



**For Immediate Release**

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## **More Than 7,600 Service Animals Receive Free, Sight-Saving Eye Exams During the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual ACVO<sup>®</sup>/StokesRx National Service Animal Eye Exam Event**

**MERIDIAN, Idaho (June 25, 2018)** – Service and Working Animals including guide, disability assistance, detection, military, search and rescue, and registered therapy animals, selflessly serve the public. In honor of these animals and their dedication, [The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists<sup>®</sup> \(ACVO<sup>®</sup>\)](#) holds the [Annual ACVO/StokesRx National Service Animal Eye Exam Event](#) each May. Last month, 305 board certified veterinary ophthalmologists throughout the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and Spain donated their time and resources to provide free eye exam screenings to thousands of eligible Service and Working Animals.

[The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual ACVO/StokesRx National Service Animal Eye Exam Event](#) took place in veterinary clinics from May 1-31, 2018. Since the event's inception in 2008, nearly 68,000 Service Animals have received free screening eye exams – including approximately 7,625 Service Animals this year. In addition to dogs, other formally trained Service and Working Animals, such as horses, mini horses, donkeys, alpacas, and cats have received the free sight-saving exams over the last 10 years.

Mark Carnes, of Colorado, has participated in ACVO's annual event for years. Thirteen years ago, Carnes was involved in a serious car accident that left him with a spinal cord injury, resulting in limited feeling in both legs below the knees. Without the use of a balance support dog, Carnes would have frequent falls. Enter Woodie, Carnes' five-year-old Standard Poodle. Woodie has been trained to adjust to Carnes' movements and stabilize him so he doesn't fall. Because of the work that Woodie does for Carnes, his eyesight is of utmost importance.

“Woodie allows me to live a fuller and more productive life, by enabling me to function in everyday environments without the fear of serious injury or death,” says Carnes. “That being said, the bond between the Service Dog and his partner is a very strong one and I want to take care of him as well as he takes care of me.”

Unfortunately, during Woodie's free screening exam, bleeding and lesions on his retinas were discovered. This is a very serious condition for a Service Dog, as it can lead to blindness, if left untreated. While ACVO's participating ophthalmologists agree that finding such a complication is thankfully rare during this event, an earlier diagnosis and treatment plan may prevent additional problems in the long-run.

“Had we not gone to ACVO's annual screening event, I wouldn't have known anything was wrong because he wasn't exhibiting any other symptoms,” continues Carnes. “We are now scheduled for a follow-up appointment in the coming weeks to treat Woodie's condition before it progresses, allowing me to have a better chance of keeping him as my service dog for years to come.”

In addition to individuals, the event also benefits organizations. Carol Christopherson, President and Founder of Florida Service Dogs, Inc., has been bringing the organization's dogs to Daniel Brown, DVM, DACVO, at the Animal Eye Clinic in Jacksonville for the event since its inception. Florida Service Dogs, Inc. is a veteran-owned and operated program in Jacksonville that trains rescue dogs for service.

“As a nonprofit, we need to save money wherever we can, so that it can go to training our dogs for those in need,” says Christopherson. “A program like this, where 40 to 60 of our dogs can be screened for such an important exam – free-of-charge, no less – has been so invaluable to our organization. We'd never be able to afford so many exams without this event and without Dr. Brown and his staff's dedication, compassion, and assistance.”

“Every year, we continue to see this event expand to additional clinics around the world and reach more Service Animals,” said Stacey Daniel, Executive Director of ACVO. “It’s an honor to work with such passionate and dedicated ophthalmologists and to be able to assist these hard-working Service Animals and their handlers for the past decade. The costs for both the Service Animals and their care can be very high, so to be able to obtain such an important screening examination at no cost can make a huge difference for many of the program’s recipients.”

This year’s event was sponsored by the [ACVO](#) and [Stokes Pharmacy](#), as well as several generous industry sponsors, ophthalmologists, and staff. Participating ophthalmologists volunteer their services, staff, and facilities at no charge to participate in the event.

### **About the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists®**

The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists® (ACVO®) is an approved veterinary specialty organization of the American Board of Veterinary Specialties, and is recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Its mission is “to advance the quality of veterinary medicine through certification of veterinarians who demonstrate excellence as specialists in veterinary ophthalmology.” To become board certified, a candidate must successfully complete a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, a one-year internship, a three-year ACVO® approved residency and pass a series of credentials and examinations. For more information, please visit [www.ACVO.org](http://www.ACVO.org).

### **About Stokes Pharmacy**

Stokes Pharmacy is a national, full-service compounding pharmacy specializing in the art and science of the custom formulation of prescription medicines for humans and animals. Leading the way in innovation, Stokes invites veterinarians to prescribe compounded medications online securely, quickly, and accurately via [iFill](#), a cloud-based prescription management system. For more information, visit [stokespharmacy.com](http://stokespharmacy.com).

*PHOTO CAPTION: Board certified veterinary ophthalmologist Dr. Daniel Brown examines Service Dog Marty (with Carol Christopherson of Florida Service Dogs, Inc.) during the [11<sup>th</sup> Annual ACVO/StokesRx National Eye Exam Event](#), held at the Animal Eye Clinic in Jacksonville, FL on May 26, 2018.*

*PHOTO: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nZkEaxbMSBk24HGPXXxZ-nJ4aW-wVu37/view?usp=sharing>*

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