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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CANINE COMPANIONS INVITES PUBLIC TO CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE DOG WEEK

Local Nonprofit Organization to Graduate New Human-Canine Teams on August 12

OCEANSIDE, CA International Assistance Dog Week is August 7-13, 2011. It was created to recognize the devoted, hardworking assistance dogs helping people with disabilities worldwide. Canine Companions for Independence, which has its Southwest Regional Training Center in Oceanside, is a nonprofit organization that provides assistance dogs to people with disabilities other than blindness. Canine Companions will celebrate International Assistance Dog Week at its graduation ceremony on Friday, August 12, 2011 and the public is invited. The event will be held at the Mission San Luis Rey Parish's Serra Center (4070 Mission Avenue in Oceanside) at NOON. This inspiring ceremony will honor the newest recipients of Canine Companions' highly-trained assistance dogs. Canine Companions' clients receive their dogs, training and ongoing follow-up services free of charge.

The August graduating class represents Canine Companions' diverse clientele. Adults and children with a wide range of physical and developmental disabilities benefit from these canine helpers. Graduating assistance dogs have been in training for two years and know up to 50 different commands. They assist with practical tasks like opening doors, activating light switches, retrieving dropped objects and pulling manual wheelchairs. The graduation ceremony is the culmination of an intensive, two-week, residential Team Training course completed by these new human-canine teams at Canine Companions' Oceanside campus.

The graduation ceremony will also feature volunteer puppy raisers turning in the Canine Companions puppies they have been raising and training for the past 14 to 16 months. Next, the puppies will embark on six to nine months of Professional Training with staff instructors in the hopes that they will one day become assistance dogs for people with disabilities.

International Assistance Dog Week aims to raise awareness about assistance dogs and how they improve the lives of their human partners. Canine Companions for Independence has graduated the most teams from an assistance dog program, with nearly 3,700 people with disabilities partnered with assistance dogs since Canine Companions' founding in 1975. "Canine Companions for Independence is the leader of the assistance dog industry," explains Linda Valliant, Canine Companions' Southwest Regional Executive Director. "Many Southern Californians do not realize that this life-changing program operates in their own backyard. We invite charitable community members, potential applicants, dog lovers and professionals serving people with disabilities to come to graduation, celebrate with us and learn what we're all about!" Interviews will be available with assistance dog teams and Canine Companions for Independence spokespeople at the graduation ceremony.

About Canine Companions for Independence:

Canine Companions for Independence provides highly trained assistance dogs to children and adults with disabilities. Established in 1975, Canine Companions now has five regional training centers across the country. Canine Companions is recognized worldwide for the excellence of its dogs, and the quality and longevity of the matches it makes between dogs and people. There is no charge for the dog, training and ongoing follow-up services.

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