

## Thousands of Service Dogs to Receive the Gift of Preserved Sight

Meridian, ID (Vocus) April 15, 2008 -- The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists® (<http://www.acvo.org/>) (ACVO®), Pet Health Systems (PHS) ([www.pethealthsystems.com](http://www.pethealthsystems.com)) and Merial ([www.merial.com](http://www.merial.com)) are launching the ACVO® National Service Dog Eye Exam (<http://www.acvoeyeexam.org/>) event the week of May 12, 2008. This unprecedented event will provide free sight-saving eye exams and preventative health reports to 5,000-10,000 Service Dogs.

Over 140 board certified veterinary ophthalmologists and 1,300 general veterinarians across the U.S. will work together to provide these services at no cost to Service Dog groups including: guide dogs, handicapped assistance dogs, detection dogs and search and rescue dogs. With this event, ACVO® and PHS hope to give back to these animals who selflessly serve the public for no compensation. They will accomplish this goal while donating nearly \$1 million in services to the 5,000-10,000 Service Dogs anticipated to participate. Merial, makers of HEARTGARD® Plus (ivermectin/pyrantel) and FRONTLINE®, is the official event sponsor.

An ACVO® Diplomate recently hosted a local test event in Memphis, TN, and examined 87 Service Dogs. The local event was so successful that ACVO® decided to offer this program on a national scale. One seeing-eye dog, "Quest", was diagnosed with a possible sight-robbing tumor, which would be devastating to both him and his owner, Mr. Ron McKenney. We are hopeful that through the partnership of a veterinary oncologist and veterinary ophthalmologist Quest may be able to retain his sight.

Mr. McKenney stated: "If the ACVO® Eye Exam Event can help my dog, and give him a chance at beating this disease before it gets too advanced, just think what it can do for the hundreds, if not thousands of service dogs that will be able to participate in the nationwide event. I can't imagine living without my best friend, Quest. I depend on him for everything, but more important, I love him. I don't want to lose him. He's my life. I thank Dr. Bill Miller for the Eye Exam Event, Dr. Chuck Halford, my primary care vet, and Pet Health Systems for all they've done to help my beloved Quest."

Quest was one of many dogs who benefited from the local event, hopefully one of thousands to benefit from the upcoming national program. View a heart-felt (<http://www.acvoeyeexam.org/press/Quest2-21-08.pdf>) article describing the "Quest story." See a video ([http://www.acvo.org/diplomates/ExamDay/Eye\\_Exam\\_Day.wmv](http://www.acvo.org/diplomates/ExamDay/Eye_Exam_Day.wmv)) describing the program and local coverage of Tennessee test event.

Never before has an event been held that benefits 5,000-10,000 Service Dogs and honors their work. Participating Board Certified Diplomates of the ACVO® will provide a free screening eye exam to Service Dog groups including: guide dogs, handicapped assistance dogs, detection dogs, and search and rescue dogs. Dogs must be 'working dogs' which were certified through a formal training program or organization to qualify. Many of our Diplomates generously provide similar services to their Service Dog clients throughout the year. The hope with this event is to make a large impact to help

preserve the sight of these animals whose partners depend upon them.

In addition to the eye exam, participants will receive a Pet Wellness Report™ (preventative health diagnosis) and blood panel through their primary care veterinarian (no cost to these doctors), sponsored by Pet Health Systems. The system is an internet site which enables the pet owner to register and agree to receive information regarding their pet's health. Once the pet owner has registered they receive updates on their pet's health. Within these updates are veterinarian recommended products and services to address the individual pet's wellness needs. Read the Daily News article (<http://www.acvoeyexam.org/press/PHSDailyNews1-29-08.pdf>) on this system and how it helped Service Dogs in the local event in Tennessee.

#### About ACVO:

The ACVO® 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 their DVM program, a one year internship, a three year residency and pass a series of credentials and examinations. Please visit [www.ACVO.org](http://www.ACVO.org) to learn more.

#### About ACVO National Service Dog Eye Exam Day:

The ACVO® National Service Dog Eye Exam Day is a ground-breaking event that will help preserve the eye-sight of thousands of Service Dogs across America. The following non-profit organizations are supporting this effort: American Animal Hospital Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, state Veterinary Medical Associations (USA and Canada), American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives, Veterinary Hospital Managers Association, Veterinary Ophthalmic Technicians Society, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Guiding Eyes for the Blind, North American Police Dog Association, National Narcotic Detection Dog Association, Patriot Paws Service Dogs, and Service Dogs of America. More organizational support is pending. The public may learn more or register to participate by visiting [www.ACVOeyexam.org](http://www.ACVOeyexam.org).

#### Contact:

Stacee Daniel, ACVO Director

American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists

Ph: 208.466.7624

Fx: 208.466.7693

office08 @ acvo.org

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