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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release

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THOUSANDS OF SERVICE DOGS TO RECEIVE FREE SIGHT SAVING EYE EXAMS IN THE U.S. AND CANADA

**ACVO®/Merial® National Service Dog Eye Exam Event brings together
veterinary ophthalmologists and thousands of service dogs for free exams. Registration
begins April 1st for May 2010 event.**

Meridian, ID -- She has been blind for 13 years. So, when Lisa Davidson, of Warminster, PA found out about the ACVO/Merial National Service Dog Eye Exam event, she was elated. She completely relies on her guide dog, Eagle for assistance. "I think it's great these animals are being represented because they have a very special job to do," says Ms. Davidson. "Eagle has opened many doors for me, to allow me to become independent. It's so important that his eyes are working."

And, that's exactly the reason for the event. Guide dogs, handicapped assistance dogs, detection dogs and search and rescue dogs selflessly serve the public. **So, for the month of May 2010, the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO) is launching the 3rd annual ACVO/Merial National Service Dog Eye Exam Event** to help serve these dogs who dedicate their lives to serving us. More than 170 board certified veterinary ophthalmologists in the U.S. and Canada will provide free sight-saving eye exams to thousands of service dogs.

Stacey Daniel, executive director of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO) says, "If we can assist more dogs, then the dogs can better assist people. This event is a success each year due to the outstanding support of our volunteer ophthalmologists, our sponsors and the service dog community. All are instrumental in helping these dogs."

Lisa Davidson took Eagle to the Center for Animal Referral and Emergency Services in Langhorne, PA during 2009's event to get his free eye exam. Board certified veterinary ophthalmologist, Dr. Robert Peiffer, examined the 6 year-old black lab/golden retriever mix and gave Eagle a clean bill of health. "In these exams, we hope to identify any health issues in their early stages," says Dr. Peiffer. "Early detection and treatment are the keys to fast recovery."

At Katonah Bedford Veterinary Center, in Bedford Hills, NY, Pele, a young Labrador retriever was examined by board certified veterinary ophthalmologist, Dr. Cory Mosunic during 2009's event. "We're looking for any retinal disease or early cataracts," says Dr. Mosunic. We're also

looking for things that will limit their vision down the road, whether it's an ingrown hair or anything that can result in a scratch of the cornea. It's a complete ocular exam." Pele is from Puppies Behind Bars, an organization providing psychiatric service dogs to soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan. "I'm deeply appreciative of the veterinarians that participate in this," says Puppies Behind Bars President and Founder, Gloria Gilbert Stoga. "I think it's a wonderful service."

HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE 2010 EVENT:

To qualify, dogs must be active "working dogs" that were certified by a formal training program or organization or currently enrolled in a formal training program. The certifying organization could be national, regional or local in nature. Specific service groups are listed on the website at www.ACVOeyeexam.org

Owners/agents for the dog(s) must FIRST register the animal via an online registration form beginning April 1, at www.ACVOeyeexam.org Registration ends May 16th. Once registered online, the owner/agent can locate a participating ophthalmologist in their area and contact that doctor to schedule an appointment, during the month of May. Appointment dates and times may vary depending on the facility and are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

To learn more about and register for the ACVO®/Merial® National Service Dog Eye Exam Event, please visit www.ACVOeyeexam.org.

The ACVO apologizes for any inconvenience our criteria for inclusion in the Service Dog Eye Exam Program may impose and we thank you for your interest.

About the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists

The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists® is an approved veterinary specialty organization of the American Board of Veterinary Specialties, and is recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Its mission is "to advance the quality of veterinary medicine through certification of veterinarians who demonstrate excellence as specialists in veterinary ophthalmology." To become board certified a candidate must complete a DVM degree, a one year internship, a three year approved residency and pass a series of credentials and examinations. For more information, please visit www.ACVO.org.

The following non-profit organizations have supported the National Service Dog Eye Exam Day: American Animal Hospital Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, state veterinary medical associations in the U.S. and Canada, American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives, Veterinary Hospital Managers Association, Veterinary Ophthalmic Technicians Society, Guiding Eyes for the Blind, American Association of Detection Dogs, North American Police Dog Association, National Narcotic Detection Dog Association, Patriot Paws Service Dogs, Paws with a Cause, Department of Homeland Security and Service Dogs of America. Organizational support is updated weekly.

Regarding the qualifications for active working dogs or those in training:

The complimentary eye exam is provided to service dogs that have been formally trained (and have the corresponding paperwork) or have been certified by a nationally recognized service dog program. The purpose for the criteria is twofold. First, ACVO is developing a database that can be used in the future to identify potential eye problems associated with the jobs that certain groups of service dogs perform. To make the data useful they must carefully set criteria for participants. Second, over the past several years, ACVO has had some individuals claim their dog was a service dog just to take advantage of the eye exam. ACVO diplomates generously donate their time and resources to provide eye exams for service dogs. These resources are limited and if nonqualified dogs fill the limited time slots allotted, then a qualified dog may be excluded.

Sponsors:

Sponsors for the 2010 ACVO/Merial National Service Dog Eye Exam Event include: The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists, Merial (Platinum Sponsor), I-MED Pharma Inc. (Bronze Sponsor) and Ocu-GLO Rx, Canine Vision Supplement (Bronze Sponsor).

Media Inquiries:

For more information, photos and interviews with Stacey Daniel, Executive Director of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists or to speak with a participating veterinary ophthalmologist, service dog (and their owner), please contact Sharyn Frankel at 508-561-9357 or Sharyn@FetchingCommunications.com