



HEARTS 4 HEROES USA

Founded by First Responders for First Responders!

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in strong support of Hearts4Heroes and their exceptional work in training and pairing Crisis Support K9s with first responders and emergency management professionals.

My name is Rick Bartee, and I currently serve as a FEMA USAR Blue Incident Support Team (IST) Leader. I am also the Retired Fire Chief for the City of Roseville, California, with decades of experience in emergency response, incident command, and responder wellness at the local, state, and federal levels.

Through Hearts for Heroes, I was partnered with Lady Liberty, my Crisis Support K9. I received her when she was just five months old, already fully trained and remarkably prepared to begin working in operational environments. I was immediately impressed by the quality, consistency, and depth of her training at such a young age. Her calm demeanor, focus, obedience, and ability to engage appropriately in high-stress environments were extraordinary and clearly reflected the professionalism and standards upheld by Hearts for Heroes.

Lady Liberty has since been actively utilized during crisis incidents, critical incident stress debriefings, and fire department community outreach programs. Her presence has had a meaningful and measurable impact, helping to lower stress, encourage communication, and provide emotional grounding for first responders, victims, and community members alike. She consistently performs with confidence and sensitivity, even in emotionally charged or chaotic settings.

In addition to her current role, it is my intent to bring Lady Liberty with me on future FEMA USAR responses, where I believe her skills will be an invaluable asset to team members operating under prolonged stress and austere conditions. Based on my operational experience, the integration of a properly trained Crisis Support K9 like Lady Liberty is not only beneficial but increasingly essential to responder health and mission effectiveness.



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Hearts for Heroes delivers far more than trained dogs—they deliver trust, preparedness, and a tangible commitment to the mental health and resilience of those who serve. I give them my highest recommendation without hesitation.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any additional information.

Respectfully,

**Rick Bartee
FEMA USAR Blue Incident Support Team Leader
Retired Fire Chief, City of Roseville, California
Handler – Lady Liberty, Crisis Support K9**

All the Best,

Rick

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"Be a Hero to our Heroes!"