



For Immediate Release

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Saint Francis Service Dogs Opens Doors on New Kennel
Building described as "State-of-the-art."

Roanoke, Va. (May 7, 2010) – Saint Francis Service Dogs, an internationally accredited service dog training organization based in Roanoke, Va. today cut the ribbon on a \$1.2 million kennel and administrative facility. The new building provides space for more dogs in training, office space for staff and administration as well as facilities for dog grooming, and other needs associated with the care of service dogs in training.

“This facility gives us the ability to be much more efficient with our time and resources,” said Saint Francis Executive Director Cabell Youell. “We researched facilities across the country and consulted with lots of people before making decisions on the best way to build the facility. We are pleased with the results.”

The 12 kennels boast partial radiant heat floors for the comfort of the service dogs. “It gives the dogs a choice as to whether they want to rest in a warm spot or a cool spot,” explained Development Director Niki Voudren. The floors are coated with epoxy paint in order to be non-slip and nearly everything can be washed with a hose. The kennel portion of the building is also equipped with speakers so the dogs can listen to soothing music. “Research shows that dogs really respond well to music,” she said.

During the ceremony, Board President Paula Mitchell thanked the many supporters, donors, staff and volunteers who made the building possible in a difficult economic climate. “The fundraising for the kennel campaign began in 2007 and became increasingly challenging through a depressed economy. We decided that the time to build was good because we were able to save on construction costs and invest in our local community at a time it needed it most,” said Mitchell in her prepared remarks.

Roanoke County Board of Supervisors Chairman Joe “Butch” Church presented Youell a certificate of appreciation for the contributions Saint Francis has made to the Community. Another speaker, Donna Akers, whose son Cody Frye is a service

dog partner, praised the organization for having made a significant difference in Cody's life. "Saint Francis has changed our lives in a wonderful way and now they can they do this on a larger scale for those in need." she said.

The Saint Francis Service Dog Center, located just off the Hollins exit of Interstate 81, is a converted horse farm. Saint Francis has been improving the site since it was purchased in 2002. Prior to the opening of the new building, staff and trainers were operating out of a small home on the premises. "I don't want to say it was too small", quipped Youell, "but my office was in the former bathroom."

Saint Francis raises and places an average of six service dogs per year. The dogs help people with disabilities ranging from children with autism and other conditions, to adults who have suffered from accidents, stroke, MS, cerebral palsy, rheumatoid arthritis and other debilitating conditions. With the new facility, Youell said the organization would be able to raise the number of dogs in training and therefore the number placed with partners annually. "It won't happen overnight," said Youell. "We want controlled and sustainable growth. We will need to add people and resources every step along the way. The kennel was an important first step."

