

CISSY, CAMEO & DANIEL OUR PAGE

One of our neighbors, Cissy Lorch, has had the pleasure of sponsoring a dog for a veteran accepted for the service dog program through K9s for Warriors.

That dog is officially a certified service dog! Well, done, Cameo!



Daniel with Cameo

The process of sponsoring a dog is a journey. Cissy completed her application to become a sponsor in December 2019. K9s for

Warriors is fortunate to have many people who are excited about sponsoring a service dog and Cissy had to wait while she climbed the list to #1. That took 2 1/2 years!

80% of the Dogs are found in kill/no-kill shelters throughout the States. There are requirements for every dog selected. A few of them are age, health, intelligence, and size. Once a dog is found, a veterinarian checks the dog for fitness. After the dog travels to the K9s for Warriors kennels in Ponte Vedra, they begin their service dog training. This process varies greatly with each dog and can take anywhere from 3-9 months. When a dog passes all the testing to become a support dog, it is then matched with one of the veteran's that has also been waiting. Veterans must submit an application too. Once accepted, the veteran can be on a waiting list that is more than 2 years long! During the COVID epidemic the number of veterans and dogs were decreased. Once a match is made and a veteran is told there is a dog for them, they are very excited.

Both the dog and the veteran meet at the K9s for Warriors campus for a 3-week bonding/training period. The campus has "dormitories" that are roomy enough for the human and canine to spend 24/7 during their training. Previous to this the dog has already learned 26 commands -- now it's the veteran's turn. Graduation is the beginning of their life together. Once the veteran has his diploma, he takes the dog home with him. That isn't the end! In a year, both veteran and dog return to the campus for a week-long recertification process.

Back to our story about Cissy, Cameo, and Daniel. On July 22nd, Cissy was invited to attend the graduation at the K9s for Warriors headquarters/campus. She, along with friend Terri, were asked to arrive early for a "Meet & Greet" with Daniel and Cameo. They then attended the brief graduation ceremony. If you would like to watch any of the K9s monthly graduations, they are available on YouTube. Type in: K9s for Warriors graduation. Daniel and Cameo will be on the one for July 2022; it lasts 7 minutes. With the class of July 2022, a total of 743 veterans have gone thru the program in Ponte Vedra.

Cissy is a veteran of the Navy, having spent 20 years serving as a Nurse. Daniel is an Army veteran from New York. Cissy is very proud of her part in helping a fellow veteran knowing that the dog she sponsored will help him deal with the lasting mental damages suffered during his service to our country.

Recently K9s for Warrior opened a mega-kennel on Phillips Highway in Ponte Vedra that holds up to 150 dogs preparing to become certified service dogs. This will significantly reduce the length of time on a waitlist for future matches between a veteran and his service dog.



Cissy meets Daniel and Cameo

As you can imagine, not every dog is able to learn all 26 commands. These dogs are much sought after because they are healthy, smart, and well-trained and they immediately become available for adoption. If you are interested in having a young (2 to 4-year-old) dog that has been completely vetted and has some obedience training, one of these dogs could be yours! Just sign into the website for K9s for Warriors and look for the adoption opportunities. These are not advertised and are only listed on the website as they become available.

- CARRIE CARDASICA