



MANTECA FIRE DEPARTMENT

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to offer my strong recommendation and support for Hearts 4 Heroes and the important work they do for first responders, emergency professionals, and their families.

My name is Traig Smith, and I am a Battalion Chief with the City of Manteca Fire Department with 25 years of service. Throughout my career, I have experienced firsthand the demands of emergency response, incident command, and life in the fire service. I also grew up in a first responder family, with my father serving as a CHP officer. These experiences have given me a unique perspective on the impact this profession can have not only on first responders, but also on their spouses and families. Long shifts, missed family events, difficult calls, and the challenge of balancing the demands of the job with life at home are realities that every first responder family understands.

This is where Hearts 4 Heroes and Nova, our Manteca Fire Therapy Dog, have made a meaningful difference. Hearts 4 Heroes has been instrumental in Nova's development and training, providing the professional guidance and resources necessary for her to effectively serve our members and our community.

Nova's impact extends well beyond the fire station. She has connected with members of our community, emergency room staff, law enforcement officers, ambulance crews, and thousands of local students. She has become a welcomed presence at Manteca Fire Department family events and throughout our community.

Her greatest impact, however, is within the firehouse. Nova has been present following difficult incidents, providing a calming presence that helps firefighters decompress and opens the door for conversations that may not otherwise occur. She has also supported members dealing with personal tragedies, including the serious illness or loss of loved ones. Over time, Nova has become much more than a therapy dog—she has become a valued member of our fire department family.

None of this would have been possible without Hearts 4 Heroes. The quality of their training, their continued support, and their commitment to first responders cannot be overstated. Their team consistently goes above and beyond to help, and I am privileged to be associated with their organization.



MANTECA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Based on my personal and professional experience with Hearts 4 Heroes, I recommend them without hesitation. Their work has had a genuine and lasting impact on our department, our members, their families, and the community we serve.

I am always available to answer any questions or provide any additional information.

Respectfully,

**Traig Smith
Battalion Chief
Nova, MFD Therapy Dog**