



## SERVICE DOG EARNS FIRST STAR AT 'POWER PLAY FOR HEROES'

By Melissa Walsh

U.S. military veteran Mike Ronan dropped the puck to kick off the 2017 Power Play for Heroes hockey game. But the event's first star went to his service dog, Julie.

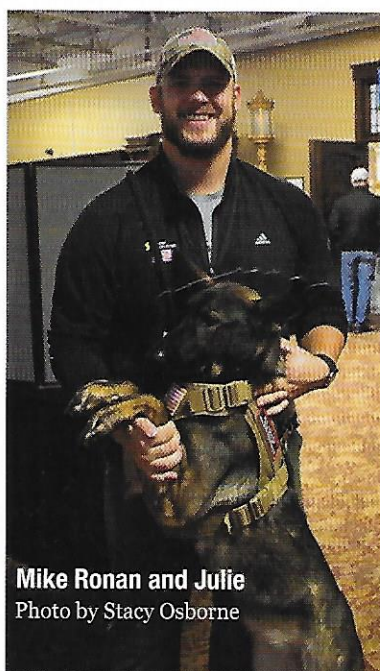
The charity game between Team STAHLs and The Detroit Red Wings Alumni at St. Clair Shores Civic Arena Sunday, Nov. 12 was part of the STAHLs' Power Play for Heroes weekend celebrating military veterans. The Stahls family dedicated the proceeds from the 2017 events to Guardian Angels, a Florida-based charitable organization that pairs medical service dogs with military veterans around the country suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression disorders and traumatic brain injury.

Guests of honor Ronan, a Marine Corps sergeant veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and his service dog Julie appeared

before the crowd of hockey fans between periods to present information about Guardian Angels. Ronan also hit the ice with Team STAHLs as they faced veteran pro-hockey players in a spirited game of speed, playful infractions and shots lighting up the nets at both ends, as well as brightening the faces of the many fans in attendance.

In the DRWA net was veteran airman and hockey goalie Gregg Malicke. The former Wolverine who played for the Grand Rapids Griffins followed his hockey career by enlisting in military service. He served eight years as a pilot with the 107 Fighter Squadron with deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan before transitioning into medicine as a flight surgeon.

"When they can put something together like this, it's just an honor to be part of it," Malicke says.



Mike Ronan and Julie  
Photo by Stacy Osborne



Right, Mike Ronan, Ronan's fiancée Olivia Radke, Guardian Angels dog Julie and Guardian Angels Michigan Regional Coordinator Jolanthe Bassett

Photo by Stacy Osborne



"Everybody has their own experience over there. And everybody comes back in a different way, whether it's change for the good or change for the bad."

Paired with Julie in January 2017, Ronan says, "Julie's been pretty fantastic."

Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and traumatic brain injury, Ronan experiences panic and anxiety attacks and seizures. Julie — trained to sense a chemical change in Ronan's body — alerts him and calms him.

"Within a week of getting Julie I was going from sleeping an hour and a half or two hours a night to sleeping full nights with no nightmares almost instantly," Ronan says.

"She's made my life a lot easier," says Ronan's fiancée, Olivia Radke, "because when he had his panic attacks, I'd be the one comforting him. Julie brings him back much faster."

Handling Eastside metro Detroit fundraising activities for the Guardian Angels, Grosse Pointe Farms resident Mary Lamparter raised \$150,000 in September 2017 and \$160,000 in 2016.

"I'm a fundraiser. And I'm dedicated to Guardian Angels,"

says Lamparter.

Her work to support 2017 Power Play for Heroes brought the organization another \$18,000, in addition to the matching contribution by the Stahls for a total of \$36,000. The family urges the community to contribute to Guardian Angels to help them meet their goal of \$40,000 — the cost of housing, training and pairing two dogs.

According to Guardian Angels Michigan Regional Coordinator Jolanthe Bassett, the dogs undergo 1,500 to 2,000 hours of training. Pairings with veterans is facilitated word-of-mouth. Qualifying conditions include a mental or physical disability limiting a major life activity, capability to work with and care for a service dog and ability to train at one of the Guardian Angels Florida locations. With the exception of a \$25 application fee, the 501(c)3 organization provides service dogs at no cost to qualified recipients.

"It's a pretty well-oiled machine," says Bassett.

For more information about Guardian Angels or to make a donation, visit [medicalservedogs.org](http://medicalservedogs.org).



Photo by Michael S. Doré