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Shari Duval takes the stage at TEDx Jacksonville

TEDx Jacksonville, the local chapter of the national nonprofit TED, hosted Shari Duval along with 12 other powerful speakers at its annual conference.

The 2017 conference, titled “We, The People,” followed the format of its parent organization by presenting some of Florida’s top minds devoted to spreading world-changing ideas.

Shari received a standing ovation after her speech about the epidemic of veteran suicide, imploring federal funding for this innovative “prescription on four legs” that we know helps our nation’s heroes heal. The day long event was held at the historic Florida Theatre on October 14th, and also featured local musicians.

Shari had this to say about her TEDx talk: “I’ve done a lot of talks to advocate for our warriors, but this was, hands-down, the most challenging speech I’ve given. It took me out of my comfort zone, but helped setup the program to achieve new heights that, without this talk, might not be an opportunity. I’m very grateful to have participated.”

A compassionate donor’s unique family tie to the K9s family

Donor Spotlight: Robert Swinarton

Bob Swinarton is one of our nation’s few remaining WWII vets; he volunteered to serve in the Army and the Air Force during the Great War. At 91 years of age, he is still on a mission to serve his fellow service members.

Bob discovered the value of investing in the futures of our warriors when he sponsored his first dog last year. His connection to the canine runs deep: he named it Roddy, after his wife of nearly 70 years, who died one year ago. Roddy the rescue dog was paired with warrior Ric in February 2017. Bob attended the team’s graduation, where Ric eagerly thanked the man who sponsored his life-changing service dog. The pair stays in touch now, sharing a unique bond over Roddy.

Bob’s second sponsored dog graduated with his warrior in September, this time with the name Potter (a nickname of Bob’s). Bob says what continues to inspire him to give is: “The donations provide ongoing feedback. Following your sponsored dog as it develops and seeing how much it means to the vet is something that keeps on giving. There’s no other program that has the rewards you see from K9s.”

A Message from Our Chief Operating Officer

As an Army veteran deployed to Iraq in 2003-04, I am intimately familiar with the challenges that our warriors face daily. Depression and isolation are just two of the many problems service members may experience when returning from a combat zone. In 2012, when I was introduced to K9s For Warriors, I realized there was hope for returning warriors who, like me, struggled with issues related to deployment.

However, rather than applying to the program to receive a service dog, I embraced K9s For Warriors in a different capacity: I started volunteering regularly. That grew into employment, and eventually, into my role today overseeing Warrior Operations. Every month, warriors teetering with little hope come to us for help, often as a last resort. Remarkably, over a three-week period, there’s an enormous positive change in them which is very gratifying to observe.

I have watched in amazement this organization blossom into the nation’s largest provider of service dogs for PTSD. With growth comes change, but K9s For Warriors consistently saves lives and offers the highest level of respect for those warriors who have sacrificed for our country. As the COO, I am committed to making sure I do my part to help my brothers and sisters in arms. Thank you for your continued support of K9s For Warriors!

Jason Snodgrass
Chief Operating Officer, K9s For Warriors

Check out the K9s For Warriors Facebook page to see updates on warrior graduates and dogs in training. Be sure to “LIKE” us when you get there!