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Email: info@k9sforwarriors.org • www.k9sforwarriors.org

Thursday, April 14, 2016

**Testimony of Rory Diamond, Executive Director of K9s For Warriors before
The Subcommittee on National Security of the House Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform: “Connecting Veterans with PTSD with Service Dogs”**

The empirical evidence of the efficacy of service dogs in treating the symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress (PTS) is clear and overwhelming. The laborious second effort by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to run a years-long pilot program to conclude what we already know is wasteful at best. With 22 American veterans committing suicide every day, the time for action is now. K9s For Warriors (K9s) is incredibly successful at preventing veteran suicide and giving our warriors a second chance at life. We believe that federal funding ought to be directed towards organizations like K9s so that our returning heroes can heal from the wounds of war.

I. About K9s For Warriors

Founded by Shari Duval in 2011, K9s is the nation’s largest provider of service dogs for American veterans with PTS, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), and/or military sexual trauma (MST). K9s operates from a nine-acre, state-of-the-art campus in Ponte Vedra, Florida with the capacity to pair sixteen warriors with service dogs every month (192 per year). K9s has served veterans in 42 states and over 150 cities with plans to expand to meet the needs of our disabled veterans.

At least 22 veterans commit suicide every day.¹ Twenty-nine percent of post-9/11 veterans suffer from PTS.² K9s was founded to combat this crisis and to aid veterans in their recovery process from trauma as a result of military service post 9/11. By pairing veterans with well-trained service dogs (themselves, rescues), the organization has been instrumental in the recovery of hundreds of disabled veterans, and, most importantly, we are incredibly successful at preventing veteran suicide.

¹ “Suicide Data Report,” Department of Veterans Affairs, Mental Health Services, Suicide Prevention Program, Janet Kemp, RN PhD & Robert Bossarte, PhD., (Rev. April 2016).

² “Mental Disorders Among OEF/OIF Veterans Using VA Health Care: Facts and Figures Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, National Academy of Sciences, Treatment for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Military,” <https://www.aamc.org/download/298324/data/iomPTSstudy.pdf> (last visited April 10, 2016).



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II. The K9s For Warriors Program

Shari Duval founded K9s to help her son Brett Simon recover from his own experience with PTS. Brett was an expert dog trainer for the Miami Township of Cincinnati Police Department, and, after 9/11, he was attached to the U.S. Army as a contractor, handling bomb-sniffing dogs. After two tours in Iraq, his body returned intact, but the old Brett was nowhere to be found. Determined to aid her son's recovery, Shari immersed herself in research about PTS. In the course of this research, she found (1) an alarming number of veterans were suffering from the same debilitating symptoms as Brett, and (2) many people suffering from PTS had seen improvement with the help of service dogs. For Shari, the next step was obvious: start a non-profit to pair veterans with service dogs and get Brett back to doing what he loves—training dogs.

Working initially out of a two-bedroom house, Shari and Brett found a number of rescue dogs at a local shelter and began inviting warriors suffering from PTS and other service-related issues to a three-week, in-residence training program. Five years later, the organization now has its own campus and kennels, a dedicated staff of 36 and team of 1200 volunteers, and, most importantly, a growing track record of success in aiding hundreds of veterans recover and reintegrate to civilian life with the aid of rescued, well-trained dogs.

A. K9s Program Is Unique

No other organization operates quite like K9s. First, K9s utilizes rescue and shelter dogs, saving the time and money required for a full-blown puppy breeding program. This results in a win/win for America in that the veteran receives a fully trained, healthy service canine while also saving a perfectly wonderful dog from a high-kill shelter. Second, K9s provides a 21 day, in-house training program. This ensures that our warriors receive extensive one-on-one and cohort training. In addition, this allows our staff ample time to work with the warrior/canine team and ensure an excellent and effective match. Third, K9s utilizes both dog trainers and *warrior trainers*. *Warrior trainers* are veterans with PTS who have service dogs and have progressed far enough along in their own recovery that they can now give back to fellow veterans. This peer-to-peer mentoring ensures that each warrior has a robust support system while learning to utilize their service dog. Finally, every warrior that walks through the door at K9s is family. We provide them with a service canine, equipment, training, certification, seminars, legal instruction, vet care, housing, home cooked meals, unconditional love and listening, and life-time of wrap-around services (including available life-long healthcare and food for their dogs). The K9s program is 100% free for the veteran. As we say at K9s, "We have our warriors' backs."



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B. The K9s Program Provides Clear and Convincing Evidence of the Efficacy of Service Dogs for Veterans with PTS

The K9s program is incredibly effective. When the warriors come through the front door of our clubhouse, they are often giving life just one more chance. We serve the warriors most at risk of veteran suicide. Below is the statistical compilation two researchers compiled from an independent analysis of hundreds of K9s case files:

- The average K9s warrior is on 10-15 medications when beginning our program. 92% see those medications reduced or eliminated after graduation.
- 73% of graduates report improvement in health after having received their dog.
- 85% report being able to handle anxiety better after having received their dog.
- Before receiving their service dogs, 42% of graduates reported that they considered themselves to be in poor health. After receiving their service dog only 7% continued to rate their health as “poor.”
- 82% report a decrease in suicidal thoughts.
- 77% report a reduction in nightmares/night terrors.
- Prior to entering the K9s program, none of the graduates reported handling flashbacks well. 35% reported handling flashbacks well after receiving their service dog.
- 93% noted that they benefitted from the physical and mental bond with their service dog.
- Less than 20% of the participants reported being able to attend work or school before receiving their service dog. This number rose to 50% after receiving their services dogs.
- Before receiving their service dog, 93% of the participants reported that symptoms associated with PTS played a major role in their inability to enjoy activities. After receiving their service dog only 18% of participants continued to report that their symptoms played a major role.³

C. The K9s For Warriors Program is Scalable and Portable

K9s pioneered an innovative way of training service dogs and pairing them with veterans seeking tools for resilience and health. K9s standardized its practices with the goal of being able to replicate the program across the country. With sufficient funding, the K9s program could be replicated in any community. The economies of scale for the

³ Jaekle, T. & Semegon, A. (2015 unpub.) K9s for Warriors: Brief Overview of Initial Statistical Analysis, Flagler College.



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K9s program are significant. In 2017, K9s will be able to train a healthy rescue dog and pair it with a warrior through our academy for approximately \$23,000.

The ancillary benefits to the VA for this effort are significant. For example, as noted above, K9s graduates utilize far fewer medications and have much better overall health. The U.S. federal price tag for the Iraq war — including an estimate for veterans’ medical and disability costs into the future — is about \$2.2 trillion dollars. The use of service dogs and the corresponding reduction in the demand for prescription drugs and other VA services is an obvious cost savings to the taxpayer. Moreover, the warrior will have a far higher quality of life with the use of a service dog, rather than simply taking more medications. Finally, many of our warrior graduates are 100% disabled, but choose to go back to work with their service dogs, rather than receive disability benefit checks from the government for the remainder of their lives.

III. The VA Pilot Program Is Misguided at Best

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) pilot program regarding the efficacy of service dogs for veterans with PTS (the “Pilot Program”) is fundamentally flawed for at least four reasons: (1) sufficient evidence exists to support the use of service dogs for veterans with PTS; (2) the Pilot Program’s use of emotional support dogs ignores the primary benefit of a service dog for veterans with PTS; (3) insufficient numbers of warriors are seeking and/or following through with traditional PTS therapies; and (4) the VA’s delay in providing service dogs for veterans with PTS has already costs lives and any further delay (until at least 2019) will, undoubtedly, cost the lives of even more veterans.

A. Sufficient Evidence Exists to Support the Use of Service Dogs for Veterans with PTS

The VA makes clear on its website that it believes “there is not enough research yet to know if dogs actually help treat PTS and its symptoms.”⁴ This misbelief underlies the purpose behind the Pilot Program—to surmise whether or not service dogs help treat PTS; however, sufficient evidence exists to prove without a doubt that service canines ameliorate the symptoms of PTS and related co-morbidities.

⁴ U.S. Dept. of Vet. Aff’s website, http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/cope/dogs_and_ptsd.asp (last visited April 10, 2016).



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1. Two independent studies prove the efficacy of the K9s For Warriors Program

K9s along with its research partners at Purdue University and the Human Animal Bond Research Initiative will be announcing this summer a peer-reviewed, published study as to the efficacy of K9s program. Specifically, Dr. Marguerite E. O’Hair, Assistant Professor, Human-Animal Interaction at Purdue University’s Center for the Human-Animal Bond conducted saliva collection (mouth swab) analysis and standardized self-report measures of mental health and wellbeing, including symptoms of PTS as the primary outcome on the PTS Checklist, as well as secondary outcomes on psychological wellbeing, health, and social functioning on the NIH Patient Reported Outcome Measurement Information System (PROMIS). One-hundred forty one military veterans with PTS (113 male, 28 female) participated, including 76 with a service dog and 65 on the waitlist to receive a service dog from K9s.

Dr. O’Hair’s preliminary conclusions are groundbreaking and encouraging, the service dogs: (1) lowered overall PTS symptom severity, in particular assisting warriors with the ability to cope with flashbacks and anxiety attacks, (2) lessened the frequency of nightmares and overall sleep disturbances, (3) lowered overall anxiety, depression, and anger, (4) improved levels of companionship and social reintegration, (5) lowered levels of social isolation, enabling warriors to leave their home more often and interact in public with others, (6) improve a warriors ability to participate in social activities and perform large tasks such as going to the movies, concerts, or traveling, and (7) increase overall psychological wellbeing, and higher levels of life satisfaction and resilience.⁵

Moreover, Drs. Tina Jaeckle and Angi Semegon, Department of Social Sciences, Flagler College conducted an independent analysis verifying the benefits of participating in the K9s program for veterans struggling with PTS. Ninety-three percent of the participants noted that they benefitted from the physical and mental bond with their service dog. Participants also noted positive changes to overall health ($t(59) = 7.95, p < .001$). Before receiving their service dogs, 42% of warriors reported that they considered themselves to be in poor health. After receiving their service dog only 7% continued to rate their health as “poor.”

Marked changes in the number of prescription medications being used was also noted. Fifty percent of the participants reported using seven or more types of medication on a regular basis (daily use) prior to receiving their service dog. This number dropped to fewer than 20% of the participants using seven or more types of medication. Only 6%

⁵O’Haire, A. & Rodriguez, K.E. (future pub. date Summer 2016) Pilot Study of the Effects of Service Dogs on Mental Health and Wellness in War Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Purdue University.



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of the participants reported taking less than three types of medication prior to receiving their service dog; however, 35% percent of the participants reported they were currently using less than three types of medication after receiving their service dog.

Dramatic changes in psychological symptoms associated with PTS were also documented. Participants reported statistically significant decreases in the number of nightmares ($t(59) = 10.20, p < .001$) flashbacks ($t(59) = 10.48, p < .001$) and anxiety attacks ($t(59) = 10.82, p < .001$) after receiving their service dog. Before receiving their service dog, 89% of the participants reported having more than two nightmares a week. Thirty-five percent reported having nightmares every night (seven nights a week). A marked decrease in the number of nightmares was noted. After receiving their service dog, only 5% continued to have nightmares every night, while 51% reported having two or fewer nightmares per week. Only 3% of the participants reported handling anxiety attacks well before receiving their service dog. This number increased to 29% reported handling their anxiety attacks well after receiving their service dog. Not one of the respondents reported handling flashbacks well prior to receiving their service dog. However, a full 35% reported handling flashbacks well after receiving their service dog.

Most notably, a remarkable decrease in suicidal ideation was also reported. Prior to receiving their service dog, 60% of participants reported often feeling “like dying would be easier.” Only 7% of the participants continued to report that they often felt “like dying would be easier.”

Participants also noted many positive changes in their daily activities. Less than 20% of the participants reported being able to attend work or school before receiving their service dog. This number rose to 50% after receiving their services dogs. Before receiving their service dog, 93% of the participants reported that symptoms associated with PTS played a major role in their inability to enjoy activities. After receiving their service dog only 18% of participants continued to report that their symptoms played a major role in their ability to enjoy activities. Although many participants (51%) noted that their symptoms still impacted their ability to enjoy activities, they reported a decrease in the degree to which their symptoms interfered with their ability to enjoy activities.⁶

2. *An independent study of another agency providing veterans with PTS service dogs made similar conclusions as the two K9s studies*

In 2013, doctoral candidate Alicia Moore presented a dissertation for a degree of Doctor of Psychology at the Wright Institute Graduate School of Psychology. Dr. Moore conducted an independent review of an unnamed service dog agency’s placement of

⁶ Jaeckle (2015), *infra* n. 3.



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service dogs with veterans with PTS and made strikingly similar findings as made by Drs. O’Haire, Jaeckle, and Semegon about the K9s program.

For example, Dr. Moore found that veterans in that program suffering from PTS made dramatic improvements after receiving their service canine. The recipients reported improvements in their ability to handle any or an outright reduction in re-experiencing, nightmares/night terrors, and flashbacks. Likewise, the service canines assisted in overcoming problems of avoidance, numbing, hyper arousal, and various PTS co-morbidities.⁷

3. *A sound foundation of empirical data supports the use of service dogs to ameliorate the symptoms of PTS*

While not directed at the use of service dogs for veterans suffering from PTS specifically, there is ample data showing that service dogs can help *anyone* cope with and/or recover from the symptoms of PTS generally. For example, studies have concluded that spending time with a dog can: (1) increase feelings of affection and unconditional love⁸; (2) reduce feelings of loneliness⁹; (3) increase feelings of empowerment¹⁰; (4) help one feel valued and needed¹¹; (5) provide a major source of support¹²; (6) increase present-moment focus¹³; (7) increase pro-social behaviors¹⁴; and, most importantly, (8) reduce stress and anxiety.¹⁵

⁷ Marston, H. & Kopicki, A. (2015). The Military Psychologist. The Impact of Service Dogs On Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Veteran Population.

⁸ Carmack, B.J. (1991). The role of companion animals for persons with AIDS/HIV. *Holistic Nursing Practice*.

⁹ Carmack (1991), *infra* n. 8; Krause-Parello, C.A. (2008). The mediating effect of pet attachment support between loneliness and general health in older females living in the community. *Journal of Community Health Nursing*. Krause-Parellow, Rew, L. (2000). Friends and pets as companions; strategies for coping with loneliness among homeless youth. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing: Official Publication of the Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nurses, Inc.*

¹⁰ Johson, C.M. (2001). *Relationships with animals as a component of the healing process: A study of child abuse survivors*. The Union Institute.

¹¹ Carmack (1991), *infra* n. 8; Rew (2000), *infra* n. 9.

¹² Bardnill, N. & Hutchison, S. (1997). Animal-assisted therapy with hospitalized adolescents. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing: Official Publication of the Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nurses*; Carmack (1991), *infra*, n. 8.

¹³ Carmack (1991), *infra*, n. 8; McGraw, S. (2007). *The relationship between soldier and military working dog during the Vietnam War: An empirical existential phenomenological study*. Duquesne University.

¹⁴ Kongable, L.G., Buckwalter, K.C., & Stolley, J.M. (1989). The effects of pet therapy on the social behavior of institutionalized Alzheimer’s clients. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*.

¹⁵ Allen, K. (2003). Are Pets a Health Pleasure? The Influence of Pets on Blood Pressure. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*; Barker, S. B. Knisely, J.S., McCain, N.L., Schubert, C.M., & Pandurangi, A.K. (2010). Exploratory study of stress-buffering response patterns from interaction with a therapy dog. *Anthrozoos*; Carmack (1991), *infra* n. 8



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Moreover, animal-assisted therapy has been studied and found to be helpful for a variety of mental health disorders including: (1) anxiety¹⁶; (2) depression¹⁷; (3) processing grief¹⁸; (4) relaxation¹⁹; (5) self-esteem²⁰; (6) social isolation/loneliness²¹; and (7) substance abuse.²²

Thus, the main tenant underlining the Pilot Program—that there is insufficient evidence attesting to the efficacy of service canines in ameliorating the symptoms of PTS—is wholly untenable. The weight of the empirical evidence clearly supports the use of service canines to reduce PTS symptoms. And, given the current crisis in veteran suicide in America, wouldn't it make sense to err on the side of providing more to our veterans, not less?

B. The Pilot Program's Use of Emotional Support Animals Ignores the Central Purpose of a Service Dog for a Veteran with PTS

One of the greatest challenges facing a veteran with PTS is walking out their front door. Countless K9s warrior participants report that they cannot go to a store, get on a bus, go to the mall, or participate in their childrens' school activities.²³ Our warriors are

¹⁶ Allen, K. (2003), *infra* n. 15; Barker et al. (2010), *infra* n. 15; Morgan, T. (2008). *An examination of the anxiolytic effects of interaction with a therapy dog*. Indiana University; Shiloh, S. (2003). Reduction of state-anxiety by petting animals in a controlled laboratory experiment. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*.

¹⁷ Folse, E.B., Minder, C.C., Aycocock, M.J., & Santana, R.T. (1994). Animal-assisted therapy and depression in adult college students. *Anthrozoos*; Hagman, C.S. (1999). *The effect of animal-assisted therapy on levels of measured anxiety and deperession in residents of assisted living and health care communities*. U. Tennessee; Souter, M.A., & Miller, M.D. (2007). Do animal-assisted activities effectively treat depression? A Meta-analysis. *Anthrozoos*.

¹⁸ Obrien, K. (2007). *Animal-assisted activities and therapy with bereaved children*. Cal. State University, Long Beach; Teso, J. (2011). *The Effect of a Therapy Dog on the Effectiveness of a Child Life Intervention with Adolescents Experiencing Grief and Loss*. Arizona State University.

¹⁹ Charnetski, C.J., Riggers, S., & Brennan, F.X. (2004). Effect of petting a dog on immune system function.

²⁰ Heindl, B.A. (1996). *The effectiveness of pet therapy as an intervention in a community-based children's day treatment program*. Mississippi State University; Pedersen, I., Nordaunet, T., Martinsen, E.W., Berget, B., & Braastad, B.W. (2001). FAm animal-assisted intervention; relationship between work and contact with farm animals and change in depression, anxiety, and self-efficacy among persons with clinical depression.

²¹ Banks, M.R., & Banks, W.A.. (2005). The effects of group and individual animal-assisted therapy on loneliness in residents of long-term care facilities. *Anthrozoos*; McConnel, A.R., Brown, C.M., Shoda, T.M., Stayton, L.E., & Martin, C.E. (2011). Friends with benefits: On the positive consequences of pet ownership. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*; Rew (1990), *infra* n. 9.

²² Campbell-Begg, T. (1998). *Promotion of transactions during animal-assisted, group therapy with individuals who are recovering from chemical addictions*. D'Youville College; Pace, K.L. (1996). *The impact of animal-assisted therapy with an adolescent substance abuse population*. Rush University, College of Nursing; Wesley, M.C., Minatrea, N.B., & Watson, J.C. (2009) Animal-assisted therapy in the treatment of substance dependence. *Anthrozoos*.

²³ Dr. Moore reports remarkably similar statements from the warriors she interviewed.



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isolated and hiding at home. The story is repeated over-and-over, our warriors are hyper vigilant, prone to anxiety in public, and generally unable to go out into the civilian world further isolating themselves. This is an impassable barrier to getting help. The service dogs we pair them with serve as a bridge for them to integrate successfully into the civilian community. Moreover, after returning from war, our warriors no longer have benefit and comfort of their battle buddies. Our graduates consistently tell us that their dogs help fill that void.

As noted above, less than 20% of warriors applying to the K9s program report being able to attend work or school before receiving the service dog.²⁴ However, this isolation drops dramatically after receiving a service dog. K9s has found through its life-time follow-up/wrap around services program that graduated warriors have reengaged in many life tasks that their symptoms previously prevented them from participating in, such as work, school, and socializing with family and friends.

Yet, via the Pilot Program, the VA is attempting to liken a *service dog* with an *emotional support animal*. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and associated regulations ensures public access for *service dogs* but does not protect such access for individuals with *emotional support dogs*.²⁵ Thus, the VA's attempt to push emotional support dogs onto warriors with PTS points to their total lack of awareness as to when and, in particular where, a veteran with PTS needs a service dog. Our disabled veterans need to be able to take their dogs to work, school, the mall, on an airplane. What good is an emotional support dog if the warrior cannot take it to the very places that trigger his or her PTS symptoms?

C. Few Veterans Seek Treatment for PTS and Even Fewer Continue that Treatment

The Pilot Program assumes that the VA is offering another viable option for the treatment of PTS for the veterans they serve. Putting aside the shockingly inept response by the VA to the veteran suicide crisis, not enough of our warriors are seeking help from traditional sources. One study found that of veterans filing disability claims from PTS,

²⁴ Jaeckle (2016), *infra* n. 3.

²⁵ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 2010 Regulations define a service animal as “any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition.” C.F.R. § 35.104 and § 36.104 (2010). An emotional support dog is not trained to perform any specific tasks and, therefore, does not enjoy the same public access laws as a service dog.



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just over 50% also sought treatment for the condition.²⁶ Moreover, the drop-out rate of veterans for more traditional PTS therapies is too high.²⁷ One analysis found that the attrition rate was 68%.²⁸ Based upon the high-rate of veterans with PTS who will not seek out treatment at all and the high rate of attrition for those that do, other approaches, specifically the use of service dogs must be tried. Programs like K9s are undoubtedly filling the gaps where the VA is failing. Without question, the attrition rate from the K9s program is materially lower than traditional therapies.

D. The Time Has Long Since Passed for the VA to Provide PTS Service Dogs

The original PTS service dog pilot program was mandated by Congress in 2009. Since then, over 50,000 American veterans have committed suicide. *If* the VA successfully concludes this study on time, it will be finished in 2018 with funding available for warriors in 2019. That is a best case scenario; however, as of this testimony, the VA has, apparently, only been able to pair a few dozen warriors with dogs, and it seems highly unlikely that the Pilot Program will conclude on time. Likewise, there is very little evidence indicating that even with positive results from the Pilot Program that the VA will overcome its obvious reluctance to pay for PTS service dogs and act on that data.

Our warriors report to us that they receive very little attention at the VA. They wait and wait and wait, and when they finally get a moment before a psychiatrist or a psychologist (or very often a clinical social worker), they get no more than a few minutes of their time. On a good day, they will get some eye-contact, but most of the time they just see someone filling out a form. And, without fail, they walk away with yet another prescription drug. Rehashing the litany of failures of the VA system seems to serve little purpose. Suffice to say that our warriors feel their government has abandoned them.

We have proof the dogs work. Providing our disabled veterans with a life-saving (and cost effective) service dog is not too much to ask. The time is now to provide these essential tools that will help keep our nation's heroes alive.

²⁶ Sayer, N., Friedemann-Sanchez, G. Spont, M., Murdoch, M., Parker, L.E., Chiros, C., & Rosenheck, R. (2009). A qualitative study of determinants of PTSD treatment initiation in veterans. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*.

²⁷ Angeli, N. (2009). *Adherence to psychotherapy for post-traumatic stress in veterans of military combat in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom)*. Georgia State University.

²⁸ Garcia, H.A., Kelly, L.P., Rentz, T.O., & Shuko, L. (2011). Pretreatment Predictors of Dropout From Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for PTSD in Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans. *Psychological Services*.



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Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rory Diamond". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Rory Diamond, Executive Director



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Biography of Rory Diamond

Rory Diamond is the Executive Director of K9s For Warriors and is responsible for the executive management of the non-profit organization. Prior to leading K9s, Rory was a litigator at two international law firms specializing in complex litigation, government investigations, and sophisticated bank fraud. Rory also served as a federal prosecutor for the U.S. Department of Justice specializing in organized crime, public corruption, and financial fraud prosecutions. Before earning his law degree, Rory served as Briefing Director for California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and as a Deputy Associate Director at the White House for President George W. Bush. Rory worked in the White House on 9/11 and, ultimately, served as part of the startup staff for the U.S. Office of Homeland Security.

In his spare time, Rory is a community and anti-crime advocate. He is a commissioner on the Jacksonville Journey Oversight Committee, serves as Vice-President of Beaches Watch, is a graduate of the Leadership Jacksonville Class of 2014 and the Leadership Florida/Connect Class of 2015. Rory is an avid surfer and runs his rescue dog “Barron” on Neptune Beach every day. He earned a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.