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## **K9 PARTNERS FOR PATRIOTS REACHES 200 GRADUATES AMONG VETERANS & SERVICE DOGS**

BROOKSVILLE, FL (March 12, 2019) – K9 Partners for Patriots reached a new milestone when its graduating class of veterans and service dogs completed their 19-week training course today. This class now brings the total number of graduates to 200.

K9 Partners for Patriots is a nonprofit program for veterans-only, where veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or Military Sexual trauma (MST) train together with their service dog. Select dogs are capable of alerting to the scent of adrenaline which enables them --with proper training— to help veterans better manage the debilitating stress and anxieties that accompany PTSD.

“Success at programs like ours is essential because among veterans with PTSD we have a veteran suicide rate of 22 per day in the U.S. according to the Dept. of Veterans Affairs,” says Mary Peter, founder and CEO, K9 Partners for Patriots. “Sadly, many veterans with PTSD never seek help; they feel there’s a stigma to it... and those who do often withdraw even more when the pills and prescriptions tried on them fail,” she noted.

“By creating and strengthening a bond between them and their service dog, they gain confidence because for the first time in a long time they now see a path forward,” said Peter.

“It’s extremely gratifying to see the progress our veterans make. When they first get here, many are overwhelmed with anxiety and stress; some can barely make it in the door,” she added. “But over time they recognize that this is a family. They build a mutual trust and companionship with their service dog and they are at home training with other veterans with similar struggles.”

“They see from week to week what they are accomplishing together and that helps them regain confidence and hope,” noted Peter. “And in the process they’re replacing isolation with socialization and camaraderie.”

The first graduate of the program was on hand for the milestone too. Ron Flaville, a Marine Corps and Army veteran, today serves as Chief Operating Officer for K9P4P.

And now it’s grown into a success that has drawn the praise of participating veterans and the support of federal and state officials. The Dept. of Defense provides some grant funding aimed at enabling K9 Partners for Patriots daily operations as well as replicating its methodology with like-minded veterans organizations across the U.S.

“The number of veterans with PTSD and related disabilities from all eras seems to be growing faster than the VA can manage,” says Flaville. “But what our program has proven is that a well-trained service dog can be far more effective than pills. Among the 320,000 veterans just in the greater Tampa Bay area, anywhere from 10% to 20% of them could be suffering from PTSD, TBI, or MST. We want

these veterans to benefit from what we provide for free. They just need to take the first step.”

K9 Partners for Patriots <https://k9partnersforpatriots.com> is a nonprofit 501c3 organization based in Brooksville, FL. Its mission is to give veterans and active military a second chance at life by empowering those with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Military Sexual Trauma (MST) through the experience of training and caring for their own service dog.

