

## **Local Tucson Hospital Helps Service Dogs to Receive the Gift of Preserved Sight at No Charge**

### ***Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson Taking Up the Challenge of National Service Dog Eye Exam Week***

**Tucson, AZ, May 12, 2008** – Locally owned Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson (VSCT) ([www.vscot.com](http://www.vscot.com)) is joining forces with The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists® (ACVO) in launching the Tucson arm of the ACVO® National Service Dog Eye Exam event to take place the week of May 12<sup>th</sup>. The hope with this event is to help preserve the sight of animals whose partners greatly depend upon them.

Therefore, in honor of the National Service Dog Eye Exam Week, the Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson's on-staff ophthalmologist, Dr. Caroline Betbeze, will provide complimentary eye screenings to service dogs. To qualify dogs must be "working dogs" certified through a formal training program or organization.

This unprecedented event will provide complimentary sight-saving eye exams and preventative health reports to 5,000-10,000 Service Dogs nationwide. In addition to the Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson, over 140 other board certified veterinary ophthalmologists and 1,300 general veterinarians across the U.S. will work together to provide these services at no cost to service dogs such as guide dogs, handicapped assistance dogs, detection dogs and search and rescue dogs.

With this event, Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson and others such as ACVO®, Merial and Pet Health Systems hope to give back to these animals who selflessly serve the public. They will accomplish this goal by donating nearly one million dollars in services to the 5,000-10,000 service dogs anticipated to participate.

Caroline Betbeze, DVM, Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists, of the Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson stated that "An ACVO® Diplomate recently hosted a local 'test' event in Memphis, TN and examined 87 Service Dogs. The local event was so successful that ACVO decided to offer this program on a national scale. We are just so excited to help take it to this next level."

At the Memphis event one seeing-eye dog, "Quest", was diagnosed with a possible sight-robbing tumor, which would be devastating to both him and his owner, Ron McKenney. It is now hoped that through the partnership of a veterinary oncologist and veterinary ophthalmologist, Quest may be able to retain his sight. McKenney stated "If the ACVO® Eye Exam Event can give my dog a chance at beating this disease, just think what it can do for the thousands of service dogs in the nationwide event. I can't imagine living without my best friend, Quest. I depend on him for everything. I thank all the doctors who have helped my beloved Quest."

In addition to the eye exam, participants will receive a Pet Wellness Report™ (preventative health diagnosis) and blood panel through their primary care veterinarian (at no cost to these doctors), sponsored by Pet Health Systems. The system is actually housed on an Internet site, which enables the pet owner to register and agree to receive information regarding their pet's health. An article on this system and how it helped service dogs in Tennessee can be viewed at <http://www.acvoeyeexam.org/press/PHSDailyNews1-29-08.pdf> )

The 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. The public may learn more or register to participate by visiting [www.ACVOeyeexam.org](http://www.ACVOeyeexam.org).

Founded in 2004 by Dr. Barbara Gores and Dr. James Boulay, the Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson is the largest 24 hour, 7 day a week emergency, critical care and multi-specialty veterinary hospital in Southern Arizona with 20 doctors and 55 support staff members serving pet owners and the primary veterinary community of Southern Arizona, as well as western Texas and New Mexico. The Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson also strives to provide valuable support and resources to other local veterinary practices. Southern Arizona primary care veterinarians can not only can send their complicated cases to VSCT for advanced diagnostics and care, but can also close their doors at night and on the weekend knowing that VSCT will handle their phone calls and any emergencies for them.

The Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson is located at 4909 N. La Canada Drive, Tucson, AZ 85704-1507 and can be reached by calling (520) 795-9955 or visiting [www.vscot.com](http://www.vscot.com)