

# Shy Wolf Sanctuary wolf dogs bring peace to local veterans

**Thaddeus Mast**, Naples Daily News Published 4:11 p.m. ET Aug. 25, 2019 | Updated 6:24 p.m. ET Aug. 25, 2019

Veterans strode up to the 10-foot-tall wooden gate surrounding Shy Wolf Sanctuary on a mission — build a bridge for the resident foxes.

Ozzy, a large wolf dog, pulled at his leash as they entered. The fluffy giant wasn't looking for a fight. He wanted attention and some pats and scratches from veterans in Home Base SWFL.

Ozzy got his pats.

A dozen veterans of all ages and branches stepped into the small courtyard as [Shy Wolf](https://shywolfsanctuary.org/) volunteers explained the sanctuary's history and purpose. They take in abandoned or traumatized wolf dogs and give them a home. Some veterans could relate to the animals' troubled pasts.

After the introduction, the men and women got to work. One group toured the 2.5-acre facility while another began threading wire through 2x4 boards. The fox space needed a bridge, and Home Base members needed a job, said Deborah Todd, 8-year U.S. Air Force veteran.

"One problem (veterans) have is lack of finding meaningful pursuits in life," Todd said. "This is an opportunity, being here. It's amazing."

Members of [Home Base SWFL](http://homebase.org/wellness-fitness/warrior-health-fitness/southwest-florida/) regularly exercise and get together to help overcome a painful transition from military to civilian life, Todd said. Volunteering and touring Shy Wolf Sanctuary is one part of the group's mission.

Building a bridge for foxes is a great volunteer experience, but some veterans connected with the wolf dogs, who were often abandoned or mistreated before finding a home at Shy Wolf.

Fernando Moreau spent 25 years in the army and three tours in the Middle East. He rose through the ranks before leaving the military five years ago.

"I went from someone with power and authority to a nobody," Moreau said. "You're never taught how to deal (with the change)."

Depression, thoughts of suicide and possible murder ran through his head while Moreau denied anything was wrong. His former wife, scared for her life, fled to Southwest Florida two years ago. Moreau followed and began accepting his problems.

Home Base SWFL was the help he needed.

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Moreau keeps involved in the organization that he said helped save his life. Plus, he has two huskies of his own and wouldn't miss seeing wolf dogs for anything.

"It's amazing here," he said.

Home Base SWFL is the newest participant in the therapeutic Healing Hearts Program offered by Shy Wolf Sanctuary. Organizations protecting children in need let kids play with wolf dogs that have gone through similar experiences. They volunteer by painting animal enclosures.

The veterans are the first adults to go through the program but substituted painting with bridge-building.

It was a success.

"I'm bringing my son next time," Moreau said.

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