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Jan 14, 2010

## Dog helps Iraq vet with PTSD: 'My little Marine'

08:01 AM

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Life has become calmer, safer and less stressful for Chris Goehner since he paired up with Pele, according to this story by the Associated Press.

Goehner, 25, a Wenatchee Valle, Wash., native now attending Central Washington University, suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which has afflicted him since serving two tours as a U.S. Navy corpsman attached to a U.S. Marine Corps emergency room unit in Iraq. He worked as a medic in Kuwait and Iraq in 2004 and 2005, before being diagnosed with PTSD and discharged in 2006.

Pele is his service dog. Since November, the two have become inseparable.

Goehner is one of only 21 Iraq War veterans suffering from PTSD who have been paired with service dogs since the military recently started a new program to try to help soldiers with the disorder.

Pele was trained for the program by an organization called Puppies Behind Bars. The nonprofit organization uses prison inmates to train service dogs in several New York regional prisons. For a story and video on the training of the dogs click [here](#).

Pele, a 20-month-old golden retriever/Labrador retriever mix, accompanies Goehner to his classes, when he goes to the store or mall and when he goes out to dinner. Pele sleeps in his bedroom at night, guarding his rest from haunting nightmares of bomb attacks and shot and blown-up soldiers.

"Pele is my little Marine. He watches my back," said Goehner, referring to the Marines who offered him protection when he was working close to the battle zone in Iraq.

Since getting Pele, Goehner said he's slept better than he has in three years. He's been able to take a nap for the first time since leaving the military. He can go into a crowded place with less fear that he's going to be attacked or shot at. He's not as unnerved by loud noises that remind him of shellfire and isn't constantly filled with anger and ready for a fight.

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[harnzilla](#) (23 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 4h 14m ago

I'm currently deployed, and due to be home in a couple of weeks. More than anything else, I'm looking forward to getting home to my basset hound... he's my kid and my best friend rolled into one four legged lump of bassety goodness.

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[NewzReader](#) (59 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 8h 9m ago

A good dog is one part loyal friend, and one part angel.

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[USN SS RET.](#) (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 13h 54m ago

GOD bless our troupes, they give so much to keep us free. They deserve the best care and support they can get. By having our prison inmates train service animals they can be productive members of our society and thrive forward.



CAPTION

AP

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[Siggs](#) (66 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 19h 14m ago  
God Bless US Navy Corpsmen. They do so much and never get enough credit

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[razzberryrose](#) (14 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 19h 32m ago  
Dogs are wonderful for so many reasons, and now we can add another one to the list. God bless them both.

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[calamityjen](#) (16 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1d ago  
Dogs are amazing for this sort of thing, on days when its too much and I want to just stay in with the curtains drawn and rage against the fact that my ex is getting out in less than 75 days, my Ferg will come and bump me with his big slobbery face and remind me that he is there and he will protect me and my kids. He is a big furry rock that takes away the fear and the stress and the anger, and helps me to keep a routine, and he forces me to think of others. When I was having nightmares and grinding my teeth and always on alert, he would come and sleep on my bed and stay close to calm me, now that I am doing better,he sleeps in the childrens room most nights being their big safe teddy bear. He is better than any medication than doctors could prescribe for PTSD, and dogs require the sufferer to think beyond their own problems, and that is an important part of healing.

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