

MOMMY'S HERO



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HUMANE
PUPS4PATRIOTS™

MOMMY'S HERO

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Introductory Note

When a parent returns from military service with an invisible wound, a service dog can be an effective tool in helping live with Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). However, a service dog is different than a family pet and this can be difficult for younger children to understand. Written by a clinical specialist working to help veterans with PTS and the president and CEO of American Humane, the country's first national humane organization that also trains dogs in need of forever homes, this book is designed to help the children of veterans diagnosed with PTS or TBI understand the role of a service dog and how s/he will help their family.

My mommy went to war for her work and to keep us safe. I missed my mommy the whole time she was gone, and I couldn't wait until she came back. Everyone called my mommy their 'hero,' but to me, she's MY MOMMY.

I was scared she might come back injured or hurt, but when she calls me every week, she tells me she is safe, we joke, and she talks to me about my day.

Some soldiers on base come back from war in wheelchairs, and some come back and they look okay. I hope my mommy comes back looking okay!

Today I found out she's coming home!!!!!! I am going to clean my room and make the biggest sign I can make, so she can find me right away.





Mommy is different. She isn't in a wheelchair, and she has her arms and legs....but she's different. I dropped my sign and it made a loud noise. Mommy got really scared and then a little mad. My mom looks like the same mommy, but she acts different.

Before mommy went to war, we used to play, we could go to the movies and eat popcorn, we went to the store and cooked together. Now mommy stays quiet most of the time. She gets angry really fast, and we stay home all day.

I don't think my mommy is trying to be mean. My daddy says that mommy has PTS. I asked my teacher what PTS is and she told me it means that mommy's brain is scared of things because that's how she stayed alive during the war.



When mommy gets scared, she stays scared for a long time. She doesn't talk much about what she's thinking. A lot of the time I see her just staring. I wish I could make her laugh and play.

I don't think mommy is sleeping very much. Last night when I got up to use the bathroom, mommy was still watching TV. When I woke up, she was still sitting in the same spot and wearing the same clothes. Why can't I make my mommy feel better?

Mommy is going away for a week. She got accepted into a program that helps mommies with PTS, but I don't exactly know how. Daddy said that mommy is going to bring a big surprise home. I wonder what it could be?!?!?!?

I got a call from mommy this week and guess what?!?!?!?!?!? When I saw her on the screen, she had a dog with her. Her dog's name is Layla, and mommy says she is a very special dog.



Layla is mommy's service dog and she stays with mommy all day long. She even goes into the bathroom with mommy. Mommy explained that dogs can understand and sense things that people cannot.

When I asked mommy what Layla does, mommy explained that Layla can smell changes in mommy's body if she feels scared or uncomfortable, and Layla is trained to help mommy feel better. Layla also wakes mommy up in the middle of the night if she is having a scary dream.

Since Layla is a service dog, she can go anywhere with mommy to help mommy do the things she used to do before she went to war and her brain got hurt. Mommy showed me how we will be able to go the store now, and even to the movies with Layla. I am so excited that mommy might be able to go to my talent show!



There are only a couple of rules Daddy and I have to follow:

1) We cannot distract Layla from doing her job. Even if she is sleeping next to mommy, Layla needs to be able to focus on mommy and only mommy.

2) We have to help mommy continue to train Layla. The trainers told mommy that Layla is trained to meet all of the laws that say she can be a service dog, but mommy has to keep training Layla everyday so she can keep doing amazing things.

3) I'm not allowed to feed Layla, because mommy said that service dogs are fed as part of their training. I would feel so bad if I messed up Layla's training!!!



Mommy says playing with my dog Ben is very different than playing with Layla. Ben gets the zoomies and runs around the house. Layla will be tired from working all day and helping mommy. Both of our dogs are happy, so I am going to play with my friends, Ben, my daddy, and my toys so that Layla can help mommy.

The last rule is the hardest and I was a little sad. I am not allowed to sleep with Layla. She is mommy's dog and I finally decided that I'm okay with Layla only being mommy's dog....want to know why!?!?!?? Because I GOT MY MOMMY BACK!!! She doesn't need a wheelchair like soldiers that lost a leg. All she needs is a sweet dog named Layla. Layla is her hero!!!



Picture of Your Family with their Service Dog

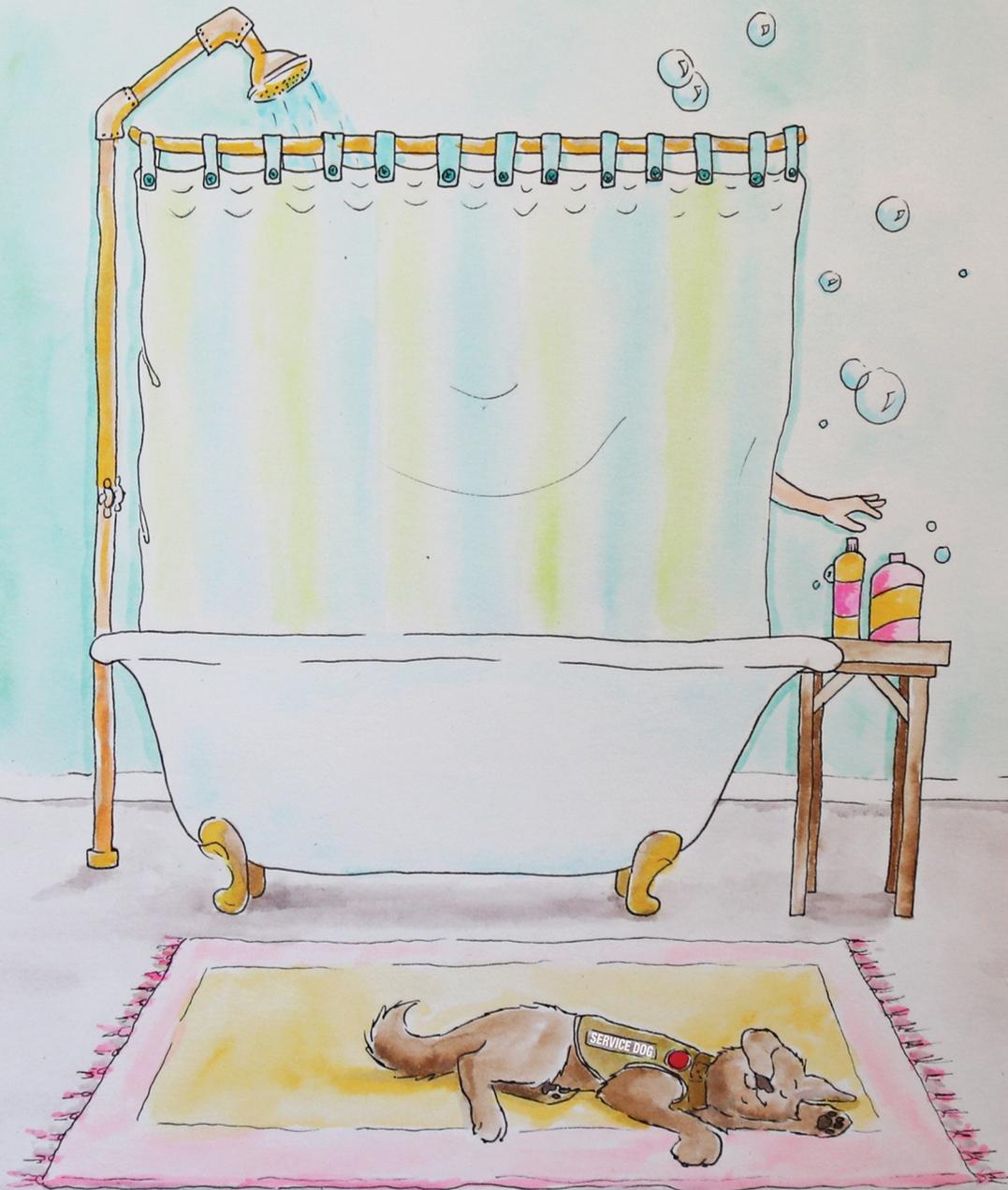
Mommy said something funny to help me remember why Layla is HER dog. If mommy was using crutches, it wouldn't help mommy if I played with her crutches when she really needs them. So Layla is mommy's dog, and I'm okay with that.

Mommy and Layla are coming home today. When I meet Layla I want to be as calm as possible. I am going to try really hard not to stare in her eyes because I think it will distract her. I am also going to wait until mommy gives me instructions on how to say hi to Layla. I would never want to get in the way of a hero who is helping someone!!!



Draw a Picture of Your Mom's
Hero Service Dog





Now that Layla has been with mommy for a while, I can see how much she helps. My mommy still has trouble sleeping sometimes, and sometimes she still gets quiet (I think she's remembering sad things), but it doesn't happen very much anymore. Mommy and Layla and I go to the store, we cook together, and we go to the movies and eat popcorn....just like we used to! Mommy laughs and helps me with my homework. Layla helped my mommy feel better!

Other ways to help your parent's service dog:

Never go in the dog's crate. It's his or her safe space. They need time to relax and rest, so make sure to leave them alone if they are laying down, sleeping, or eating.

If you want to help your friends learn how to be as mature as you are around a service dog, make sure to tell them they can't pet the service dog and give them tips on how you love your mommy's service dog without touching or distracting it.

It takes a while for a dog to get used to a new home. Just like you need time to get used to the dog, you'll need to give your mommy's new service dog some time to get used to the house, you, and her new life.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Auzadeh Harvey, LPCC (NM), LPC (CO), LPC (OR), MS, CEO, NCC, is a mental health advisor for American Humane's "Pups4Patriots" program. Harvey's clinical specialties include the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among veterans who have served during wartime, correctional mental health, program management and development, supervision, teletherapy, as well as talk therapy. She uses humor and education to empower her clients and create unconditional positive acceptance of current abilities and strengths. In addition to her work with American Humane, she operates as the mental health director for multiple correctional facilities and manages a private psychotherapy practice. Harvey holds licensure in numerous states and has served nationally on scientific advisory committees focusing on veterans and service dogs.

Robin R. Ganzert, PhD, is president and CEO of American Humane, the country's first national humane organization, which has been working for more than 100 years to support U.S. veterans and military animals. Through American Humane's "Pups4Patriots" program, the organization identifies dogs in need of forever homes and trains them to become lifesaving service dogs for veterans coping with Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury. For more information or to support this work, please visit: www.AmericanHumane.org/military.

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