Circle of Change seeks to provide veterans suffering from the effects of trauma and other emotional issues improvement in their quality of life, self-esteem, and social skills through observation, dog training and handling experiences that develop confidence, respect and trust.

**What Our Veterans are Saying**

“Calming a dog helps me to be calm...”

“I realized that if an animal can have success, so could I...with help. I just felt safe from the get go.”

“A dog forces you to be more social and more stable. A dog forces you to improve and be a better leader.”

“My life is saved because of the therapy I received.”

“This is the only treatment that has worked for me. I told my doctors and they want to know more about the program.”

“This program helped me to become more open to people besides veterans and to new opportunities.”

**What This Program Does**

- Builds communication & leadership skills
- Restores self respect, pride & dignity
- Encourages social interaction & quality lifestyle changes
**How Does This Benefit the Veteran**

The safe environment encourages veteran interaction with the dogs, the trainers, and other veterans.

Participants build communication skills and are able to apply lessons learned to their lives. This leads them to become more active members of society.

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**What Makes Us Unique**

The Veterans Dog Program differs from other organizations. Here’s how:

- Does not train or provide service dogs
- Does not provide dog adoptions.
- Appropriate dogs provided by trainers
- Dog ownership not required to participate
- Benefits gained without the responsibility of ownership

Veterans always gain valuable skills that help with dog ownership.

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**What is PTSD?**

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a condition that can be triggered by trauma.

**Symptoms**

- Irritability, anxiety and/or anger
- Overwhelming guilt or shame
- Flashbacks and/or nightmares
- Difficulty with relationships
- Emotional numbness
- Social isolation
- Hypervigilance

Veterans with PTSD are at high risk of:

- Depression
- Drug abuse
- Alcohol abuse
- Suicidal thoughts and/or actions
- Self-destructive behavior

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**How Does This Program Work?**

Referrals to Circle of Change come from collaborating mental health professionals, primarily the Veterans Administration Health Services and Vet Centers.

Throughout a 13-week session, veterans and their peer mentors meet once a week with experienced dog trainers to interact with each other and train dogs. Participants are exposed to all aspects of dog handling.

The dogs chosen for the program exhibit many of the same symptoms as veterans with anxiety issues, traumatic brain injury, and/or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Our classes provide a relaxed environment in which to observe, learn and socialize. Over time, participants see a pathway to their own recovery by helping dogs overcome behavioral challenges.

Confidence, trust and respect are the result of relationships built among the veterans, dogs and trainers.