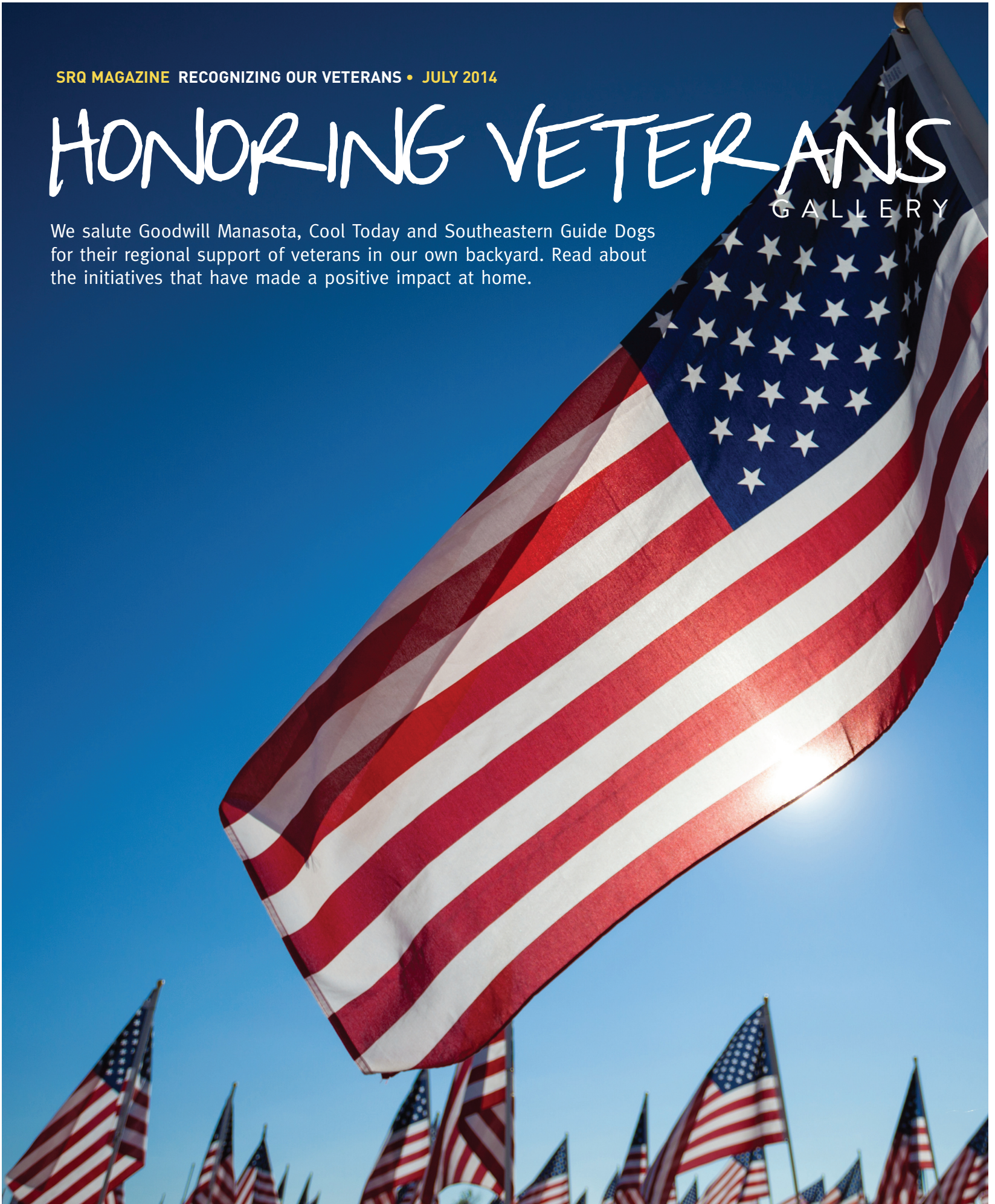


SRQ MAGAZINE RECOGNIZING OUR VETERANS • JULY 2014

HONORING VETERANS

GALLERY

We salute Goodwill Manasota, Cool Today and Southeastern Guide Dogs for their regional support of veterans in our own backyard. Read about the initiatives that have made a positive impact at home.



Goodwill Manasota

The American Veterans and Their Families. Goodwill is committed to serving veterans throughout the community through the American Veterans and their Families Initiative. The program is built around helping military members reintegrate into the community by utilizing a network of community partners to maximize local resources and services, all working to help veterans in need. This is done in the name of trying to ease our veterans' transition back into non-military employment and life.

Here is a glimpse of our 2013 veterans' program impact:

- **Numbers Served:** We served 329 veterans through 602 different services. The top four services requested was employments, financial assistance, veteran health and benefits and housing assistance. These four categories make up more than 70% of the services requested
- **Veterans & their Families Jobs & Services Fair:** Organized a job fair that was attended by more than 200 veterans and featured more than 160 employers and service organizations.
- **Veterans Resource Guide:** We published this guide which lists and describes veterans' resources available within the VA and in the local community. The purpose of this free guide is to assist returning veterans in simplifying their transition process by providing information right at their fingertips. There more than 20 categories listed alphabetically by topic from employment to healthcare, from housing to veteran service organizations. You can download a copy of the guide from our website. General McKinley said that this is one of the best resource guides that he has seen in the nation.
- **Veterans Task Force:** We also established a task force, which is a board of revered veterans in the area whose mission is to provide community-supported solutions.
- **Benefits:** Received designation that enables us to assist veterans with benefits, claims, disability, pensions, education and anything else on both federal and state level. This will allow us to interface with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, advice veterans on their claims.

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 ExperienceGoodwill.org



"Partnering with Goodwill has added a whole new opportunity to find well-trained, well-disciplined veterans. Our company prides itself on its proactive approach to hiring Veterans and 17% of our workforce are veterans, a number I hope to double with this new partnership!"

General Craig McKinley, Former Chief of the National Guard Bureau and Member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Goodwill Manasota is an industry-leading, 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization that changes lives through the power of work. With the sales of donated goods and philanthropic donations, Goodwill is able to assist people with disabilities and other barriers to employment by providing job skills training and employment opportunities. In 2013, we served more than 16,000 people, placed 537 people in jobs and assisted 329 veterans as they reintegrated back into the civilian workforce. Goodwill Manasota's economic impact back to the community is worth \$39.3 million. We accomplish our mission through a network of Good Neighbor Centers in Sarasota, Manatee, Hardee and DeSoto counties and our Mission Development Services (MDS) around North America. We have provided opportunities through programs such as Donated Goods Employment Services, Job Connection, American Veterans & their Families Initiative, JobsPlus, Supported JobsPlus, GoodwillWorks, White Glove Services, Good Neighbor Program and Ambassadors Program. Goodwill is one of the pioneers of the reduce-reuse-recycle movement and this past year diverted 37 million pounds out of the landfill. Goodwill Manasota is legally organized under the laws of the United States and the State of Florida. We are accountable to a local Board of Directors. Goodwill Manasota in essence belongs to this community, and is NOT owned by any individual or company.

"As a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the U.S. Army, I've experienced the worst of Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. I've survived seven explosions and came home only to face the battle of a lifetime. I brought home a souvenir from Iraq—a virus that stole my vision and left me completely blind. I gave up. I withdrew from family and friends, and hid behind fear and four walls. After fighting for freedom, I became a prisoner of darkness and depression. Then I met Angel, my first Southeastern Guide Dog. As my eyes and my friend, Angel gave me my life back. Now I'm with my second guide dog, George, and together we're unstoppable. George helps me fight anxiety and claustrophobia in crowds. With his help I'm on the go, training for triathlons, racing sailboats, hiking in Peru, and living like I've always lived—fully, completely, and free." Kathy Champion, Retired US Army, LTC

Southeastern Guide Dogs

As one of the most respected guide dog schools in the United States, Southeastern Guide Dogs has been changing lives for more than 30 years. And it starts with our extraordinary dogs. We match impeccably trained guide dogs with visually impaired individuals, providing a priceless, independent lifestyle. Our dogs learn over 40 commands, so students must learn, too. For 26 days, our students live on our Palmetto campus, training from our Freedom Walk to downtown Sarasota and beyond. On behalf of American heroes, our Paws for Patriots program provides guide dogs for visually impaired veterans, Veteran Service Dogs for veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Facility Therapy Dogs spreading encouragement in veterans' medical facilities. At Southeastern Guide Dogs, we offer our dogs and services at no cost to the deserving individuals who need them, and we receive no government funding.

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