

# Those who make a difference

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**TNB** | Your Bank for Life

## About Alan

The youngest of three boys, Alan grew up in the small northwest Louisiana town of Homer. He signed up for the delayed enlistment program in February his senior year and three days after high school graduation joined the Air Force. However, 18 months in it was “not what I was looking for” and he transferred to the U.S. Marine Corps. Alan began boot camp in San Diego in 1972. He wanted to work in security, specifically the K-9 division, but had to wait until he was 21. In the meantime, he worked as a flight engineer on C-130s in Cherry Point, North Carolina. When he turned 21, he was selected for embassy work and was offered his first choice: the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, where he worked with bomb detection dogs. Later, he was on the detail with HMX-1, the Marine Corps presidential helicopter squadron. He served two years while Gerald Ford was president, then took a medical separation. He was called back during a shortage of canine handlers for nine months under President George W. Bush. After leaving the service, Alan did a number of jobs: professional photographer, police officer in Shreveport, Louisiana, flight instructor, and he attended seminary to become a counselor. He was a counselor in Lubbock, Houston and at the Doris Miller VA here from 2014 to 2017 before launching WhiteHaven Canine Evaluators, a dog training business that includes his dog, Szva.



## Alan White

**W**ith 11 years of military service working with five canines, it made perfect sense for Alan White to open a dog training business after retiring from the Doris Miller VA in 2017.

It made even more sense to him to branch out with a nonprofit component to pair emotional support dogs with military veterans who need them.

“I didn’t want a job,” White said of his

retirement, “but I helped friends with their dogs and they talked me into training dogs for others.”

White opened WhiteHaven Canine Evaluators, which provides training for dogs and their owners. Some work as emotional support animals; others are trained to be therapy dogs that go into hospitals and nursing homes.

In December 2020, he began work on the nonprofit aspect of the business

to provide dogs for military veterans. He established a board, with most members having a military connection. He had already started to search for land for a training facility instead of traveling across five counties in his vehicle.

He found land in Robinson with a metal building that once served as a bus barn for Harvest Time Revival. Grants and donations helped him clear the land and build the facility. WhiteHaven Canine

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Evaluators will hold an open house from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 1 at 1208 Waverly Drive to show it off to the community.

The air-conditioned building allows him to have classes inside when the weather is too hot or cold. The facility currently has six kennels, with one sponsored and designated for the Dogs on Deployment program. That program allows a deployed military service member to board their dog with White until they return.

In addition to standard training classes, WhiteHaven provides board-and-train options.

White knows the importance of dog companionship. His own emotional support dog, Szva ("Zeeva"), an 8½-year-old German shepherd, helps with his anxiety that came out of his military service and she is able to sense when his blood sugar goes low.

"Szva has saved my life four times since April 2018," said White, who has diabetes. "Two times she woke me up from a dead sleep when my blood sugar got too low. She smells it 30 minutes beforehand."

Szva also is invaluable during the training classes, he said, stepping in to keep apart dogs that become aggressive.

"Szva is the best helper dog," White said. "She's a protector. She doesn't go for that bad behavior."

Veterans applying for dogs have to meet certain criteria, including being at least 40% disabled. White also does home visits, checking the yard and house to make sure it's a good situation for the dog and owner.

"I don't look at breeds," White said. "I look at temperament. If they have any bite history, I won't train them. Every dog is different. You learn to read their body language."

This is a monthly feature highlighting someone involved in making others' lives better. To submit someone for future consideration, email [ken.sury@wacotrib.com](mailto:ken.sury@wacotrib.com).



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