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Tripler's Four Legged Friend Wins This Year's Hero of the Year Award

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The 2014 Hero of the Year for the Hawaii State Chapter of the American Red Cross Association weighs 50 pounds, has golden fur, stands on four legs, and loves to interact with the patients of Tripler Army Medical Center.

Bailey, an 8-year-old golden retriever, received the annual award on March 8, 2014 at the Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa.

Bailey is part of a special program ran through Tripler called the Human Animal Bond Program, where she is not quite certified as a therapy dog, but still wags her tail at the opportunity to help others.

Melvin and Arlene Miyamoto adopted Bailey when she was just a puppy, and together as a family they have melted the hearts of patients throughout the hospital.

"She loves to go to the center for the aging. We've gone there for about four years now and she has made a lot of friends there. But I know she loves the hospital in general and the people that she meets there," Melvin said.

The Miyamoto family has been visiting Tripler every Saturday, making their way around the facility.

Bailey is one happy puppy when she gets to see her friends at the hospital.

As they prepare to journey to Tripler, Bailey becomes what Melvin describes as a furry ball of excitement and the feeling is mutual once the patients see her.

"For the people who see her every week, they sort of develop a bond with her. It sort of takes their mind off of the medical issues that they might be having. For those that don't get visitors it's a good chance to have someone to speak with. It gives those who are not allowed to have dogs a chance to bond with an animal once again," he said.

Whether they hang the award above the mantle or on the fridge, Melvin says Bailey's real reward is the opportunity to walk the halls of Tripler and seeing the smiles of the patients young and old.

"Bailey is a dog that sort of thrives on human interaction. That is one of the things that she looks forward to is meeting and greeting other people."

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