



**COURAGEOUS CANINE WHO WAS VICTIM OF DOG FIGHTING
WINS TOP TITLE OF AMERICAN HERO DOG
AT THE 2017 'AMERICAN HUMANE HERO DOG AWARDS®'**

**Abigail and Six Other Heroic Hounds to Appear In 'Hero Dog Awards,'
Premiering on Hallmark Channel October 26, 2017 at 8 p.m. ET/PT**



LOS ANGELES, September 17, 2017 – Following nearly a million votes by the American public and the opinions of an expert panel of celebrity animal lovers and dog experts, Abigail, a one-year-old pit mix from Lehigh Acres, Florida has been named this year's most courageous canine, besting 187 other heroic hounds and capturing the top title of "American Hero Dog" at the 2017 American Humane Hero Dog Awards®. The seventh annual "**Hero Dogs Awards**" is sponsored by the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, Inc. and will be broadcast nationally on Hallmark Channel **Thursday, October 26 (8 p.m. ET/PT)**.

Abigail is a gal who did not ask for the life she was forced to live. She was found as a stray in Miami and taken to a rescue center where she was examined. She was anemic and infested with ticks. Scars covered her bloody head, neck, back legs, and half her face was missing with the skin ripped off down to the eardrum. She smelled terrible because of multiple infections, and was covered in dried mud. Experts suspected she was a victim of dog fighting. Her injuries were at least a week old and she almost lost her life. Abigail had several major surgeries and extensive skin grafts. She had weeks of hospitalization and daily bandage changes, which led to the launch of her "mission." Her vet and her vet tech were changing her bandages, and the way they held the gauze on her head made them look like bonnets. In solidarity people from all over the world started sending bonnets and now the Facebook page "Bonnets for Abigail" has more than 12,000 followers. Despite the terrible injuries inflicted on her, Abigail is a heroic example of bravery and overcoming, and is using her public platform to teach forgiveness and bring awareness to the importance of ending dog fighting. For her extraordinary bravery and good works, Abigail won the American Humane Hero Dog Awards' "Emerging Hero Dog" category for ordinary dogs who do extraordinary things. This year, the Emerging Hero Dog category is sponsored by the maker of NexGard® (afloxolaner) Chewables. We thank them for helping draw

attention to Abigail's story and spotlighting the remarkable ways dogs are capable of forgiveness and moving on to do good things for others even when they themselves were in need of help.

A Galaxy of Stars Honors Hero Dogs Including Jay Leno and Billy Crystal

The sold-out, star-studded awards honoring America's most courageous canines were hosted at the Beverly Hilton Hotel last night by television and film star James Denton and model and animal advocate Beth Stern, accompanied by a galaxy of celebrity stars and presenters including Josie Bissett, Lacey Chabert, Danielle Fishel, Vivica Fox, Daisy Fuentes, Carrie Ann Inaba, Bailee Madison, Kellie Martin, Debbie Matenopolous, Cameron Mathison, Danica McKellar, Brandon McMillan, Barbara Niven, Alexa and Carolos Penavega, Mark Steines, Alison Sweeney, Courtney Thorne-Smith, Alicia Witte and more.

Jay Leno and Billy Crystal provided delightful pre-taped video skits. Richard Marx provided the lead musical performances. Before the show, the audience was treated to the artistry of The Alex Donner Band and a special appearance by Hallmark Channel's Goodwill Ambassador Happy the Dog.

The Hero Dog Awards were created to celebrate the powerful relationship between dogs and people and recognize extraordinary acts of heroism performed by ordinary dogs. The event will be broadcast nationwide by Hallmark Channel on October 26 at 8 pm ET/PT, 7 pm Central. The program will air as part of Hallmark Channel's Pet Project, the network's cross-platform advocacy campaign designed to celebrate the joy and enrichment animals bring to our lives.

The winner is chosen through a combination of public votes and voting by a panel of animal advocates and celebrity judges including Jennifer Arnold, Kristin Bauer van Straten, Prince Lorenzo Borghese, Philippe and Ashlan Gorse Cousteau, Carolyn Hennesy, Joanne Horowitz, Blake Koch, Bailee Madison, Adrienne Maloof, Agent Jerry Means, Laura Nativo, Shara Strand, Lisa Vanderpump, and Lou Wegner.

All Finalists Are Winners

Abigail was the one chosen as 2017 American Hero Dog, but all seven finalists were winners in their categories, and we salute them for their courage, service and compassion. Here are their official nominations:

Law Enforcement/Arson Dogs category

Ice (Olympia, WA) – In the early hours of July 21, 2016, a team of officers from the U.S. Forest Service and deputies from the Trinity County Sheriff's Office were investigating an illegal marijuana garden on public lands within the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Two suspects attempted to flee and Ice was deployed to capture one of the suspects. As Ice was apprehending the suspect, the suspect used a large knife to stab Ice twice in the chest as well as in the face and muzzle. Despite Ice's serious wounds, Ice continued to apprehend the suspect until the suspect was taken into custody. Ice's bravery likely saved the other officers from being stabbed or injured. Despite his trauma, Ice didn't let out a whine or whimper. Ice's handler and the team immediately bandaged and dressed his wounds. As the area was extremely rugged and remote, a California Highway Patrol helicopter was dispatched. Ice's handler and other team members then took turns carrying Ice approximately three-quarters of a mile over rough terrain and through dense vegetation to a suitable landing location. Ice was airlifted to VCA Asher Animal Hospital in Redding, CA and taken immediately into surgery where the doctors and staff were able to repair his wounds. Ice has since made a full recovery and has returned to duty. This wasn't Ice's first scrape, and though he is a tough-as-nails working dog, Ice also has an extraordinary ability to interact and socialize with people. Both of these amazing abilities make Ice a truly special dog and partner.

Guide/Hearing Dogs category

Pierce (Palm Bay, FL) – While serving with the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division during the first Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm), Don sustained an injury that eventually claimed his vision. In the more

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than two decades that followed, Don navigated through life with his white cane, along with the support of his wife, Peggy, and two children. As an experienced cane traveler who moved about the world quite well, Don had not seriously considered getting a guide dog until one day he now remembers as a turning point in his journey. Last year, on a family vacation, Don and his son, Jordan, set out to explore historical monuments together. At the conclusion of the trip, Don asked Jordan to describe his favorite part of the tour to which the twelve-year-old responded, "Dad, I wasn't paying much attention...I wanted to make sure you didn't fall." Heartbroken at this admission, Don knew Jordan needed the freedom to be a kid and not a sighted guide. And the payoff in having his guide dog, "Pierce," has been even greater than relieving this burden from his son; Don is experiencing life with refreshed independence and freedom. His wife, Peggy, shares, "I have seen a new confidence in Don and I can't thank Fidelco enough for their part in it. Don's guide dog is a very loving companion and dedicated to his work. We have all fallen in love."

Military Dogs category

Adak (St. Cloud, MN) – Adak is a 13-year-old German Shepherd. His longevity and accomplishments as an explosive detection dog are unmatched. During his career he has provided support to dignitaries and celebrities, and at events across more than 10 states and three countries. He was a Contract Working Dog (CWD) for the U.S. State Department in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Army, Ft. McCoy and for a private business, Dogs for Defense Inc. (D4D). Adak's first assignment was in Iraq in 2006. Adak was assigned to support the U.S. embassy and dignitaries. Adak performed a sweep of the Baghdad Central Station prior to the arrival of a dignitary. While performing the sweep, Adak alerted to a vehicle in the area, canceling the event. On January 14, 2008, the Kabul Serena Hotel was subjected to a complex terror attack. During the attack numerous guests were trapped in the hotel. Adak's was the first K-9 team to arrive, with terrorists still inside the hotel. Adak led a team of Americans who went room to room inside while terrorists were still active. Adak came across dismembered, deceased victims during his search and performed flawlessly. Over 20 people were evacuated, and a total of six people died, including one American. In 2009 Adak was conducting a sweep of the Ministry of Agriculture when he had an alert. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit arrived and identified the threat as a mortar shell. Working for D4D gave Adak constant opportunities to do unique detection work across the U.S. until he was 13. His transition from war to family member was incredible. Sadly, Adak recently passed away.

Search and Rescue Dogs category

Luca (Grand Prairie, TX) – On March 15, 2016, Fort Worth Police were dispatched to a missing endangered male. Two elderly men visited a large salvage yard when one suddenly realized that his elderly friend with Alzheimer's was missing. After a brief search, he realized he needed help and called police. Many officers responded due to the age/medical condition of the missing man. After an extensive search, Sgt. Medrano asked Officer Brock if Luca would be of any help. Luca is Officer Brock's retired Search-and-Rescue (SAR) German Shepherd, who was 10 years old at the time of this call. Luca excelled in area, water, avalanche and forest/desert searches. Officer Brock believed Luca excelled in this and it meant a helicopter ride, which Luca loved. Officer Brock picked Luca up from his home and Luca fell back into his training and used his SAR skills to search for the missing man. Luca alerted at an opening of brush at the Trinity River, which led to a very steep hill followed by a steep drop-off. Due to terrain, a PD helicopter responded and immediately observed the lost man in the river, stuck in waist-high mud on the opposite bank of the river where Luca alerted. Officers shed their gear, swam across the river, rescued the man and brought him to safety. Had Luca not tracked the man's trail and located him, the man would have drowned in the river, which still had very cold, high, fast-paced water or succumbed to the temperature. Luca's love and dedication to SAR shows the resilience of older dogs and how training doesn't go away just because they retire.

Service Dogs category

Atlas the Wonder Dog (Dayton, OH) – After coming home from Iraq, struggling with PTSD and dealing with the effects of a TBI from a roadside bomb, I was virtually lost, locked in my own personal prison. I began getting treatment while still Active Duty, which consisted of talk therapy and a single prescription. After getting out of the Marines, I continued treatment with the VA system, and nearly a decade later, the “treatment” consisted of more than eight different prescriptions totaling more than 33 pills a day....my life felt very sad, hazy, and hopeless.....I was lost. Until I found Atlas. Atlas is not only my service dog but my lifesaver. Atlas is a grounding and solid presence when flashbacks, hypervigilance, and the lingering effects of war begin again to creep up my spine. Atlas has been trained to sense these changes in me and then acts to redirect my attention and focus during these overwhelming instances. Whether it is to nudge my hand if I am getting anxious, wake me up in the throes of a nightmare or just stand behind me so I know someone has my back. With his presence, I am able to take an active, positive role in my children’s lives. Atlas has not only completely changed my life, but as the “face” of, and inspiration behind the creation of The Battle Buddy Foundation, he is also a beacon of hope for so many others struggling to cope. A regal reminder that there is hope, that there IS a way to find yourself again after combat and trauma, and that your pains and struggles have value.

Therapy Dogs category

Aladdin (Haddonfield, NJ) – Aladdin was found severely emaciated in 2013. Both of his back legs and tail had been broken. He was missing 12 teeth and had open wounds. I foster emaciated dogs and he came to me. From the moment I met him, his little tail never stopped wagging, despite his horrific condition. Aladdin had a rough recovery but he overcame the obstacles put before him. He greeted every person with a lot of hope and despite the abuse he suffered he trusted enough to learn that no one would hurt him again. Within the year he was a certified therapy dog bringing love to everyone he meets. Aladdin is a Ronald McDonald House Ambassador dog, his favorite duty! He visits schools doing a humane education, anti-bullying program. He is a trained crisis response dog and spent a week in Orlando last year after the shooting doing therapy visits and fundraising for the Victims Fund. He works with the Philadelphia Police fundraising for the Fallen Officers Fund and attending the events they do with special needs children. He is an ambassador dog for Tito’s Vodka for Dog People Campaign and together they have raised over 300,000 for rescues and shelters all over. He also works with veterans and PACT for Animals. Most importantly he is a model/ambassador for Show Your Soft Side, a nationwide animal abuse campaign and he is the spokesdog for the rescue I work with, Lilo’s Promise. Lilo’s takes in medical needs dogs like Aladdin. Heroes come in all shapes & sizes, Aladdin has taught me that each time I watch him work.

Each of the seven finalists received \$2,500 to be donated to one of American Humane’s charity partners. Abigail won an additional \$5,000 for her charity, Dogs On Deployment. In this way, more heroes may be nurtured.

Heroes Who Save and Keep Our Hero Pets Healthy All Year Round Also Honored

Behind every hero pet is a hero vet or vet tech. Each year at the Hero Dog Awards, American Humane also announced the winners of its Hero Veterinarian and Hero Veterinary Technician Awards™, sponsored by the leading animal health company Zoetis. After a nationwide search and tens of thousands of public votes, Dr. Patricia Canchola from Pueblo, Colorado, who performs thousands of spay and neuter surgeries every year, and helps abused and neglected animals, runs a low-cost pet health clinic and a pet food bank, was named 2017’s American Hero Veterinarian. Jeni Hudson from Decatur, Illinois, who founded a rescue organization that takes in pups with cleft palates and other disabilities, was declared 2017’s American Hero Veterinary Technician.

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World's Leading Friends of Animals Receive Humanitarian Awards

American Humane bestowed its top honors on several individuals whose abiding passion for and support of animals deserve special recognition. The organization awarded the Global Humanitarian Award to Wolfgang Kiessling for his lifetime efforts to protect and preserve the remarkable and endangered creatures of the Earth. Kiessling is the founder of Loro Parque, which is the first zoological institution to be Humane Certified™ by American Humane, and was recently named "The Best Zoo in the World" by TripAdvisor. American Humane also gave its prestigious National Humanitarian Medal to three extraordinary animal advocates: Timothy Lane, one of the world's leading international business figures (CEO of Everest Advisors, Inc., former CEO of PepsiCo Restaurants International for Asia and the Middle East, Inc., and former CEO of Holiday Inn Worldwide), who has been devoting his time to advancing the 140-year-old mission of American Humane as a member of the board of directors and interim COO; Philanthropist, policy and public affairs expert and board member Amanda Bowman, who chairs American Humane's capital campaign; and Dawn Assenzio, philanthropist, board member, and vice-chair of American Humane's National Ambassador Council.

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