



HEARTS 4 HEROES USA

Founded by First Responders for First Responders!

Battalion Chief & Peer Support Director - Traig Smith

Traig Smith began his career with the Manteca Fire Department in 2001, building more than two decades of experience in the fire service and serving in a wide variety of roles throughout the organization. Over the course of his career, he has worked in Fire Prevention and served as a firefighter, engineer, company officer, and now Battalion Chief. His experience across these positions has given him a firsthand understanding of both the operational demands of the fire service and the personal challenges that can come with a career dedicated to helping others.

Beyond his operational responsibilities, Traig has remained committed to supporting the health and well-being of his fellow first responders. He has served as a chaplain coordinator and as a member of the department's Wellness Committee, helping strengthen the resources and support available to department members.

Through his years in the fire service, Traig has seen how the demands of the profession can extend far beyond the firehouse. Long shifts, difficult calls, cumulative stress, and the responsibility of balancing a demanding career with family life can take a toll on firefighters and the people who support them at home. Recognizing those challenges, Traig and his wife, Kristina, began exploring additional ways to promote connection, resilience, and wellness within the fire service.

With their family's longtime love of animals, the idea of introducing a therapy dog quickly began to take shape. That idea eventually became a reality with Nova, who now proudly serves as the Manteca Fire Department's first therapy dog.

Nova provides department members with a unique source of comfort and connection, offering a calming presence during stressful moments while helping create opportunities for firefighters to decompress, connect with one another, and simply enjoy a much-needed smile. Her role also extends into the community, where she helps strengthen the connection between the fire department and the people it serves.

For Traig and his family, Nova represents the belief that supporting first responders means caring for the people behind the uniform as well as the work they perform. Together, Traig and Nova help bring greater awareness to firefighter wellness and the meaningful role therapy dogs can play in supporting those who dedicate their careers to serving others.

When she's off duty, Nova enjoys spending time with Traig, Kristina, and the rest of her family. And whether she's at the firehouse, out in the community, or relaxing at home, she remains true to her nature — always ready to make a new friend and never far from the possibility of a treat.