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**Two Veterans and Their Service Dogs to Journey 6000+ Miles to
Help Vets Keep Their Pets**

Proceeds benefit new assistance program dubbed “Operation: Keep Your Spanky”

NEW BERN, NC – April 22, 2015 – On any given day, a quick review of your social media newsfeed will probably yield one or two videos of a cute cat or cuddly puppy, and many of those are jubilant pets being reunited with their military servicemember owner returning from deployment.

Animal companions play an important role in the stabilization and emotional well-being of our returning veterans.

“I don’t know where I would be without the companionship that my dog Spanky gave me when I came home from Iraq,” says Dan Spangler, who served as a sergeant in the Marine Corps. “Spanky saved me.”

Dan adopted Spanky in 2003 when he returned home from deployment. Dan needed months of medical treatment for an injury he sustained jumping from a truck when gunfire broke out at a checkpoint. Looking back, he realizes what an important role Spanky played in both his physical and emotional recovery.

Now Dan and Spanky are setting out on a more than 6,000 mile cross country trek from Camp Lejeune, NC to Camp Pendleton, CA to raise awareness and funds for “Operation: Keep Your Spanky,” a new program that provides resources, in-kind assistance and low-cost veterinary care for military families and veteran pet owners during times of financial crisis.

“I want all veterans to have a Spanky, but it’s a sad fact that military veterans often experience financial difficulties where they face the heartbreaking choice of giving up their pets,” says Dan.

Dan says that keeping pets in their homes not only benefits the veteran owners, but it benefits area shelters and rescue organizations who otherwise might end up with the pet.

“We are stopping that cycle and promoting responsible, life-long pet ownership,” says Dan.

Army Ranger veteran Joe Trainor, Jr. and his dog CT will join Dan and Spanky on their adventure, traveling in solidarity.

“As soon as I heard what Dan is doing, I knew I wanted to join in,” says Joe, who runs a dog training facility in Chicago and is the founder of 1Pet1Vet, an organization that pairs a military

Operation: Keep Your Spanky - 2

veteran with a dog saved from euthanasia. Joe is going blind due to traumatic brain injuries (TBI) he sustained on duty in Afghanistan, and knows this may be his last chance to see much of the country he fought for.

Like Dan, Joe credits his being alive today to a dog. Joe suffers from post-traumatic stress (PTSD) and after he made the rough transition to civilian life, he fell into a deep depression, sinking so low he contemplated suicide. Right at that moment, a dog leapt into his lap, gazing at him with complete compassion. The dog literally stopped Joe and saved his life.

The planned route will take Dan and Joe and their canine companions across the country, starting at Camp Lejeune, NC on April 26 and heading south to Myrtle Beach, SC and then on through Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Arizona and California, ending at Camp Pendleton. Dan hopes to reverse course through Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Washington, D.C., Virginia, and North Carolina, ending at Camp Lejeune. The goal is to be home by Memorial Day on May 25.

Dan acknowledges the ambitious nature of this adventure, and plans to keep followers up to date using social media. A tracking device donated by Voyce will monitor Spanky's steps, while GPS tracking devices provided by Garmin will provide live web tracking of the journey.

Volunteer support along the route is key.

"We will go by any means possible—walking for sure, but we'd also love to get rides along the way," says Dan. Hotel rooms have also been donated in a few cities, and more are welcome. Supporters can volunteer to provide transportation, shelter or "even just buying us lunch" on the Volunteer tab at www.KeepYourSpanky.com.

Donations for Operation: Keep Your Spanky may be made through Dan's non-profit 501(c)(3) foundation and are tax-deductible. Per-mile pledges as low as one cent per mile may be made through athlete.com at www.bit.ly/KeepYourSpanky, and flat sum donations are accepted via PayPal to contact@dreamersfoundation.org. None of these donations will be used for lodging, food or transportation during the journey.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available; for complete information, please download the sponsorship package at www.KeepYourSpanky.com.