

Veterans Moving Forward Assisting Veterans with Service Dogs

Veterans Moving Forward, Inc., is a 501c3 nonprofit whose HQ and Training Center is located in Dulles, VA. Our not-for-profit provides trained and certified service dogs to veterans dealing with physical and/or mental health challenges. Our Website is: www.vetsfwd.org.

VMF's "Vision" is to be The Premier, national, not-for-profit organization for veterans seeking and receiving assistance/service or skilled companion dogs at no cost to the veterans or their families, and to optimize veterans' employment in distributing service dogs to veterans to meet growing demands.

VMF makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our veterans by increasing their safety and independence within their environment. VMF differs from similar service organizations that only focus on veterans with PTSD or those of certain wars. If a veteran is wounded, lost a leg due to diabetes, dealing with PTSD, or any other mental or physical challenge, we will engage with them and their medical providers to see if one of our dogs can help the veteran to be able to "Move Forward" with their lives.

We are happy to announce the arrival of our two newest VMF family members, our new puppies Ashley and Hazel.

Ashley is a 7-month-old chocolate Labrador Retriever. She is named in honor and memory of Army 1st Ashley White who was killed during combat operations in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan on October 22, 2011 when the assault force she was supporting triggered an improvised explosive device. Ashley was assigned to the 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, North Carolina National Guard, Goldsboro, NC and served as a member of a Cultural Support Team attached to a Joint Special Operations Task Force in Afghanistan. As a Cultural Support Team Member on her first deployment to Afghanistan, White selflessly served. Ashley's actions exemplify the highest commitment to duty, honor, and country. In every instance she served with distinction in support of the Task Force and our great nation.

Ashley was commissioned in the U.S. Army as a Medical Service Corps Officer after her graduation from Kent State University. She completed the Medical Services Officer Basic Course at Fort Sam Houston, Texas and the U.S. Army Basic Airborne Course at Fort Benning, GA. Ashley was assigned to Co. C, 230th Bde. Support Bn., NC National Guard where she served as an Evacuation Platoon Leader. Her awards and decorations include the Parachutists Badge, the Ohio Faithful Service Ribbon, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Army Reserve Achievement Medal and the National Defense Service Medal. Ashley was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and the Combat Action Badge.

Hazel, a black Labrador Retriever, is named after Brigadier General Hazel Winifred Johnson-Brown (October 10, 1927 – August 5, 2011), US Army, Rtd. BG Johnson-

Brown was a nurse and educator who served in the United States Army from 1955 to 1983. In 1979, she became the first Black female general in the United States Army and the first Black chief of the United States Army Nurse Corps. She was also the Director of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Nursing.

Hazel Johnson-Brown enlisted in the military in 1955, seven years after President Truman eliminated segregation in the military. Gen. Johnson-Brown obituary states "rising in the ranks as she impressed her superiors with her skill in the operating room". She was incredibly talented surgeon who took assignments across the world, including Asia. Hazel Johnson-Brown served in Japan a few years after enlisting. Training nurses on their way to Vietnam. Twenty-four years later she made history when she was promoted to Brigadier General. With this promotion she took charge of 7,000 nurses in the Army Nurse Corps. Hazel Johnson-Brown was the first black woman to hold the post.

During Johnson-Brown's promotion she was quoted saying "Race is an incidence of birth" then furthering this by saying "I hope the criterion for selection did not include race but competence". During her enlistment she got her degree in nursing from Villanova, and her Masters in Teaching from Columbia. Her career was distinguished she won many a medal, including distinguished service medal, and was awarded army nurse of the year twice. She won a Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with Oak Cluster.

In 1977 Hazel was mentioned in the magazine Ebony, where they referred to Johnson-Brown as "one of the real 'heavies' in her field". They also anticipated Johnson-Brown to becoming "the first black woman general" in which she did.

After Gen. Johnson-Brown retired from the army in 1983 she headed the American Nurses Association's government relations unit as well as directed the George Mason University's Center for Health Policy as an assistant professor and later a professor on her own. A key to Hazel's success was driven by her immense well-rounded personality as well as her intellect. Hazel Johnson treated everyone the same and demanded that in return.

In 1990 during Operation Desert Storm, Johnson committed to her patriotic nature and volunteered to work in the surgical suite at Fort Belvoir, Virginia's Army Hospital. Hazel Johnson-Brown was assigned to go to Vietnam as well, but later became very ill. The unit she would have gone to was attacked shortly after arriving to their station in Vietnam. The nurse who ended up taking her place was killed in the surprise attack along with numerous others of the group. Many were injured and even murdered in the incident.

Hazel Johnson Brown died on August 5th, 2011 in Wilmington, DE at the age of 83. Hazel Johnson Brown died while en route to the hospital, which was then realized that the cause of Hazel Johnson Brown's death was said to be Alzheimer's.

For more information, to become a Volunteer, to apply for one of our great service dogs, or to make a tax-deductible donation, please visit the Veterans Moving Forward website: www.vetsfwd.org.