**K9s For Warriors FAQs**

**Mission Statement:** K9s For Warriors is ending veteran suicide and returning our Warriors to a life of dignity and independence. We rescue and train shelter dogs to be paired as Service Dogs for Warriors with service-connected Post-Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury and/or Military Sexual Trauma.

As of September 2020, K9s For Warriors has graduated 641 Warrior-canine teams and rescued 1,231 dogs. The majority of the dogs trained in the program come from rescue shelters or are owner-surrendered. At K9s For Warriors, we rescue the dog, and the dog rescues the veteran.

1. **Why is it needed?**
   1. At least 20 veterans who served post-9/11 commit suicide daily
   2. Roughly 20% of post-9/11 veterans suffer from PTSD – that’s over 700,000 veterans
   3. Service members suffering from PTSD are at a higher risk for suicide
   4. Around 700,000 dogs are euthanized in shelters every year. Many of these are wonderful dogs who can be trained as Service Dogs for veterans in need.
2. **What is PTSD?**
   1. Hyper-vigilance
   2. Panic Attacks
   3. Insomnia
   4. Depression
   5. Isolation
   6. Hopelessness
3. **How does the K9s For Warriors program work?**

Each month, a cohort of veterans arrives at one of our two campuses for a three-week, in-house training program at **no cost** to them. K9s For Warriors provides a trained service canine, housing, all meals, equipment, veterinary care, and 120 hours of training in a family-type atmosphere that provides essential peer-to-peer support. The service canine is already trained when it is paired with the veteran. The three-week training period is to teach the veteran how to use his/her new Service Dog, and to facilitate the bonding necessary for the two to be a successful team.

1. **What types of dogs are used in the program?**

We primarily obtain dogs from shelters, rescue organizations, and owner-surrenders. Occasionally, we receive them from private donors. We do not choose by breed. We do have a few breed restrictions based on service work capability.

**5. How does a service K9 help?**

* 1. Stand: dog places itself between the Warrior and someone approaching.
  2. Look: dog stands and faces backwards and “alerts” by a tail wag or ear perk if someone is approaching.
  3. Additional tasks trained per Warrior’s unique needs: retrieve items, assist with mobility, brace to help a physically disabled Warrior stand.
  4. Wakes up handler from nightmares.
  5. Gives unconditional love and support.

f) The average Warrior is on 10-15 medications when they begin the program. 92% will eliminate or reduce prescription medications after they graduate from K9s For Warriors.

**6. Is it proven that Service Dogs work?**

Yes! Through a research partnership with **Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine**, we now have scientific evidence that Service Dogs truly help decrease veterans’ PTSD symptoms and help them reintegrate into society.

A. The first study was published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* in February 2018. Results confirmed Service Dogs confer a host of psychological and physical benefits to veterans’ wellbeing.

B. The second landmark study was published in the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* in June 2018. Data was gathered from saliva samples of participants to measure cortisol levels (“the stress hormone”). Researchers found that PTSD-sufferers who had a Service Dog produced cortisol levels close to those of a standard healthy adult.

C. The most recent study was published in February 2019 and published in *Frontiers in Veterinary Science.* It found that the bond between veterans and Service Dogs far exceeded that of a human-pet relationship.

**7. How is your nonprofit supported?**

We continue to exist and thrive thanks to passionate individual and corporate donors and sponsors. Supporters contribute via many avenues: dog sponsorships, recurring monthly donations (Guard Dog program), third-party fundraising events, one-time donations, and many more.

Our volunteer base is invaluable to our program’s success. They dedicate time and talent to cook meals for the Warriors, clean kennels, attend events to represent K9s For Warriors, and puppy raise future Service Dogs.

We are grateful to corporate sponsors for donating supplies that contribute to the welfare of our animals while in training. Elanco Animal Health provides funding, and flea and tick preventative medicine for all our Service

Dogs-in-training. Merrick Pet Care provides all food and treats used in the program, as well as research funding.

**8.** **Where does donor money go?**

We’re proud to report that 82% of our funds support operating and program costs. The remaining 18% covers administrative costs to ensure the organization will continue to grow, and in turn, save more lives.

We have been awarded several top honors by leading charity-rating organizations for our transparency, program results, and use of donor dollars. Our accreditation profiles can be found on GuideStar, Better Business Bureau, GreatNonProfits, Charity Navigator where we received a 4-star rating, The Patriot’s Initiative, and Excellence in Giving.

**9. Our locations**

In 2015, we opened a beautiful facility located on 9 acres in Ponte Vedra, Fla. that was completely donated to us. Called Camp K9, it is our headquarters, where we can serve up to 12 Warrior-canine teams per month. At Camp K9, our two, state-of-the-art kennels can house up to 67 Service Dogs-in-training.

In early 2018 we opened our second training facility near Gainesville, Fla. Like Camp K9, the Gold Family Campus was completely donated to us. The 9-bedroom, 7-bathroom house is nestled within 67 acres in the peaceful setting of Central Florida’s natural beauty. This campus hosts smaller class sizes and provides remedial training.

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Learn more and become involved by going to our website: [www.k9sforwarriors.org](http://www.k9sforwarriors.org)

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