

Today, Rep. Mike Quigley (IL-05) honored the outstanding contributions of Pits for Patriots to our community. Pits for Patriots Program is a non-for-profit organization that trains qualified, rescued pit bulls, to be service dogs and companions for Veterans and First Responders in need. To learn more, visit www.pitsforpatriots.org.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the exceptional work of an organization operating in my district called Pits for Patriots.

This innovative program strives to save not just one life, but two.

The Chicagoland organization currently trains rescued pit bulls to become service dogs for veterans in need.

In addition to helping our country's patriots, the program is committed to educating the public about the loyalty, devotion, and commitment of the pit bull breed.

Their service dogs are trained to help improve a veteran's quality of life in their day-to-day activities, such as opening and closing doors, retrieving items, and assisting with mobility problems.

I had the honor of attending a training session and meeting a dedicated veteran, Sergeant Danny Randall, and his companion dog Shiloh.

After serving for nine years in the Army, Danny felt an emotional disconnect between military and civilian life.

Reentering the civilian workforce had been a difficult adjustment.

Danny suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, making it difficult for him to remain calm in large crowds or tight spaces.

He is not comfortable sitting with his back to a door or window, and feels stressed when strangers enter his personal space.

But Danny has found a way to help battle some of the after-effects of war.

Danny's medicine is in the form of a four legged pit bull dog that goes by the name of Shiloh.

Shiloh helps Danny to remain calm when going out in public, and increases his comfort level and socialization skills.

Shiloh and the other pit bulls do more than just facilitate the day to day lives of the recipients –

They provide a sense of independence and unconditional love.

For the veterans, caring for a companion animal can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment while lessening feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression.

There are over 22 million veterans in America today.

And although the number of service members being deployed in today's wars are fewer than wars of the past –

-Those returning from war are suffering from increasingly severe disabilities, as traumatic brain injury, numerous amputations, and post traumatic stress disorder.

Over the past decade, the number of vets in need of disability compensation has more than doubled, from 600,000 in 2000 to over 1.4 million in 2011.

As more vets return home from multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, the need for assistance will grow even greater.

We must do all we can to support inventive programs such as Pits for Patriots that provide essential support and assistance to our veterans in need.

I want to end with the words of Sergeant Danny Randall, who said about his pit bull Shiloh “he truly gives me a reason to be successful. Shiloh gives me a great sense of calm and balance.”

He went on to say, “He is an amazing dog, not just where he has been and what he's lived through, but all that he has overcome. In that sense we are a lot alike, and I believe that is why we have such a strong bond.”

“We truly do everything together, and I could not have asked for a better Pittie partner.”

Let's make sure other veterans in need have access to the same program that have done so much to help Danny and Shiloh.



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