

Paw Print Post:

[Photo of the day: Small dog lovers flock to adopt Chihuahuas in NYC](#)

[Video: Dog senses earthquake before humans](#)

Jan 14, 2010

Dog helps Iraq vet with PTSD: 'My little Marine'

08:01 AM



9 Comments

8 Recommend

Life has become calmer, safer and less stressful for Chris Goehner since he paired up with Pele, according to this story by the Associated Press.

Goehner, 25, a Wenatchee Valle, Wash., native now attending Central Washington University, suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which has afflicted him since serving two tours as a U.S. Navy corpsman attached to a U.S. Marine Corps emergency room unit in Iraq. He worked as a medic in Kuwait and Iraq in 2004 and 2005, before being diagnosed with PTSD and discharged in 2006.

Pele is his service dog. Since November, the two have become inseparable.



▶ CAPTION

AP

Goehner is one of only 21 Iraq War veterans suffering from PTSD who have been paired with service dogs since the military recently started a new program to try to help soldiers with the disorder.

Pele was trained for the program by an organization called Puppies Behind Bars. The nonprofit organization uses prison inmates to train service dogs in several New York regional prisons. For a story and video on the training of the dogs click [here](#).

Pele, a 20-month-old golden retriever/Labrador retriever mix, accompanies Goehner to his classes, when he goes to the store or mall and when he goes out to dinner. Pele sleeps in his bedroom at night, guarding his rest from haunting nightmares of bomb attacks and shot and blown-up soldiers.

"Pele is my little Marine. He watches my back," said Goehner, referring to the Marines who offered him protection when he was working close to the battle zone in Iraq.

Since getting Pele, Goehner said he's slept better than he has in three years. He's been able to take a nap for the first time since leaving the military. He can go into a crowded place with less fear that he's going to be attacked or shot at. He's not as unnerved by loud noises that remind him of shellfire and isn't constantly filled with anger and ready for a fight.

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

Previous [Photo of the day: Small dog lovers flock to adopt Chihuahuas in NYC](#)


Next [Video: Dog senses earthquake before humans](#)

To report corrections and clarifications, contact Reader Editor [Brent Jones](#). For publication consideration in the newspaper,

send comments to letters@usatoday.com. Include name, phone number, city and state for verification. To view our corrections, go to corrections.usatoday.com.

Guidelines: You share in the USA TODAY community, so please keep your comments smart and civil. Don't attack other readers personally, and keep your language decent. Use the "Report Abuse" button to make a difference. [Read more](#).

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Log in](#) | [Register](#)

Submit  Post this comment to Facebook?

Comments: (8) Showing: **New:** Most recommended!



Playanaut (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5d 22h ago

I really enjoyed reading this article. As a survivor of the current war in Iraq (2003-2005), my dog became a great friend and companion. When the VA dropped it's benefits I had little else to support me through some very tough times. I'd still recommend for any veteran still suffering from PTSD, to do what I did which is to continue looking for ways to heal your PTSD. What worked for me was Vivation, which allowed me to finally feel my body and let go of all the pain I had been holding on to. Of all the things I had tried, Vivation was the only technique that helped me overcome my crippling anxiety attacks and prolonged bouts of depression.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



dani76 (2 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1/15/2010 11:23:40 PM

harnzilla, "four legged lump of bassety goodnes." Too funny! There is nothing better than a furry, cuddly pet.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



harnzilla (29 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1/15/2010 5:14:45 AM

I'm currently deployed, and due to be home in a couple of weeks. More than anything else, I'm looking forward to getting home to my basset hound... he's my kid and my best friend rolled into one four legged lump of bassety goodness.

[1 Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



NewzReader (58 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1/15/2010 1:19:55 AM

A good dog is one part loyal friend, and one part angel.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



USN SS RET. (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1/14/2010 7:34:10 PM

GOD bless our troupes, they give so much to keep us free. They deserve the best care and support they can get. By having our prison inmates train service animals they can be productive members of our society and give forward.

[2 Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



Siggs (66 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1/14/2010 2:14:52 PM

God Bless US Navy Corpsmen. They do so much and never get enough credit

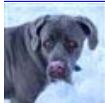
[3 Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



[razzberryrose](#) (14 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1/14/2010 1:56:59 PM

Dogs are wonderful for so many reasons, and now we can add another one to the list. God bless them both.

[2 Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



[calamityjen](#) (15 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1/14/2010 8:34:19 AM

Dogs are amazing for this sort of thing, on days when its too much and I want to just stay in with the curtains drawn and rage against the fact that my ex is getting out in less than 75 days, my Ferg will come and bump me with his big slobbery face and remind me that he is there and he will protect me and my kids. He is a big furry rock that takes away the fear and the stress and the anger, and helps me to keep a routine, and he forces me to think of others. When I was having nightmares and grinding my teeth and always on alert, he would come and sleep on my bed and stay close to calm me, now that I am doing better, he sleeps in the childrens room most nights being their big safe teddy bear. He is better than any medication than doctors could prescribe for PTSD, and dogs require the sufferer to think beyond their own problems, and that is an important part of healing.

[6 Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)