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More Than 1,500 Service Dogs Receive Free Sight Saving Eye Exams



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ACVO®/Merial® National Service Dog Eye Exam event is highly successful in pairing veterinary ophthalmologists with service dogs throughout the U.S. and Canada



Meridian, ID (Vocus) May 20, 2009 -- 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 behind the event. 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." The effort, which took place the week of May 4th, 2009 brought together more than 150 board certified veterinary ophthalmologists across the U.S. and Canada to provide free sight-saving eye exams to more than 1,500 dogs. "This event was such a success due to the outstanding support of our volunteer ophthalmologists, our sponsors and the service dog community," adds Ms. Daniel. "All were instrumental in helping these dogs."

Lisa Davidson took Eagle to the Center for Animal Referral and Emergency Services in Langhorne, PA 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. "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."

Dogs participating included active "working dogs" that were certified by a formal training program or organization or currently enrolled in a formal training program. Specific service groups are listed on the website at



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Plans for next year

This is the second year for the ACVO/Merial National Service Dog Eye Exam Event. Plans for next year are already underway and will likely take place again the first week of May 2010. People are invited to learn more, by visiting www.acvoeyexam.org.

Sponsors:

Sponsors for the 2009 ACVO/Merial National Service Dog Eye Exam Event include: The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists, Merial, Kong Veterinary Products, Optigen and Hills.

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](#). Additional organizational support is pending.

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 Kelly Farnan at 727.709.5252 or Kelly(at)[FetchingCommunications.com](mailto:Kelly@FetchingCommunications.com).

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Fetching Communications

Kelly Farnan
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