In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, thousands of New Yorkers took to the streets to clear rubble, offer supplies, and search for survivors. It was a powerful act of resilience in a deeply trying time, and while most of the individuals helping with the disaster stood on two feet, more than 300 canines also answered the call to service.

Dogs of all breeds and backgrounds, including search and rescue dogs, police dogs, service dogs, and therapy dogs, were brought in to offer supplies, and search for survivors. It was a powerful act of resilience in a deeply trying time, and while most of the individuals helping with the disaster stood on two feet, more than 300 canines also answered the call to service.

Search and rescue dogs and their handlers worked 12–16-hour days, searching for survivors and victims. They worked through dangerous conditions: Many dogs burned their paws as they dug through hot rubble, and both handlers and canines inhaled toxic dust. The task was both physically and mentally exhausting for the dogs during their shifts. Some dogs that found deceased victims refused to eat or interact with other animals. Search and rescue dogs became increasingly stressed and depressed the longer they searched without any results, mirroring their handlers. It wasn’t uncommon for handlers to stage mock “findings” of survivors to keep the dogs’ spirits up.

Fortunately, the sacrifices these dogs and their handlers made did not go unnoticed. Many dog owners were inspired to earn their search and rescue certifications after the events of 9/11, promising to aid in future disasters and hopefully lessen the impact of such catastrophes.

After 9/11, various researchers conducted many studies examining the effect this kind of work has on animals, both physically and mentally. Many of these studies wouldn’t be possible without the AKC Canine Health Foundation, so if you’re looking to give back this September, visit them at their website to see how you can help: AKCCHF.org

In July, we sponsored the second annual Texas Patriot Ruck March that was held in Robstown. This event was established to bring attention to the issue of burn pits — a subject I want to talk about this month.

The burn pits have been exposed as another dark side of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Burn pits were used by the military as a way to dispose of trash. However, they turned into health nightmares for many of our men and women who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The pits were used to burn all kinds of material — plastic, medical waste, batteries, and appliances. In some instances, they even burned dead animals and human body parts. That last one often catches people off guard, but that’s the reality. To get the fire started, they would often douse the material in jet fuel, so these pits would burn for long periods of time.

Part of the problem was the lack of oversight about what was being burned, and much of the materials in these pits put off toxic fumes. The health risks of inhaling these fumes are very serious, and it’s been compared to the air quality first responders breathed in on 9/11, which has resulted in numerous health issues for those brave men and women, including cancer.

Similar side effects are being experienced by service members who breathed in burn pit smoke in Iraq and Afghanistan. In many cases, burn pits were raging within 100 yards of where these soldiers slept. People were breathing these toxic fumes day and night.

Now, more and more service members are reporting that they’ve developed all kinds of respiratory issues, some very severe. And their options for help are limited. So far the Veterans Administration (VA) won’t recognize these issues, and neither will the Pentagon.

One company, KBR, Inc. (formerly Kellogg Brown & Root) was part of a class-action lawsuit involving soldiers who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. This company played a significant role in facilitating the burn pits.

The Supreme Court came back to say that KBR has immunity. They were serving as a government contractor and therefore fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. government — and you can’t sue the government. It was another roadblock for veterans who just wanted to move on with their lives.

This decision was devastating for a lot of people. Veterans who were exposed to the “black smoke” of the burn pits are losing their jobs due to the health issues. Some can’t get jobs because they can’t pass a physical. Even worse, these service members can’t get any compensation, because no one will recognize the root of their problems.

Thankfully, we’re working hard to change this. We’ve actually been in contact with Jon Stewart, the former host of Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show.” He’s been doing a lot of good work...
4 Driving Habits We All Need to Stop

Distracted Driving

We have all been stuck behind the person in front of us who continuously flashes their brake lights, overcorrects their steering, or takes forever to go when the light turns green. You pass them up only to find that they are on their cellphone, putting on makeup, or chowing down. Don’t be “that person”; save the texting, eating, or whatever else for later. It can always wait.

Driving Too Fast for Road Conditions

Whether it’s foggy outside, raining, or even snowing (not exactly an issue in South Texas), there is always one car that seems to be invincible to the elements and continues to drive the normal speed limit or faster when it really calls for slower, more cautious driving. It’s not only annoying but also extremely dangerous to drive recklessly in low-visibility weather. Depending on the circumstances, your vehicle may not grip the road as well and can cause a serious collision if not driven properly, so it’s important to take caution. It’s not worth arriving a few minutes early when there is a slight chance of not arriving at all.

Not Signaling When Changing Lanes

This is a common habit that can lead to road rage, a ticket, or even a collision. Use your signal light as necessary to alert other drivers of your intentions. That also doesn’t mean to switch on your turn signal after you already started to switch lanes.

Leaving High Beams On

There are places and circumstances that call for high beams — cruising down Ocean Drive is one of them. There is nothing more irritating than driving down the road and being blinded by a light almost a mile away. Be considerate of other drivers and try to routinely check your dashboard to make sure your high beams aren’t on. If you are using your high beams because your low beam bulbs have burned out, get your bulbs replaced ASAP!

CLASSIC APPLE CRISP

What do you do when apples are in season but you don’t have time to make a pie? You opt for a crisp, of course.

INGREDIENTS

Filling:
- 5 lbs Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and chopped
- 1/4 cup pecans, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tbsp lemon juice

Topping:
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 6 tbsp chilled butter cut into pieces
- 1/4 cup pecans, coarsely chopped

DIRECTIONS
1. Heat oven to 350 F.
2. In a mixing bowl, mix all filling ingredients together. Transfer to individual serving ramekins.
3. In a different mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, cinnamon, and salt for the topping. Mix in butter until it forms lumps roughly the size of a pea, then stir in pecans. Sprinkle topping over filling.
4. Bake for 35–40 minutes, let stand for 10 minutes, and serve.

Helping get 9/11 first responders the help they need after sexual members of Congress seemed to simply not care about the people who risked their lives for others.

Stewart is onboard to help bring attention to the victims of burn pits. He certainly has a lot on his plate, but it’s all for a great cause. We, too, are happy to do whatever we can to bring attention to those affected by the burn pits and hopefully get them the help and compensation they need to move on with their lives.

–Gregory Herrman

P.S. On a very different topic, I want to recognize Debra Garcia, our business manager here at Herrman & Herrman. She is celebrating her 25th year with us. Thank you, Debra, for being such a great part of our team, and thank you for all that you do to make Herrman & Herrman what it is!

Debra Garcia

We, too, are happy to do whatever we can to bring attention to those affected by the burn pits and hopefully get them the help and compensation they need to move on with their lives.