



**K9SFORWARRIORS**

114 Camp K9 Road  
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32081

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PONTE VEDRA  
BEACH, FL  
PERMIT NO. 310



# DOG TALES

K9s' Most Tail-Wagging News Source 🐾🐾 Warrior Update 117, November 2019



## Gifts and Goodies

Check out our new gifts and goodies available now on our Web store! Simply click "SHOP" from the homepage.



**First Annual Warrior-K9 Teams 2020 Wall Calendar**  
12-Month | \$14.99



**Two-Tone Inversion Umbrella**  
47" Dia. x 27.25" (open)  
\$22.00



**3-Ball Tube**  
Callaway Warbird 2.0  
golf balls | \$13.00



**Tervis Water Bottle**  
Palm or Flag design  
24 oz | \$24.99 ea.



**R.E.D. Friday T-Shirt**  
(Remember Everyone Deployed); 100% poly  
Small-4XL  
\$23.99-\$32.99



**Plush Service Pup**  
8" Plush Beige Lab  
\$15.99



**Clip-on Wireless Speaker**  
4-3/4" x 1-1/2" x 3/4"  
\$12.00

## The K9s Family That Comes With Every Service Dog

**This Veterans Day, we show how we never stop being there for our warriors**  
You already know that K9s For Warriors specializes in training service dogs for veterans with PTSD, TBI and/or MST.

But you may not know that our program goes far beyond a well-trained service dog and three weeks of immersive training for each warrior-K9 team. Not only are we there for them throughout training, but when warriors graduate and go back home, we don't just tell them "Welcome to the K9s Family!" to be nice - we mean it! Like a family, we continue to be there in any way they may need us. To date, that includes 589 warrior-K9 teams!

To describe how we do that, we interviewed our remarkable Warrior Relations team. This team of five (which includes two Marine vets and one Navy) provides a host of support to our warriors from the moment they submit their application until... well, there is no end.

### Can you tell everyone what the Warrior Relations team does?

"Our team does everything from application to alumni, and everything in between. Before warriors even arrive at our campus to attend class, we are checking in with them throughout the 12 to 18-month wait time. We prepare them for what to expect and make sure their plans are set to travel here. If they have financial hardship arriving to our program, we work with Hero Miles or a similar program to help them get here.

Once the warriors are here in class, we start building trust and rapport right away. The Warrior Trainers are in charge of their training with their service dog, but we interact with them as much as we can. We build the relationship here while they're in class so that after leaving they feel like they can get in touch about anything."



To DONATE go to [www.k9sforwarriors.org](http://www.k9sforwarriors.org)  
Thanks for your continued support!

(cont)

## The K9s Family That Comes With Every Service Dog continued...

### How do you help our warriors after they graduate?

"We immediately invite them to an exclusive social media group to interact with their K9s Family and other graduates. There, they can ask questions, share feel-good stories, successes and struggles. They know it's a supportive network where they can get encouragement and no judgment.

We also have a system in place for follow-up interviews and virtual home visits. Every few months we send an email asking how they're doing, if they've had any major life events, or things like that. In almost all of the follow-ups they just want to say, 'thank you' and tell us how much better their life has been.

We help them with any type of crisis, public access issue, legal issue, Trupanion service dog insurance, and work with a ton of other nonprofits for resources that K9s doesn't provide, but which our graduates may need. We even help spouses, caregivers, other-era veterans and civilians with PTSD who call us asking for help. We never leave anyone who calls empty-handed."

### What's one or two of your favorite success stories of the veterans who've come through our program?

Jess: "My absolute favorite success story is about a warrior who came here who had terrible physical ailments - shaking, stuttering, wouldn't make eye contact. After he met his dog, he didn't shake once. He didn't stutter. He wouldn't stop smiling. He said, 'Thank you. You've given me my life back.' He's now going out in public again, he's lost weight - he's completely changed."

Mike: "I think about a warrior who used to have nightmares all the time and think about suicide monthly. Coming in, he didn't trust us, the program, or the dog we paired him with. Two weeks in, he did a complete turn-around. He told us, 'Now, that's all in the past. I don't think about suicide anymore because of my dog. Things that would have upset me don't even bother me anymore.' He can't stop thanking us. This is a guy who came in doubting and resisting everything we were trying to do for him."

### What's the best part about being on the warrior relations team?

Sam: "We get to see them on Sunday when they first arrive, meaning we see them at their worst. We've only spoken a handful of times before they got here. We see them shaking, nervous, arms crossed, smoking cigarettes nonstop, unable to make eye contact with anyone. And then we see them on graduation day. It's literally a different person. They've lowered their guard. They're all smiling, hugging staff members, interacting with everyone and thanking everyone."

Mike: "Graduates feel like this is a family. Most of our team has only been here for two years, so we have graduates that we haven't even met, yet they still call us and ask for advice. They still trust us and stay in touch because they know we're the people who take care of them. They still feel like we're a part of their family."

**If you are a post-9/11 diagnosed with PTSD, TBI or MST, you can apply to our program from our website. If you are an other-era veteran, spouse, caregiver, friend, or just someone who cares and are in need of other help, please visit our Resources page online.**

## 1,125 DOGS RESCUED, 589 WARRIORS GRADUATED



This award is given by The Petco Foundation each year. This year, K9s was one of seven organizations that won! In a press release, The Petco Foundation president said, "The Lifesaving Awards is a celebration of love that saves animal lives and represents our gratitude to animal welfare heroes who put their love into action every day."



## K9s For Warriors: Always Innovating

You've likely heard the phrase that the best companies are always changing and innovating. At K9s For Warriors, we wholeheartedly embrace and run with that concept. In the growing service dog industry, we pride ourselves on being leaders and on the forefront of proving the value of rescue dogs. We're increasingly becoming the model service dog nonprofit in the U.S. due to our multifaceted and genuine methods. Let me share with you some of the most exciting developments of the past year that demonstrate how K9s is changing and innovating to help more warriors and rescue more dogs.

**Mega-kennel:** We've secured 5.5 acres of donated land near our Florida headquarters to build one of the largest kennels in the U.S. At any given time, this kennel will hold 250 rescues in training to become service dogs. More service dogs available equals more veterans saved. Plain and simple.

**Petco Foundation K9 Center:** This kennel marks our national expansion. Located in San Antonio, "Military City USA," it will help save up to 200 Texas shelter dogs a year (the state with the highest number and level of euthanized dogs per year). We'll transport them to our training campuses in Florida to be matched with their veteran.

**Wrap-around services:** Our main story in this newsletter covers this well. Our staff is leading the way in reaching our veterans when and how they need us. If our program isn't the right fit, we'll help them find out who or what is. Mental health care requires commitment and I'm proud that our team exemplifies that.

We hope you'll continue on this innovative journey with us through the next year! Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rory Diamond".

Rory Diamond, Chief Executive Officer, K9s For Warriors



## Good Morning America Welcomes Team Damian & Shai

On Saturday, November 9th, we all celebrated warrior-K9 team **Damian & Shai** ("shay") on GMA! The pair, who lives in Manhattan, were invited to ABC studios to be interviewed about what brought them together, and their subsequent unbreakable bond. You can watch the segment from the News page on our website.

## Vineyard Vines for Veterans Day

For the second year in a row, "Good Life" retailer **Vineyard Vines** designed an exclusive, K9s For Warriors Veterans Day shirt! They are available for a short time online, so be sure to check out Vineyard Vines' website soon if you want one! Bonus: They also designed a unique dog leash! All purchases of the leash and shirt bring back 20% of proceeds to our program. **Talk about walking your dog in style!**

