

Pets for Vets Founder Wins Award

Mar 17, 2014 by: Pet Age Magazine Staff

Clarissa Black, an animal trainer, founded Pets for Vets after she visited VA Long Beach Healthcare System's health facility with her dog, Bear. She saw the positive effect a dog can have on veterans suffering from PTSD and other conditions. The organization now has 19 chapters in 17 states.



"For us at Cigna, one of the best parts of the GO YOU Awards process has been connecting with individuals who've turned their personal passion into effective action," David Figliuzzi, executive director of the Cigna Foundation, said. "To know that Clarissa will now be using her GO YOU grant to transform her passion into better lives for even more of our veterans is especially exciting."

The GO YOU Award comes with a \$50,000 Cigna Foundation grant for Pets for Vets. Black said she will use the money to form additional chapters in other states and to match more shelter pets to veterans.

Facebook users chose Black as the GO YOU Award winner via an online vote held Nov. 4-11. She was one of four nominees for the award, all of whom previously received \$20,000 Cigna Foundation grants for their charities. Black and Pets for Vets won handily with 70 percent of the Facebook vote.

"Bringing our brave veterans together with some wonderful animals is reward enough, but it's always energizing to know that people appreciate what Pets for Vets does," Black said. "I want to thank everyone who voted, and to thank the other GO YOU Award nominees. We're all in this for the same reason, helping others."