

MEDIA RELEASE

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Leadership Florida
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Leadership Florida® Presents K9s for Warriors with the 2020 Florida Impact Award

TALLAHASSEE — On June 18, 2020, Leadership Florida presented K9s for Warriors with the 2020 Florida Impact Award.

The Florida Impact Award recognizes a business or nonprofit organization that has created a specific project or body of work whose impact is currently transforming the future of its Region or beyond and has the potential to transform Florida as a whole. Leadership Florida is proud to present this award to K9s for Warriors.

Florida-based K9s For Warriors is the nation's largest provider of service dogs to disabled veterans with invisible wounds of war: Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Sadly, for most disabled veterans, the cost of obtaining, training, and maintaining a Service Dog keeps them from pursuing this highly effective source of support. Even when a service dog is their physician's highest recommendation, the typical cost of \$25,000 is often prohibitive. K9s For Warriors ensures these costs are covered, which allows veterans with service-related TBI, PTSD, or MST to reach out for appropriate, lifesaving help without expense being the determining factor.

The service dog program's goal is to empower veterans to return to civilian life with dignity and independence, thereby reducing suicide ideation. K9s For Warriors service dogs perform the commands Front, Side, Stand, Look, Brace, & My Lap, all of which qualify as physical aid tasks for the ADA's classification of service animals. The organization thoughtfully matches each pair and individually trains the canine to aid its warrior with his/her disabilities.

Warriors attend a 3-week "full immersion" training program that provides instruction in dog training commands, community integration, stress relief techniques, peer-to-peer interaction, and human-animal bonding. Then, under the control of their warrior, the service dogs must pass a rigorous Public Access Test. All graduates receive lifetime wraparound services from K9s For Warriors, including 24/7 emotional support, recertification, emergency reinforcement funds, and replacement dogs. Without exception, the families report that while they were expecting K9s For Warriors to give them a dog, they state that what they truly received was their family member back.

"K9s For Warriors provides an invaluable service to our disabled American heroes," said Broward College President and Leadership Florida Chair, Gregory Haile, J.D. "We can never do enough in service of our veterans who have given so much to keep us safe and secure. Leadership Florida is proud to recognize K9s For Warriors with the 2020 Florida Impact Award."

About Leadership Florida

For thirty-eight years, Leadership Florida has developed a reputation as a builder of a stronger, diverse statewide sense of community. A respected non-partisan convener of committed individuals, Leadership Florida, enhances the knowledge and leadership abilities of Florida's leaders through educational programs and by encouraging collaborative work for the betterment of our state. Leadership Florida provides Floridians essential information and a meaningful forum for their opinions and creates opportunities for shared experiences that are inviting, inspiring, and of lasting value. Leadership Florida is a federally registered trademark.

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