoot campaign, and the State Capital Employee Charitable giving campaign hosted at the rotunda outside the governor’s office. Other events across the state had similar outcomes. Of special interest is the national attention that surrounded a pending presentation of a home by Tunnels To Towers Foundation to a veteran who made a point of mentioning his K9CMT service dog. The Order of Eastern Star of Montana was also particularly generous in sponsoring a service dog that will be presented later this year with publicity across its Montana chapters. The full list of presentations at awareness focused events is too lengthy to repeat here, but it’s time well spent.

**The great Montana outdoors** continued to play an important role in our efforts to reintroduce our recipients to full and normal lives. Some filled elk tags, some felt the rush of “roster...roster” and others experienced tight lines on stretches of the Missouri River. These were powerful events made possible through the generosity of landowners and professional guides who willingly support our goals.



**Dogman of Montana**, if I had a callsign I think that’s what it would be. I was maybe 17 years old when I got serious about working dogs and I am more intent today than ever. There are a couple of points to be made here. These are working dogs that will love and serve us their whole lives almost no matter what. Given that, we need to do right by them. There is a broad spectrum we are working across including: hosting seminars at our training facility on how to provide first aid and CPR for your canine; incorporating a nearby certified dog massage therapist for our ageing service dogs; involving an animal behaviorist in our training sessions as necessary. Especially important is the working dogs feeding plan. I don’t have the exact number, but it seems that we are losing more adult dogs to cancer. It’s not for me to recommend one brand or another, just take care to note the table of content and preparation method before you fill that dog bowl.

**Fundraising remained an existential challenge for us** as it does with all non-profits, but however you slice it, our banner results were key to our 2025 push and progress. When you examine the P&L that's enclosed, you'll see the relevant numbers which in combination represent grants, gifts and individual donations. You won't see names because we respect and protect people's privacy. The other thing you won't see is the huge beneficial effect of access granted to private land and the time, expertise and equipment of the professional fishing guides. This magnificent support reinforces the importance of our work. In this past year we impacted the lives of over 100 veterans. I have made this point before and it's important to remember, when we help someone square-up their lives we're helping their families and the communities too.



**We are financially secure as we continue our work in 2026** and we are moving ahead with eight new service dog projects. We plan to increase the number of beneficiaries in our program careful not to overextend. We will continue our public awareness programs reaching out to chambers of commerce and statewide media. The indoor and outdoor training facilities at K9CMT's base of operations require some maintenance and upgrade. Importantly, we are going to seek out young dog trainers across the state to hire, train and mentor.

As I consider this effort, I am thinking, in part, of the role that my nephew Grayson Pace has played here over the past year. Grayson gets it and he is willing and able to do the work. It is not just a process, commitment and compassion are required. He has demonstrated both.

Finally, thank you. Thank you to the board members and other volunteers who enable us to keep moving forward. Thank you to our donors and supporters who make it possible. Most of all, thank you to the men and women who put their lives in harm's way on our behalf.

May God continue to bless America and may He bless you.

Sincerely,

**David W. Riggs**  
**Founder and CEO**  
**K9 Care Montana, Inc.**

Enclosure: 2025 P&L