Canines for Service®
June 29, 2015

**Press Release**

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**Canines for Veterans Program Withdraws from Naval Station Brig Charleston after Nearly 5 Years**

**Wilmington, NC:** Canines for Service has withdrawn the Canines for Veterans program from the Naval Station Brig Charleston effective June 24, 2015. The program has relocated to Canines for Services headquarters in Wilmington, NC. The Canines for Veterans program continues to benefit Veterans with service trained shelter dogs.

For the past seven years, the Canines for Veterans program partnered with military command to conduct training behind the walls of two military prisons. It is the only United States Department of Labor (DOL) Certificate of Apprenticeship program for Service Dog Technician offered to military prisoners. The program has become known nationally as a triple win; rescuing shelter dogs, providing rehabilitation to military prisoners, and providing highly skilled service dogs to wounded and injured Veterans.

“It has been a very difficult decision to withdraw the program from the Brig. It has only been reached after exhausting all possibilities with the command. As a non-profit organization, Canines for Service has experienced a decline in donations and grant funding for the veterans program,” states Rick Hairston, President and CEO of Canines for Service. “The inability for the Brig to provide staff support for the program at levels previously provided and fund for the DOL training has led to the need to bring the program home to Wilmington.”

The value of the Canines for Veterans program provided to the United States Naval Consolidated Brig has exceeded $3.6 million and has cost Canines for Service just over $1.06 million. Out of 86 participating prisoners, 27 have achieved U.S. Department of Labor Certificate of Apprenticeship in Service Dog Technician since the program was approved as an apprenticeship in the spring of 2011. To date, 38 Veterans have received a service dog; 28 of which were partnered from the United States Naval Consolidated Brig.

Despite the success of the program, there is **currently no federal or state funding.** While relocating the program to Wilmington does reduce some costs, Canines for Veterans is still in need of financial support. Donations of any amount are welcome and can made by visiting [www.caninesforservice.org](http://www.caninesforservice.org).

**What Others Are Saying.**

“A great number of our men and women in uniform are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with injuries sustained during combat,” Congressman Jones said. “During times such as these, it is especially important that our nation honors its commitment to support and care for its veterans. Carolina Canines’ Military Prison Service Dog Training Program is an excellent program that will provide valuable benefit to veterans with disabilities as they seek to reclaim their independence and improve their quality of life.” Congressman Walter Jones
“On this day 1 year ago (January 5, 2015), Chris and I flew to Charleston, South Carolina, to meet & train with his service dog, Samaria (Sam). We knew she was going to help Chris in his recovery, but no one could have prepared us for how amazing she really is. It's like she was born to be by his side. She has so much pride when she is helping him, you can see it in her very expressive face and the way she prances next to him. It's been an amazing year, watching them grow & become a stronger team. I can't wait to see what the next years hold for them. I am forever grateful to Patricia & Rick, the founders of Canines for Veterans, as well as Sam's training team, Laura & Chris. You guys are amazing, thank you for doing incredible things!!” – Danielle Owens, wife of Sgt Owens, US Army, retired

Canines for Service is a North Carolina based non-profit corporation dedicated to empowering people with disabilities to achieve greater independence. The group trains and places certified service dogs, provides pet therapy certification classes and helps children in our community improve their reading skills. It is the only service dog provider in North Carolina accredited by Assistance Dogs International. Since its inception in 1996, Canines for Service has provided over $11 million in services to our community. For more information or to ask about volunteer opportunities, call 910-362-8181 or visit www.caninesforservice.org.

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