



A PAW-SITIVE PRESENCE: CELEBRATING NATIONAL SERVICE DOG MONTH



BY HAILEY BRINDAMOUR, ACP*

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL SERVICE DOG MONTH, and these loyal companions can be a lifeline for Veterans and Service Members. Matt Tarlton, a former US Navy Senior Chief with 23 years in military law enforcement and K9 handling, knows this better than most. He's continuing to serve his community by providing K9 training via entrepreneurship and nonprofit leadership.

After he retired in 2023, Tarlton was making good money, but burning out in his role as a dog trainer for a local company. A chance encounter with a video clip starring TV host Steve Harvey inspired him to start his training business, NoQuarterK9LLC, where he would teach dog owners to be their own trainers. There was just one big unknown: How could Tarlton best reach the people who needed this service?

Tarlton, who was already familiar with ACP's no-cost mentorship program as a service rep for career services company RecruitMilitary, decided he could use a Mentor of his own. He linked up with Stephen Pollan, CEO and founder of two successful staffing companies, Pelocity and Assessment Technologies Group. They created an agenda for the year and refined Tarlton's approach to business ownership.

Pollan was immediately impressed by Tarlton's dedication and his openness to new approaches. "With Matt, it was special from the very beginning," says Pollan, who has over 25 years of experience as an entrepreneur. The pair married Pollan's proven strategies for growth with

Tarlton's vision and passion for K9 training, laying out a multi year plan to help Tarlton build a loyal client base.

Pollan and Tarlton drilled down into the minutiae that can make or break a business. They created marketing strategies and materials, analyzed web traffic to better understand and target demographics, and identified ways Tarlton could build name recognition in his community. Their methodical approach allowed them to measure success along the way and tailor their monthly discussions accordingly.

Now, NoQuarterK9 is thriving, with demand outpacing supply. Tarlton plans to grow operations even more. He envisions NoQuarter eventually including a "dog oasis" for canines and their companions, complete with a doggy bar, dock diving pool, and training kennel.

This year, Tarlton achieved a years-long goal when he launched BuildingBattleBuddies.org, a 501(c)3 organization that works with Veterans and First Responders who have experienced trauma in the line of duty. Building Battle Buddies "trains the trainer" through a three-week course that equips clients to teach their dogs to assist with their unique needs, building a stronger bond between canine and human. The organization just completed its first training and is actively interviewing more clients to expand their reach.

The US Department of Veterans Affairs provides a Veterinary Health Insurance Benefit to help cover the costs associated with service dogs. Veterans can connect with their state Department of Veterans Affairs to be connected with local resources and organizations.

For fellow entrepreneurs, Tarlton emphasizes the importance of getting help and guidance. "I couldn't ask for a better Mentor," says Tarlton of his ACP mentorship. "Stephen was instrumental in helping me brainstorm, find creative ways to attract customers, and stay focused on my short term goals."

"It's a great honor for me to support veterans in their journey to success," says Pollan, a three-time ACP Mentor who looks forward to continuing his work with Veterans and Military Spouses. If you are a post-9/11 Veteran or Active Duty Military Spouse, sign up to connect with ACP Ventures and begin your mentorship journey. You can also join us at the ACP Village today to find entrepreneurship resources and connect with our small business community! 