

# Puppy Love

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Within hours of the September 11 attacks, thousands of rescue workers from across America deployed to ground zero to help in the search and rescue efforts. Joining the endeavor were dogs specially trained in search and rescue, police work, therapy and comfort. It is estimated that more than 300 dogs took part in the search, rescue and recovery efforts at Ground Zero. Working alongside their handlers, the four-legged heroes worked tirelessly climbing huge piles of debris while fires still smoldered. Remarkably, these four legged rescuers worked daunting twelve hours shifts for as long as two weeks at a time with no break.

## Morale Faltered...

The search for signs of life or human remains was mentally and physically taxing on the dogs. The dogs became discouraged when they found so few living people and lost their drive to search. Aware of the importance of morale in these dogs and to keep their motivation high, their handlers would stage a “mock find” so the dogs could feel successful.



Back in 2001, Bretagne was a fresh graduate of *Disaster City* when she was deployed to New York shortly after the World Trade Center attacks. She continued deployments to other natural disasters, including Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, for the next eight years. In 2009 Bretagne left Texas Task Force 1 to focus on her work as a local fire department search and rescue dog. In her later years, Bretagne visited elementary schools encouraging at risk children to read out loud to her; and they really did! When the time came to say goodbye she was given a hero's farewell. Firefighters and rescue workers lined the sidewalk as her body, draped in an American flag, was carried out. Tears were shed by many. But, all knew Bretagne, now 16, had lived a full life: she accepted every challenge with courage and dedication, embracing the sorrows and joys with an open heart. She knew what she did mattered, and for her that was enough.



The 9/11 Memorial Museum has dedicated a “Dogs of 9/11” exhibit honoring the K-9 dogs of 9/11. This fiberglass statue was one of more than 100 icons created through DOGNY, an AKC’s public-art fundraising effort. The statues were displayed in public places around the city and auctioned for a total of \$3.5 million. The AKC donated all of the proceeds to search-and-rescue organizations.