

"My Pledge to Our Veterans."

Lizzy VandeVoort

Did you know that approximately half of United States soldiers come home from conflict facing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? Veterans may develop this mental health diagnosis when they experience something traumatic. They already have a lot to get used to after deployment. A veteran's brain may be so used to conflict that they will always be looking over their shoulder and they may often feel uneasy and frightened. I believe that I can make a difference in a veteran's life in the cutest way possible... puppies!

PTSD is caused by witnessing or experiencing traumatic events. PTSD can start at different times for every soldier. PTSD in some cases may appear within a month of the traumatic event, while in other cases it may take a few years to appear. Mayoclinic.org states that symptoms of PTSD are grouped into four primary types: intrusive memories, avoidance, negative thinking, and changes in physical and emotional reactions. PTSD can get more severe as time passes. Some common treatments for PTSD include cognitive behavior therapy, stress inoculation therapy, and my personal favorite, service dogs.

The Puppy Jake Foundation specializes in assisting veterans with PTSD. This organization trains dogs to be able to do a service for a veteran. These service dogs provide veterans with constant companionship that helps them feel comfortable at all times. I think that this organization is great and it needs to become better known to the veterans that would benefit from it and potential supporters that could help Puppy Jake further its mission of helping veterans.

My great grandfather was a veteran. Although I never knew him, if he were still alive, I would say this... Thank you for all you did for the

United States of America. Thank you for showing your bravery, sacrifice, integrity and courage in the line of duty.

My pledge to our veterans is that I will thank them for the sacrifices they have made for me by sending letters to veterans with PTSD to show them how much I care about them and to introduce the Puppy Jake Foundation. I will support the Puppy Jake Foundation by donating money or supplies to benefit their service dogs. With these letters I can show kindness and respect to our veterans who have risked their lives to protect my life and my freedoms.

Sources:

- Mayoclinic.org
- www.puppyjakefoundation.org