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## **COMMUNITY COLLABORATION: ZOO WELCOMES WAGGING TAILS OF SERVICE DOGS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WITH K9s FOR WARRIORS**

April 21, 2016 – *Jacksonville, FL* – Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG) is teaming up with K9s For Warriors to provide training opportunities for veterans in the K9s program and their service dogs.

K9s For Warriors is dedicated to providing service canines to warriors suffering from invisible wounds of war as a result of military service post 9/11. The mission of the organization is to empower warriors to return to civilian life with dignity and respect. Training at the Zoo gives veterans a preview of what they can look forward to upon graduation from K9s For Warriors – having fun out in public with family and friends.

“We are very excited about our partnership with the zoo,” said Rory Diamond, K9s For Warriors Executive Director. “This training not only provides our soldiers with a life-saving gift, but it also makes them feel supported by the community.”

Veterans travel to Jacksonville from all over the country to be matched with a service dog. For 21 days, they stay at the K9s for Warriors facility where they bond with their canine and receive 120 hours of training in order to graduate as a certified service dog handler. Training at large attractions such as JZG helps veterans prepare for scenarios they will likely face when home. They learn to use their service dogs to mitigate their symptoms, giving them the opportunity to focus on the present.

“The Zoo is committed to partnering with organizations throughout our community,” said Janet Wesley, Director of Marketing and Development at JZG. “We are grateful for the men and women who have served our country, and are honored to host K9s For Warriors through their continued training at the Zoo. This ongoing partnership will enable future classes of service dogs and their warriors to train here at JZG.”

**Photo Credits:** Brittney Hendricks

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### **About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens**

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit [jacksonvillezoo.org](http://jacksonvillezoo.org).

### **About K9s For Warriors**

K9s For Warriors is dedicated to providing service canines to warriors suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a result of injuries they have received during military service post-9/11. The canines used in the program are carefully evaluated, former rescue/shelter dogs or owner surrenders. Give a new leash on life to rescue dogs and military heroes. Find more information at [www.k9sforwarriors.org](http://www.k9sforwarriors.org)