

Some men are sitting in chairs, others on 5 gallon buckets staring at their comrades sift carefully through debris hoping for any sign of life. No one is talking.

A multitude of expressions sweeps over their dirt stained faces as we approach one of the many stations around the "pile" When they find out that the dogs are brought in to see them, some joke, others ask what it is that the dogs do. I make my way towards them and ask Tikva to go say 'hi.' Her enthusiasm changes to calm. She becomes keen on making her way towards a man sitting and staring at the pile. She touches her nose to his knee, as he reaches out to pat her, she lifts her paws up towards his lap as if she too is reaching. He carefully lifts her into his lap and is surprised to feel the softness of her fur. She tucks her face into the crook of his arm and waits for his fingers to massage her. Perhaps she too is seeking comfort. We remain at this site for about 2 hours. Conversation is lighthearted with one while another strokes Tikva's fur, sharing about his experience of the last 12 days... "Wow", says Karen in awe as we leave the site. "Those dogs did in a few minutes what it has taken me days to do."

~WTC site Sept 23, 2001- Journal account of Animal Assisted Crisis Response 2001



"Their (firefighters) defenses were high. Tikva (the crisis response dog) would come along and they would react and their eyes would light up or they would smile.... It was just amazing."

-Karen Soyka, M.S., LPCC, CCDC, National Geographic, Dogs with Jobs Episode 4 Tikva





The men in the following pictures are from the FEMA task force that called themselves "Tunnel Rats". They thought Tikva and Hoss were rescue dogs. One of them made the comment that Tikva's hair would catch on fire in the rubble. I explained, "she isn't that kind of rescue dog." "What does she do" one of them asked as they motioned for us to come over. One guy started joking about what kind of rescue dog she could be. Before you know it, they had both of the dogs in their cart.

The guy sitting with Tikva could not believe how soft her fur was, "This feels a lot better than the cement and ashes I've been crawling in all day. The expressions in the two preceding pictures (not shown) were somewhat skeptical and tighter facial muscles. Notice the expressions of both men as they are petting the dogs? The softening of the facial muscles give a clue to what is taking place on the inside.

(a physiological change occurs through touch. According to scientific research the heart rate and blood pressure drop thereby producing a relaxed state)



Then, the last picture really says it all. There it is, The smile.







Hoss, at VMAT

At some point, the mayors office asked us to accompany families on the Ferry Boats. We would go to the site for part of the day, then to VMAT for decontamination and then make our way to the Family Assistance Center to accompany a family.

### A dog called Hope

A woman waiting to board the ferry boat reaches towards Tikva. "I can't believe you are here," she whispers. As Tikva draws closer, the woman leans over, reaches toward her and begins to hug her, burying her face deeper into the fur on her neck and begins to cry. She looked at her badge and said, "her name is Tikva, that means Hope in Hebrew and I am Jewish" She makes the comment that her husband loved dogs more than anything except her and that he had a merle blue collie (she thinks Tikva looks like his dog) before they got together. She remarks that this thing that just happened is a gift to her husband and a sign to give her hope and strength.

-Family Assistance Center Pier 94 Sept. 2001



"These dogs are the only thing that helped me make it through the day...."

-Firefighter, FDNY WTC site 9-01.

During this time some of the firefighters started making calls to the VMAT asking where the comfort dogs were. After that, Josiah and me spent the rest of the time at the site.

Oct 4th or 5th my last day at the site, I placed Tikva in his arms, no words were spoken between us. As I reached forward to lift Tikva from his lap, a simple request was spoken, "Can you bring her back tomorrow?" An extraordinary miracle took place through a simple act of petting a dog.

These dogs were rescuing the rescuers.