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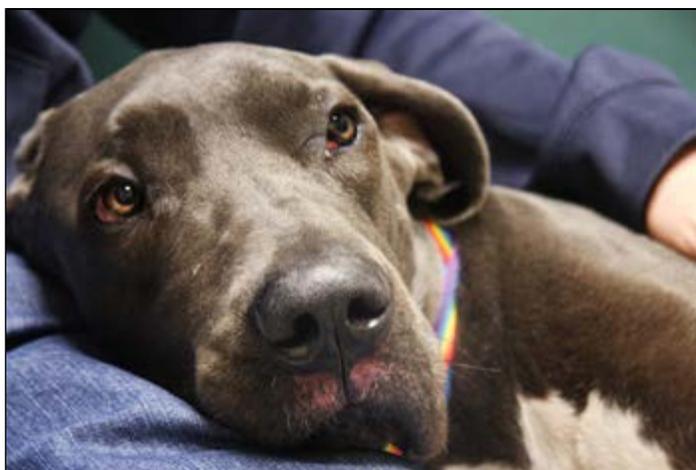
NEWS & EVENTS

VMTH Patient Nominated for Hero Dog Award

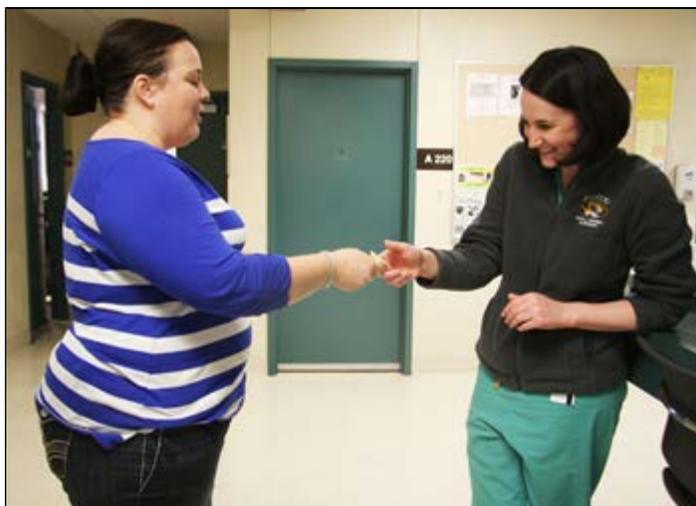
In the beginning, it was Bandit who needed a hero. When Kelly Brownfield and David Gist of Waynesville, Mo., picked out their Great Dane Duke, they noticed that his brother had mange and a large growth on his face for which the breeder had chosen not to seek veterinary care. They decided to adopt him, too, taking him to a veterinarian right away.

Two and a half years later, the dog they named Bandit has stolen the hearts of many who have met him and gained a reputation for being a hero to those he helps. As a therapy dog, Bandit spends most of his days bringing comfort to members of the military at the Fort Leonard Wood USO, where he has been deemed the official USO Comfort Dog, as well as patients at the Fort Leonard Wood hospital and residents at the St. James Veterans Home. He is one of 25 dogs nominated for the [2014 American Humane Association Hero Dog Award](#) in the therapy dogs category.

After developing cranial cruciate ligament tears in both of his back legs recently, Bandit's veterinarian referred him to the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital for surgery. Canine cranial cruciate ligaments are similar to anterior cruciate ligaments (ACLs) in humans. Ruptures of these ligaments are a



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Fort Leonard Wood USO Center Director Kelly Brownfield, Bandit's co-owner, presents a USO of Missouri Inc. coin to second-year resident Jessica Knapp, DVM, in appreciation of her work in

common injury in dogs, said Jessica Knapp, DVM, a second-year resident in small animal surgery at the MU College of Veterinary Medicine who treated Bandit.

To slow the degenerative process in Bandit's knees and reduce his pain, veterinarians at the VMTH decided to perform a tibial plateau leveling osteotomy. Because dogs have a steep slope to the top of their knees, the surgery involves making a circular cut in the top of the shin bone, or tibial plateau, and rotating the contact surface of the bone until it attains a relatively level orientation. The bone was stabilized with an eight-screw plate and a 10-screw plate.

Although the cranial cruciate ligaments in both of his legs were torn, Bandit's veterinarians only operated on his left leg during this surgery. There is a much higher complication rate if both legs are treated at the same time, Knapp said. He will have surgery on the right leg later.

The procedure meant two months of confinement for Bandit, who normally encounters about 2,500 people each week.

"I think the hardest part has been constricting his movements," said Brownfield, who works as the Fort Leonard Wood USO Center director and brings Bandit to work daily. "Bandit is used to being out and about, doing what he does best, which is putting smiles on anyone who comes into contact with him."

Brownfield said the comfort Bandit provides on a daily basis means much to those he encounters. She described a hospital visit in which Bandit helped a young soldier who was experiencing severe pain from an injury.

"The patient's glance met Bandit, and she motioned for him to come forward," Brownfield said. "She was still in obvious pain, with tears still rolling down her cheeks, but the calmness that came over both her and Bandit was amazing. Bandit was able to dry her eyes with a few kisses."

Members of the military often take their unit patches from their uniforms and place them on Bandit's therapy dog vest as a symbol of their appreciation for what he has done for them. He has received so many patches that Brownfield and Gist had to get a second vest to hold them

caring for Bandit. "We do not pass them out to just anyone, and they are rare to come by, but Bandit means a lot to thousands of troops around the world who have come into contact with him," Brownfield said. "Because of Dr. Knapp's level of professionalism, care and compassion, Bandit will make a full recovery to ensure he can continue lifting the spirits of those in need."



Bandit comforts a soldier in severe pain during one of his hospital visits. "Bandit was able to dry her eyes with a few kisses," Brownfield said. Brownfield and Bandit visited the soldier every day during her stay in the hospital.



Bandit greets owners David Gist and Brownfield after his surgery to repair a rupture in the cranial cruciate ligament in his left leg. The injury is common in dogs, Knapp said.

all. He now also sports an MU College of Veterinary Medicine pin given to him by VMTH staff.

Susan Hinkle, a Therapy Dog Inc. tester who performed Bandit's therapy dog test, nominated Bandit for the Hero Dog Award because of his impact on the community. The annual national competition recognizes dogs in eight categories: law enforcement dogs, arson dogs, service dogs, therapy dogs, military dogs, guide and hearing dogs, search and rescue dogs, and emerging hero dogs.

"The American Humane Association Hero Dog Awards celebrate the powerful relationship between dogs and people," the awards website states. "These amazing dogs provide compassion and comfort to transform people's lives with their unconditional love, devotion and intuition. Hero Dogs are ordinary dogs doing extraordinary things."

The awards contest consists of three rounds. In the first round, online voting will determine three semifinalists in each category. After that, the public and a panel of judges will choose a finalist in each category. From these finalists the public and celebrity judges will select the winner.

First-round voting continues until noon EST on June 6. People can submit one vote per category every day. Votes for Bandit can be cast at <http://www.herodogawards.org/vote/?nominee=58779771>.

For updates on his progress in the contest, go to <https://www.facebook.com/VoteForBandit>.

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Last Update: June 2, 2014