Research Proves Service Dogs Save Lives

K9s For Warriors is built on the belief that service dogs don't just make our warriors feel better, but dramatically improve and, indeed, save their lives. I say belief because up until this past week, we knew our dogs worked, but we didn't have any peer-reviewed scientific proof. Now we do.

A groundbreaking study conducted by K9s For Warriors and Purdue University was just published by the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. The quick summary: the K9s For Warriors program works! Results reveal that veterans suffering from PTSD exhibited better mental health and well-being on several measures if they had a service dog ranging from less depression to reduced social isolation.

For years, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has stated there is insufficient evidence proving that service dogs help warriors with PTSD. For example, the VA's Chief Veterinary Medical Officer said just recently: "I would say there is a lot of heartwarming stories that service dogs help, but scientific basis for that claim is lacking. The VA is based on evidence-based medicine. We want people to use therapy that has proven value." Well, that evidence is finally here, and the VA can no longer flatly deny what we know so well here at K9s For Warriors, these dogs save lives.

We will always stick to our single-minded mission to ensure that every warrior suffering from PTSD has access to a high-quality service dog. Given the high price they have paid in providing us with the blessings of liberty, we owe them that much.

Rory Diamond
Chief Executive Officer, K9s For Warriors

Inside This Issue

Our New Campus Has a Beloved Captain
K9s For Warriors announces new campus to help female veterans

Documentary Filming Underway
K9s For Warriors coming to the big screen

2017 Year at a Glance
Highlights from our program in 2017

Pawsitive Passion
Letter from K9s For Warriors Chief Marketing Officer, Tahoma Guiry

Rowing A Marathon
Local Jacksonville supporter creates a new kind of fundraiser

Research Proves Service Dogs Save Lives
Study shows service dogs are a proven therapy for PTSD

Our New Campus Has a Beloved Captain

On January 31st, we celebrated our new, second campus with a dedication ceremony!

The ceremony was attended by local supporters, and hosted by our long-time advocate and reporter Jeannie Blaylock of NBC/ABC affiliate station First Coast News. Called the Gold Family Campus, it will be used primarily for female classes. The stunning 9-bedroom, 7-bathroom house sits on 67 acres, about two hours west of our headquarters. It is powered by $1 million worth of solar panels, making it completely energy independent.

This grand property will require capable, experienced hands to manage, and we couldn’t be more thrilled that our very own graduate Randy Dexter has been named Campus Director! Randy graduated with his service dog Captain in August 2014, and is the subject of K9s For Warriors’ most popular video and PSA, “Dear Captain.” We frequently feature his accomplishments as proof that service dogs are effective. Most recently, Randy was president of the student veterans group, Rebel Vets, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He’s led fellow student veterans around the country to advocate for veterans’ education and health benefits, and recently graduated with his B.A. in Communication & Media Studies. He has plans to earn his Masters in Nonprofit Management at the University of Central Florida. Randy has also traveled to Washington D.C., several times with K9s’ executive staff to advocate for the PAWS Act.

“This is a dream come true,” said Randy. “In August 2014, I traveled to Florida as a warrior at the end of his rope. Captain and K9s For Warriors changed that. Now as we get ready to move to Florida, it’s to help veterans and rescue dogs live happy, productive, and meaningful lives. To me, there is no better job.”
In a stroke good fortune, K9s For Warriors was selected to be the subject of a feature documentary film by DNA Films®. According to the company’s press release, DNA Films® is an Emmy Award-winning film production studio, whose producers have won more than a dozen awards for excellence in television and film production, which includes over 500 TV episodes and dozens of movies.

Film producers arrived to Camp K9 at the end of January to begin filming, interviewing, and photographing the campus and warrior-canine teams. We’ll update our supporters via social media and future newsletters as the project progresses.

**Documentary Filming Underway**

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**Pawsitive Passion**

The last quarter has been a whirlwind of excitement and passionate support for K9s For Warriors! From news features of our graduate teams, to a documentary being filmed at Camp K9, to the Gold Family Campus dedication and announcement of Randy Dexter as Campus Director, there’s no shortage of progress to report, or amazing supporters to thank for their passion for our mission. We constantly strive to share updates of our graduates, and what our volunteers and supporters (you!) are doing to help the mission.

Sharing is what I want to talk to you about: as Chief Marketing Officer, my team is responsible for making sure you know all the latest news and developments of our program, because your support helped us achieve it! You may not be surprised to know we rely on social media, word-of-mouth, and grass-roots efforts to spread awareness. Those are the primary vehicles that bring in more warriors, rescue dogs, and the funding to pair and train them. I want to emphasize how important your role is in spreading that information. Your “pawsitive” comments, feedback and shares on our social media accounts can’t be understated. Your roles as champions for the K9s cause to save veterans’ and dogs’ lives are invaluable to the success of this program.

With that said, I ask that you keep sharing our content, and keep sharing your own passionate voice when you talk about K9s For Warriors to your friends, family, and your community.

From the Education Team and all of K9s For Warriors staff, thank you!

Tahoma Guiry
Chief Marketing Officer, K9s For Warriors

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**Rowing a Marathon**

In December, one supporter went all out for a unique fundraiser.

If you’re familiar with national fitness organization Orange Theory, then you know that “all out” means giving every ounce of energy you have. That’s exactly what Jacksonville athlete Laura Eastwood did when she rowed the equivalent of a marathon on an indoor water rower to raise funds for K9s. With fellow fitness fanatics cheering her on, Laura rowed 42,200 meters - the equivalent of 26.2 miles!

“The unconditional love and companionship that I get from my own pup is immeasurable. To be able to help give that gift back to our veterans means everything,” said Laura on why she initiated the fundraiser. K9s For Warriors ambassadors and puppy raisers were also there with their puppies in training.

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**Thanks to our supporters, volunteers, our community and staff, K9s For Warriors continues to be the nation’s leading service dog provider to veterans with Post-traumatic Stress. Here are some highlights of 2017.**

In 2017, K9s For Warriors paired 114 veterans with rescue dogs. That’s 228 lives saved!

Our K9 Intake team visited over 40 dog shelters evaluating a total of 206 dogs.

We found forever homes for 106 dogs who did not make the program.

Volunteers spent 104 hours calling donors to say “Thank You”

Our program serves veterans nationwide. To date, there are warriors in 44 states plus Puerto Rico.

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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!