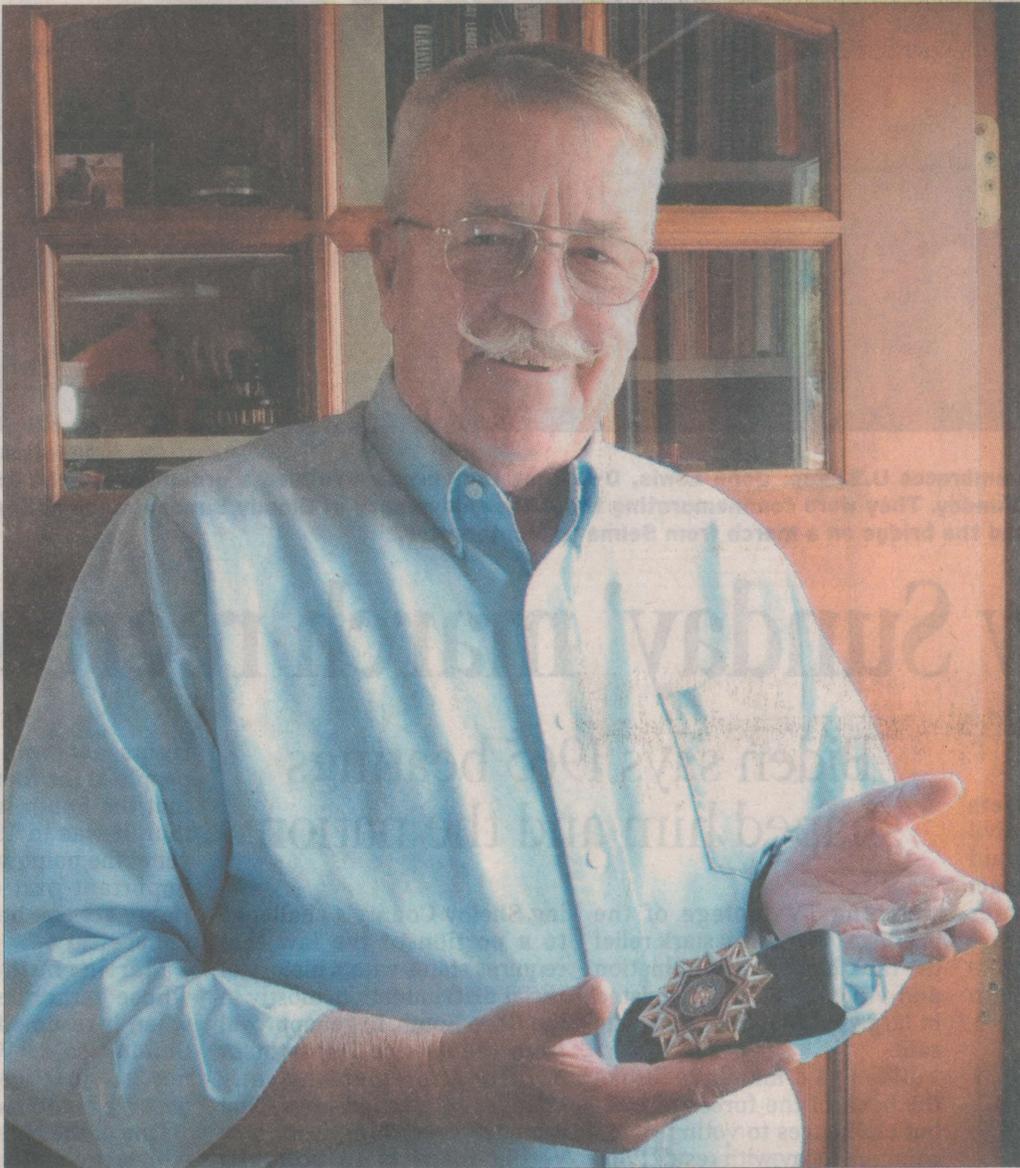


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Alan Driscoll said his organization, K9s of the War on Terror, provides the only mechanism for awarding medals to American military and law enforcement dogs.

RON SCHLOERB
CAPE COD TIMES

Canine kudos

Falmouth veteran establishes group to honor dogs in military service

By **AMY ANTHONY**

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FALMOUTH – Most of the walls in the Waquoit studio Alan Driscoll shares with his wife, Bonnie Maresh, are covered with Maresh's paintings, but in one room hang photos of Dutchess, Driscoll's canine companion during the Vietnam War.

"I had an extremely close relationship with my dog," said Driscoll, 71, one of the first Air Force sentry dog handlers in Vietnam.

In 2009, Driscoll formed the non-profit organization K9s of the War on Terror (K9WT) to recognize the contributions of military, law enforcement and Department of Homeland Security dogs since the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Driscoll said his dog-handling experience in Vietnam in 1966 and 1967 "absolutely influenced" his decision to form K9WT.

Driscoll said his organization provides the only mechanism for awarding medals to American military and law enforcement dogs. Although other countries do so, the United States has no such system in place, he said.

Handlers from around the country can nominate their dogs for the K9WT award by submitting an application, which can be found on the group's website, www.k9wt.org, and Driscoll and a committee review the nominations and verify qualifications.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ALAN DRISCOLL

Alan Driscoll with his sentry dog, Dutchess, in Vietnam.

Dogs: Honoring 'selfless' canines of combat

from A1

In 2012, K9WT awarded its first two medals: one to Besy, a German shepherd who assisted in border patrols, checkpoint operations and counterexplosives detection in Afghanistan, and one to Ryky, a Malinois who helped clear paths for medical personnel after an improvised explosive device attack in Afghanistan.

"It's important to recognize the dog," Driscoll said. "We recognize the handlers, too, but we recognize the dog first."

About 10 years ago, Driscoll reunited with Edward Hobbs, a fellow sentry dog handler, through the Vietnam Dog Handler Association, a group dedicated to honoring the memory of its military dogs.

Hobbs, of Houston, is now the secretary on the board of directors and works on fundraising.

"You're closer to that dog than anyone else," Hobbs, 68, said of the relationship between handler and canine.

"Too many people take dogs for granted," said Michael Lemish, one of four members on the K9WT review committee. "With all the technology we have, we still rely on dogs."

In 2000, Driscoll was involved in helping to pass "Robby's Law," which facilitates the adoption of retired military dogs when their work ends, said Lemish, a military dog historian whose book "Forever Forward," which



focuses on K-9 operations in Vietnam, discusses the passing of the federal law.

"Prior to 2000, dogs were not retired to civilians," said Lemish, a Mashpee resident. "They were

euthanized after service."

In 2002, Driscoll adopted Baro, a German shepherd who was injured during military training and a "great companion," Driscoll said.



RON SCHLOERB PHOTOS/CAPE COD TIMES

Alan Driscoll strolls with Baro, a retired military dog he adopted in 2002. Driscoll's group recognizes the contributions of combat and law enforcement dogs with the medals above.

"With all the technology we have, we still rely on dogs."

MICHAEL LEMISH

member of K9WT review committee

In addition to awarding medals, Driscoll and his colleagues are in the process of creating a monument that will serve as a memorial to dogs involved in the war on terror and looking for a site for it.

"We can at least make sure dogs in this conflict get recognized," said Driscoll. "They are so selfless."