



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Meet America's Top Dogs! Seven Remarkable Canines Named Finalists for 2019 American Humane Hero Dog Awards®**

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**“American Humane Hero Dog Awards” to premiere as two-hour special  
October 23 on Hallmark Channel**

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**Yearlong contest to culminate in red carpet awards gala at the Beverly Hilton Hotel**

**BEVERLY HILLS, CA – July 26, 2019** – America has spoken! Based on some 900,000 votes cast by animal lovers across the country – as well as a celebrity panel of dog lovers and experts – seven remarkable canines have been selected as finalists in the 2019 American Humane Hero Dog Awards®. The program, now in its ninth year, will debut nationwide October 23 as a two-hour special on Hallmark Channel. The show is an annual programming component of the network's pet adoption advocacy initiative, Hallmark Channel's Adoption Ever After. The announcement was made today as part of Crown Media Family Networks' bi-annual Television Critics Summer Press Tour.

This year's seven heroic canines each took top honors in their individual categories from a field of 360 nominees. All the finalists, along with their human handlers, will travel to LA where they will be honored at a star-studded Hero Dog Awards gala on October 5 at The Beverly Hilton.

Voting is now open for America to cast a ballot on which of the seven dogs will be named 2019 American Hero Dog. The public is invited to submit one vote per day through September 9 at [www.herodogawards.org](http://www.herodogawards.org). This year's top dog will be announced at end of the gala in October.

***Meet the seven remarkable Hero Dog Awards finalists  
(as described by their owners and handlers)***

### **Law Enforcement/Arson Dogs category**

**“Dax” from Libertyville, IL** – Dax began his successful career with the Lake County (IL) Sheriff's Office almost four years ago. He has been directly responsible for tracking and successfully apprehending over 70 suspects. Dax

has also been accountable for tracking and finding dozens of missing or endangered children and adults. Dax has been used for over 100 narcotic searches resulting in the seizure of over 17 kilos of cocaine, heroin and other narcotics, hundreds of pounds of cannabis, approximately three quarters of a million dollars in currency, dozens of firearms, and vehicles. Dax's top deployments in 2018 included tracking and locating a dangerous domestic violence offender who forced his way into a home and then battered and choked a woman until she lost consciousness; capturing a robbery suspect even after the offender struck Dax repeatedly; and, apprehending a wanted fugitive (who was allegedly armed) hiding in the attic of a home covered in fiberglass insulation. Dax saved the lives of citizens and deputies in late 2018 when he tracked a fugitive who had allegedly committed a burglary, was in the process of stealing a vehicle from its owner, and then brandished a gun at pursuing deputies. The fugitive was charged with attempted murder and several other felonies after being located by Dax. Dax's tireless drive, dedication to training, love for police work, and incredible success stories have gained him thousands of supporters from across the country. Dax has proven to be an outstanding K9 hero!

### **Shelter Dogs category**

**“Gus” from Houston, TX** – Gus was found walking aimlessly down a busy street with a head so severely swollen, you couldn't tell he was a dog. A shoelace was tied so tightly on him that it sliced through his flesh in his neck almost to the bone. Through his recovery he gained thousands of well-wishers from all over the country and other countries, as well. He brought attention to the plight of homeless animals and how they suffer. His good nature and compliance through all his very difficult procedures and surgeries have given people hope and something to cheer for. He has been the glue for people from all over the world who look to him for some good in this seemingly uncaring climate. His innocence and sweetness transcend cultural differences and indifference to the homeless dog crisis in Houston and other cities facing the same situation. Because of him and his message, more people are fostering and adopting dogs from shelters, as well as stopping to help the stray dog that is only looking for something to eat and a gentle touch. People are taking notice and getting more involved in animal welfare. I believe Gus came to us with a specific purpose and mission. He is the tender soul who opens hearts and helps people know that there are more Gusses out there who are just as special as he is, and that we all can do something to help and not just turn away. #gusstrong #iamgus

### **Guide/Hearing Dogs category**

**“Leader Dog Lady” from Hamilton, MI** – I'm legally blind. Leader Dog Lady is my guide dog. My world has changed so much since Lady came into my life. Leader Dog Lady is my eyes and she guides me to wherever I need to go and helps me with whatever I need to do. We go on a plane once or twice a year. I love life because I have Leader Dog Lady by my side. I'm more independent and much more confident. I see the world through Leader Dog Lady's eyes and it's a world where I set goals for us for the year. Friends and family always ask what Leader Dog Lady and my adventures are going to be. My life is busy because of Lady. We educate people about Leader Dogs for the Blind, go to Lions Club conventions to promote Leader Dogs for the Blind. We attend big events and fundraisers for this wonderful organization. July will be our four-year anniversary as a team. Leader Dog Lady loves to work and I feel safe crossing busy intersections, getting on a plane, or walking three miles. She goes to work with me and my co-workers love her. There is nothing we can't do. Leader Dog Lady is so smart and she's a very beautiful Black Lab. When out in public, people are looking at Leader Dog Lady and not asking me a ton of questions about my vision. Because of Lady I'm more social and more comfortable. I love and trust her more than people. To be a good working team, this is very important. I am nominating Leader Dog Lady for Hero Dog. She is my HERO!!

### **Military Dogs category**

**“Sgt. Yeager” from Cary, NC** – Sergeant Yeager honorably performed combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan as an Improvised Explosive Detection Dog with the United States Marine Corps. Sgt. Yeager has been credited with detecting the locations of dozens of explosive devices. During his three combat tours, Sgt. Yeager participated in over 100 patrols, and was tasked with clearing routes for his fellow Marines. On April 12, 2012, Sgt. Yeager suffered shrapnel wounds from an IED that caused him to lose part of his ear. He was awarded the Purple Heart

for his injuries. Unfortunately, the same explosion took the life of his handler, Lance Corporal Abraham Tarwoe. The pair was virtuously trying to protect the other Marines in the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan. Fellow Marines attest to the unbreakable bond between Tarwoe and Sgt. Yeager. After the attack, Sgt. Yeager was transported back to the U.S. and treated for his injuries until he was stable enough to retire from the USMC. Lance Corporal Tarwoe's widow was unable to adopt Sgt. Yeager as she would now be raising their infant son alone. Sgt. Yeager was adopted by another Marine Corps family. Today, at 12 years of age, Sgt. Yeager is beginning to show signs of aging, though his spirit is undiminished. Despite his trials and witnessing acts of terrorism, Yeager remains a sweet dog with an infinitely joyful disposition. He has settled in North Carolina with his family, where he is an ambassador for the Project K-9 Hero Foundation, which pays 100% of his medical bills from his sustained injuries.

### **Search and Rescue Dogs category**

**“Piglet” from Lancaster, CA** – Piglet is the best friend of Winnie The Pooh. But there's another “Piglet” in town: an eight-year-old Catahoula Leopard Dog. This Piglet, a veteran search and rescue dog, is trained and certified to help families in arduous times. Nothing could have prepared Piglet and handler Lori Wells for the inconceivable conditions on a recent deployment. Called to aid in the aftermath of the horrific “Camp Fire” in Paradise, California, this little dog deployed to do all she could to help. Piglet provides a vital service. The value of her work in bringing answers to grieving families is immeasurable. She assists in locating people on land and in water. Once, human searchers spent seven days combing a lake with no luck. On day eight, Piglet deployed and located the subject. She helped the coroner by locating enough bones to reconstruct and positively identify the individual. Lori and Piglet donate hundreds of volunteer hours annually and depart for each call-out with enthusiasm. Traveling thousands of miles a year does not diminish Piglet's bubbly personality and happy-go-lucky attitude. In her off hours, she loves making friends. At events she's always a crowd-pleaser with a wagging tail, signature “smile,” and endless kisses. Perhaps this is what makes Piglet a unique search and rescue dog. Her famous namesake's creator was said to have shared advice appropriate for those survivors who this dedicated K9 helps reunite: “If there ever comes a time when we can't be together, keep me in your heart, I'll stay there forever.”

### **Service Dogs category**

**“Alice” from Nicholasville, KY** – In 2015, Antonio was a normal, playful nine-year old who loved soccer and his friends. Then, on a normal day, while riding in the back of his parents' SUV with his younger brothers on the way to a family dinner, a man fired three to five bullets into their car and shot him in the head. Since that day Antonio has been fighting the battle of a lifetime. He spent 18 days in a coma and has endured five brain surgeries. Nearly four years later, an artificial skull covers half of Antonio's brain, because a seizure causing a fall could be fatal. Antonio not only battles seizures, but migraines, balance issues, spells and more. In October of 2016, Antonio was paired with his service dog, Alice, from Guardian Angels Medical Service Dogs in Florida. His mom, Tara, says, “Alice is a hero in our eyes, because without her, Antonio would not be able to do the simple things in life that we take for granted.” Going to school, the store, or even just a walk outside would be impossible for him. Never once has Alice failed to alert to an oncoming seizure or “spell” and she assists him with his balance issues. Alice has given Antonio the chance at a new normal life he couldn't have had without her. She is a loyal and loving hero every day. She's saved Antonio's life many times. If that's not a hero, I don't know what is. She is his guardian angel and helps him live his new normal to the fullest extent possible.

### **Therapy Dogs category**

**“Jeanie” from Lake Charles, LA** – This three-legged rescue went from being homeless and crippled to becoming a certified therapy dog. Jeanie was rescued from a rural area in south Louisiana when she was five months old and was adopted after a deformed front leg was removed by a local vet. Jeanie works for the Children's Advocacy Center, where she comforts children who are questioned by detectives working on physical and sexual abuse cases, violent crimes, and even homicides. She and her owner volunteer at hospitals, schools, nursing homes, reading

programs, and veterans' homes, where Jeanie bonds with fellow amputees. Jeanie attends counseling sessions with amputees and children's grief therapy groups. She comforts students during finals week and visits schools' special education classes. Jeanie spent a day with traumatized elementary students who witnessed a shooting in their classroom. She helped an apprehensive child speak to officers after witnessing a murder/suicide. A depressed veterans' home resident who suffered with dementia was joyful and content during a visit with Jeanie. In cases like these, Jeanie's presence eases stress levels and provides a calm and joyful diversion. Jeanie deserves to be the American Hero Dog because she gives love and comfort to those who need it most, especially frightened and traumatized children. She hopes to inspire other counseling, advocacy and law enforcement agencies to consider the benefits of therapy dogs like her.

Over the past nine years, nearly 10 million votes have been cast for more than a thousand dogs seeking the coveted title of American Hero Dog. The program reaches more than 1 billion people each year and draws the support and participation of top celebrity dog lovers from all over the world. Hosts, judges, award presenters, and entertainment acts have included Jay Leno, Billy Crystal, Betty White, Ariel Winter, Rebecca Romijn, Jerry O'Connell, Dean Cain, James Denton, Beth Stern, Katharine McPhee, Alison Sweeney, Whoopi Goldberg, Denise Richards, Lisa Vanderpump, Chelsea Handler, Martin Short, Jewel, Wilson Phillips, Carson Kressley, Miranda Lambert, Pauley Perrette, Kristin Chenoweth, Naomi Judd, Eric Stonestreet, Fred Willard, Danica McKellar, Bailee Madison, and many, many more.

"The American Humane Hero Dog Awards celebrate the tremendously important roles dogs play in our lives," said Dr. Robin Ganzert, American Humane president and CEO. "The American public and our special judging panel now have an extraordinarily tough task ahead of them in determining who our top dog will be because all are worthy winners."

"Hallmark Channel is proud to have the American Humane Hero Dog Awards serve as the focal point of our Adoption Ever After initiative," said Bill Abbott, president and CEO of Crown Media Family Networks. "Adoption Ever After is our on- and off-air advocacy and awareness initiative designed to celebrate the joy pets bring to our lives, shine a spotlight on the wonderful animals in shelters across the country, and promote adoption."

For more information about the 2019 American Humane Hero Dog Awards®, and to vote daily in the contest, please visit [www.herodogawards.org](http://www.herodogawards.org). For more information on sponsorship opportunities email Mari Harner at [marih@americanhumane.org](mailto:marih@americanhumane.org) or call 1-800-227-4645.

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#### **About American Humane**

American Humane is the country's first national humane organization, founded in 1877. For more information, please visit [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org).

#### **About Hallmark Channel**

Hallmark Channel is Crown Media Family Networks' flagship 24-hour cable television network, distributed nationwide in high definition (HD) and standard definition (SD) to 88 million homes. As the country's leading destination for quality family entertainment, Hallmark Channel delivers on the 100-year legacy of the Hallmark brand. In addition to its signature new, original movies, the network features an ambitious lineup of other new, original content, including scripted primetime series, such as "Good Witch," "When Calls the Heart" and "Chesapeake Shores"; annual specials including "Kitten Bowl" and "Hero Dog Awards"; and a daily, two-hour lifestyle show, "Home & Family." Additionally, Hallmark Channel is the exclusive home to world premiere presentations of the acclaimed Hallmark Hall of Fame franchise. Dedicated to helping viewers celebrate life's special moments, Hallmark Channel also offers annual holiday programming franchises, including "Countdown to Christmas," "Countdown to Valentine's Day," "Summer Nights," "Fall Harvest" and "Winterfest." Rounding out the network's diverse slate are some of television's most beloved comedies and series, including "The Golden Girls" and "Frasier."

Hallmark Cards, Inc. owns and operates Crown Media Family Networks.

For more information, please visit [www.crownmediapress.com](http://www.crownmediapress.com)

To visit the network website, please visit [www.hallmarkchannel.com](http://www.hallmarkchannel.com)

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