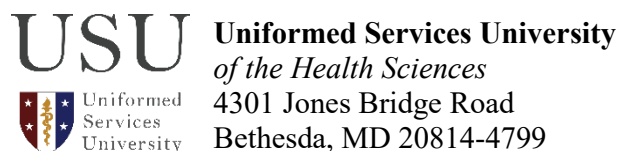


Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way



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New Facility dog Grover to bring ‘pawsitive’ impact to next generation of health care providers

Bethesda, Md. – The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) will enlist the support of a second facility dog, Grover, a two-year-old black Labrador named after a decorated WWII veteran. The new addition to the university – who will promote wellness on campus and teach the benefits of pet therapy in health care – will officially be welcomed to campus with an Army enlistment ceremony on Feb. 28, when he will become “Sgt. Grover,” combat medic.

Grover is service-bred and service-trained, and comes to USU from Hero Dogs, Inc. He will enhance the university’s well-being program and help future military health care providers learn new ways to care for patients. The choice was made for him to serve as an enlisted member in honor and recognition of the invaluable role and contributions of the enlisted personnel at USU.

Grover is also named for WWII veteran, Grover Sassaman, who passed away in 2020 at age 98. Sassaman served as an aircraft mechanic in the infamous “Black Sheep Squadron,” led by Gregory “Pappy” Boyington. Sassaman was injured in combat operations, earning a Purple Heart and other military decorations for his heroic service.

Grover joins USU’s first facility dog, Navy Cmdr. Shetland, a Golden Labrador Retriever mix who has been serving the university since 2019. At that time, USU’s School of Medicine became the first medical school in the country to have a permanent, live-in facility dog. Shetland far exceeded the university’s expectations, and the decision was made to add a second facility dog, explained USU Brigade Commander Army Col. Patrick Donahue.

“We wanted to build upon his positive impact as well as our ability to continue to teach our students the valuable role these animals have in supporting individuals, and our military medical community as a whole,” Donahue said. “Not only has our facility dog program served as an enormous source of positivity and community, especially through the daily challenges of the pandemic, but it has exposed our students to the concepts of animal-assisted interventions and the many ways dogs support humans.”

Assistance dogs are trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities, supporting individuals with low vision, even mitigating the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. Therapy animals, meanwhile, provide comfort and affection in a variety of settings to help improve physical, social, emotional and cognitive functioning.

Grover will also support the university’s well-being program, which includes year-round activities geared toward promoting strategies to mitigate and reduce the causes and effects of burnout in all settings and career stages. Through direct contact with students, faculty, and staff, Grover will offer yet another way of reducing stress with his friendly disposition, on-command “high-fives.”

With more military treatment facilities establishing facility dog programs, it is increasingly likely USU's students will encounter therapy dogs in the course of their training and throughout their military careers. USU students will be advantaged in understanding not only the value of a facility dog to a community, Donahue said, but also the potential benefits service animals might have on their patients.

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About the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences: The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, founded by an act of Congress in 1972, is the nation's federal health sciences university and the academic heart of the Military Health System. USU students are primarily active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who receive specialized education in tropical and infectious diseases, TBI and PTSD, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, global health, and acute trauma care. USU also has graduate programs in oral biology, biomedical sciences and public health committed to excellence in research. The University's research program covers a wide range of areas important to both the military and public health. For more information about USU and its programs, visit www.usuhs.edu.