



## Contact:

**SJC Media**

408-392-1199

[sjcmedia@sjc.org](mailto:sjcmedia@sjc.org)

## **Paws for Purple Hearts**

Megan Franke, Advancement Associate

(650) 684-7230

[menlopark@pawsforpurplehearts.org](mailto:menlopark@pawsforpurplehearts.org)

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## **Mineta San José International Airport Hosts Paws for Purple Hearts to Train Therapy Assistance Dogs for War Veterans and Warriors**

-- *Paws for Purple Hearts* chose Silicon Valley's Airport as first airport to train service dogs --

**San José, Calif.**— As Veterans Day approaches in November, one way [Mineta San José International Airport \(SJC\)](#) is honoring service men and women is by hosting service dog training for [Paws for Purple Hearts](#) (PPH). Through Paws for Purple Hearts, trained service dogs are placed with War Veterans and Warriors who have mobility impairments or trauma-related conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). Part of the training this year includes a “paws”-on experience at SJC to familiarize the service dogs with an airport environment.

Since the Menlo Park location supports both Veterans and active service members living within a two-hour drive of the San Francisco Bay area, the team chose Silicon Valley's Airport as their first airport to train their service dogs. PPH training allows the service dogs to experience the “lay of the land” of an airport, preparing them to better assist their assigned “Warrior” with navigation of a large space and crowds, completing the screening process, and arriving safely at the gate.

**SJC Director of Aviation John Aitken** said, “We are honored to work with Paws for Purple Hearts to provide support in training these incredible service dogs to navigate their way through our airport. We are always looking for ways to improve the travel experience for our customers, and this effort reflects our commitment to all passengers to provide a safe, healthy and reliable travel experience.”

“We are so grateful for the opportunity to have our dogs train at the Mineta San José International Airport. The more positive experiences our dogs have now, the more they will be able to navigate situations in the future,” said **Mike Hogan, PPH Chief Advancement Officer**. “When it comes to flying, some of our Warriors have PTSD and our dogs are trained to interrupt anxiety behaviors and provide the support they need to help them through the process.”

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PPH began in 2006 as a research program at the prestigious Bergin University of Canine Studies in collaboration with the Menlo Park Veterans Administration Medical Center, which then evolved into numerous locations nationwide. Since 2016, PPH has deployed 128 dogs for canine-assisted therapy programs.

SJC has a long history of partnership with various guide dog training programs aimed at a range of passengers' needs. In 2001, shortly after 9/11, [SJC was the first airport to offer therapy dogs](#) in the terminals to help calm passengers' nerves before flying.

For more information about Paws for Purple Heart or how you can donate to transform the lives of America's heroes, visit [www.pawsforpurplehearts.org](http://www.pawsforpurplehearts.org), or text "purplepaws" to 707070 to donate today.

#### **SJC: Transforming How Silicon Valley Travels**

Mineta San José International Airport (SJC) is Silicon Valley's airport, a self-supporting enterprise owned and operated by the City of San José. The airport, now in its 71<sup>st</sup> year, served nearly 15.7 million passengers in 2019, with nonstop service across North America and to Europe and Asia. SJC was America's fastest-growing major airport the past four years, based on percentage increase in passengers served. For more airport information, visit <https://www.flysanjose.com>.

#### **About Paws for Purple Hearts**

PPH's canine-assisted therapeutic programs increase efficiency and impact by utilizing dogs that are already in the service dog training program to help provide therapy to Warriors. This innovative program has allowed them to dramatically increase their reach and impact among the military and veteran population both in Menlo Park and around the Nation. Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® is when Veterans or Active Duty Service Members with PTSD or TBI help PPH trainers with service dog training. Soothing, light-hearted contact with PPH puppies and dogs, together with caring and capable trainers, eases a Warrior's symptom severity. For more information, visit [www.pawsforpurplehearts.org](http://www.pawsforpurplehearts.org).