

**250th Dog**



# Puppies for PAROLE

## With Faith, Puppies for Parole Reaches a Milestone

*Border Collie named Faith celebrated as the 250th dog adopted from the program*

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Faith has a new leash on life thanks to Puppies for Parole. The 1-year-old female Border Collie was starved, abused and scared. That all changed, though, on January 28, 2011, when Faith arrived at South Central Correctional Center (SCCC) in Licking. She was not accustomed to the type of care and affection she would receive at the institution. Faith’s life prior to Puppies for Parole could be described as “rocky,” at best.

The Animal Shelter of Texas County received Faith from a man who pulled up in a truck and said he had a dog he no longer wanted. When the staff at the shelter informed him that they would check and see whether they had space for Faith at the shelter, he immediately informed the staff that if they did not take the dog, he would shoot her and leave her to die. Faith showed signs of abuse and was very skittish, especially around men.

Two offender handlers were charged with the task of training Faith. The offenders previously trained a deaf Dachshund named Zeus, who was donated to the Missouri School for the Deaf. The two handlers said they used a lot of positive reinforcement to earn Faith’s trust.

“One of the first things she did was jump from our bottom bunk to the top bunk,” one offender handler said. “She would jump from the bottom bunk to the top of her crate. So we had to show her how to safely get down from the bottom bunk.”

*Faith continues on page 2*

## Faith continued from front page



*Faith receives some positive reinforcement from one of her offender handlers during a training exercise.*

One offender handler said he believes Faith liked to be on the top bunk because she was closer to eye level with people. Both offenders said Faith was very intelligent and was relatively easy to train once they got past her anxiety.

“She likes to sneak up behind you,” one offender handler said. “She likes to herd by nature. Faith is very sensitive. We used treats and affection as positive reinforcement throughout her training. She responded well to our method and once she warmed up to us, we were her best friends.”

The offenders said Faith never was much for playing with dog toys. However, she would take the toys and methodically line them up in her crate. She would then lay next to them, all the while keeping a keen eye on the toys. They believe this was due to her herding instincts.

Faith’s warm disposition was no more apparent than when she fostered a litter of orphaned puppies at SCCC. The offender trainers were awe-struck with how the dog took in the pups.

SCCC Institutional Activities Coordinator Tina Holland adopted Faith. Holland said she immediately fell in love with the dog, but it was her daughter who sealed the deal.

“We always wanted another Mastiff,” Holland said. “We had talked about adopting Faith and then the shelter called and said they had Mastiff puppies. My daughter, though, said she wanted Faith. So we adopted Faith.”

Her offender handlers said the Puppies for Parole Program has had a profound effect on them. One handler said it gives them a sense of responsibility and purpose.

“We know we have a good thing (Puppies for Parole) here,” one offender handler said. “None of us ever want to do anything to mess this up for us or the dogs. It’s very therapeutic for us. We’ve learned a lot about having patience because of this program. Our communication skills have improved because of this. The list goes on and on. It’s funny because the baddest of the bad will see one of these dogs and be like ‘come here, boy.’ Their voice will get softer and their whole mentality will change. These dogs affect all of us.”

Faith passed the Canine Good Citizenship Test on March 2 under the tutelage of her offender handlers. She went to her new home with the Hollands two days later. •



*Faith gets a visit from her new owner, Institutional Activities Coordinator Tina Holland.*

# Looking Back: Koda and Boris

## *Puppies for Parole's first success stories*

It was love at first sight for Linn Murphy and her 2-year-old Siberian Husky Koda. Linn, a 15-year employee of the Department of Corrections (DOC), first eyed Koda while he was in training as part of the Puppies for Parole Program at the Jefferson City Correctional Center (JCCC). Koda was part of the Puppies for Parole pilot program. The class of K-9s began their training on February 1, 2010.

“My middle son wanted a Husky,” Linn said. “My father raised Huskies. When I saw him (Koda), it was love at first sight. I had to have him.”



*Koda sits during a training session at Jefferson City Correctional Center.*

After Koda completed his training, Linn finalized his adoption.

“The offenders did a wonderful job teaching him manners,” she said. “He is very, very well-behaved. He listens well and responds to commands. He stays inside quite a bit with us, but he also likes to play outside. When we had all the snow, he was so funny. He would just dive into it. He loved it. When my oldest son moved out and got married, he wanted to take Koda with him. I told him he had to get his own dog.”

One of Koda's classmates, Boris, was also adopted by an employee at JCCC. Boris is a 2-year-old Sheltie mix. Melissa Hewlett, a corrections officer of almost three years, was working in the prison yard when she had her first encounter with Boris. She said the “little dog” started barking at her and didn't want to have anything to do with her. Melissa asked the offender handler for the dog's leash.

“After I got the leash, I made him warm up to me,” she said. “Over the next couple of days, I kept doing that and pretty soon we were buddies. After graduation, I wanted to see Boris go to a loving home, so



*Boris takes a break during a training session at Jefferson City Correctional Center.*

we adopted him.”

Melissa said Boris has adapted well to her family. She said he is very well-mannered and listens. He shares the home with a dog Melissa also adopted from the Puppies for Parole Program. She said he does well with other dogs. Melissa has a 7-year-old son who Boris adores.

“He does great with my son,” she said. “Boris is very protective of his family and his home. Once he warms up to people, he is very loving and affectionate. He is truly part of our family.” •



# A New Leash on Life

## Hearing-impaired dogs find second chance through Puppies for Parole



*Zeus, a deaf Dachshund now known as Sparky, takes a trip to the fire hydrant.*

Offenders at the South Central Correctional Center (SCCC) in Licking made worldwide headlines this year. They gave Zeus, now known as Sparky, a second chance at life. Zeus was born deaf. The birth defect rendered him useless to the breeder and his future was uncertain, at best. The Dachshund ended up at an animal rescue shelter where his handicap plagued any chance for adoption. The shelter reached out to SCCC, which participates in the Department of Corrections' (DOC) Puppies for Parole Program.

When the shelter approached SCCC about taking Zeus in for the eight-week training session, the offender handlers were more than willing to accept the challenge of helping the dog overcome his disability. In preparation, the handlers met with deaf offenders at SCCC to learn sign language.

The offenders devised a plan that would teach the Dachshund how to respond to commands with the use of sign language.

After his training was complete, the offenders made sure Zeus would go to a home where he could help others. They paid the adoption fee and donated the dog to the Missouri School for the Deaf (MSD) in Fulton.

Barbara Garrison, the superintendent at MSD, said Zeus has adapted well to the school and that he is expanding his sign language commands. Because Zeus is difficult to sign, the school changed his name to Sparky.

"He is doing great," she said. "The children are delighted to have him here. He hasn't met a stranger. Sparky makes the rounds, visiting the classrooms and sleeps in the dorms on special occasion weekends. We have some kids who have disassociation problems. Sparky has become a good friend to these children and helps them open up. He is working out beautifully."

Upon learning about Zeus, a boy named Abraham reached out to the offenders for help with his dog, Coby. Abraham's twin sister is deaf and he wanted her to be able to communicate with Coby. The offender handlers wrote a training manual and produced a DVD to help Abraham train his dog. The training materials were personalized specifically for Coby. Abraham sent the offenders a thank you card that said Coby now behaves and knows sign language.



*Good dog! Petey, a deaf Boston Terrier, lays on command during a training exercise at South Central Correctional Center.*

The offenders at SCCC have another deaf dog currently in training. After reading about Zeus,

***Hearing-impaired continues on page 5***



## Hearing-impaired continued from page 4

Petey, a 1-year-old Boston Terrier, was donated to the Animal Shelter of Texas County for training. The previous owner didn't know how to work with him because of his impairment. Petey's offender trainers are utilizing many of the methods used on Zeus, but they admit a lot of the training is trial and error.

"I've read books on sign language and have talked to some of our deaf offenders," he said. "When I see Petey exhibiting good behavior, I give him the sign and award him with positive reinforcement. When we first received Petey, he was pretty antisocial towards other dogs. We have managed to bring that out of him."


One of the offender handlers said the key to Petey's training has been a lot of patience and repetition. Petey was adopted prior to his graduation from the program. A deaf woman from Washington, D.C. reached out to the Missouri School for the Deaf after reading about Zeus. She was interested in adopting a dog trained by sign language. The school forwarded the woman on to the Animal Shelter of Texas County, who in turn told her about Petey. The woman immediately made arrangements to adopt Petey after his training is complete. •



Petey sits, intently waiting for the next command from his offender handler.



The steps used to train Zeus were compiled in a manual and DVD (shown above) for a child named Abraham, who was interested in training his own dog so his twin sister, who is deaf, could communicate with the dog. The contents of his thank-you note are shown below.



Thank you for the  
 DVD and the training  
 manual. I really  
 like it alot, MY dog  
 behaves now. He  
 knows sign language  
 now,  
 Sincerely,  
 Abrahm

# Back from the Brink

## *From certain death to search and rescue, thanks to the Puppies for Parole Program*

Stewey, a 16-month-old black Lab mix, put his nose to good use and sniffed his way from the Cameron Animal Shelter all the way to the bay area of northern California. As an unwanted “pound puppy,” Stewey at one time faced euthanization. A lot has changed, though, for this pooch as he has found a career sniffing out historical human remains.

After completing the Puppies for Parole Program at Western Missouri Correctional Center (WMCC), Stewey was adopted by Benjamin Peek, a retired firefighter from California. Peek works with the Institute for Canine Forensics (ICF). The ICF is a non-profit organization that specializes in human remains detection.

“A friend of mine was on an (ICF) team,” Peek said. “After I retired, I got in touch with her and told her I was interested in joining a team. I asked her if she could point me in the right direction. She told me she could do better than that and she found Stewey on an online message board, which advertised him as having the potential to be a service dog. So I requested more information about him. I received some additional information, and he looked dynamite, so I flew to Missouri and picked him up on October 3, 2010.”

Stewey was trained by offender handlers in basic obedience at WMCC. Peek said Stewey knew about four commands when he picked him up. In just four months, the dog’s vocabulary has expanded to about 25 commands.

“He learns so fast,” Peek said. “It doesn’t take him long to pick up on things. When I first brought Stewey back, other members of the team were blown away that he was up for euthanization at one point. They couldn’t believe how smart he is. He is extremely loving and his loyalty is ridiculous.”



*And action! Stewey shows off his skills in the field of tracking.*

Peek said he frequently walks Stewey without a leash on 160 acres that he owns. He said Stewey never runs off and always stays by his owner’s side.

To be certified in historical human remains detection, it typically takes a dog about two years. Peek said Stewey is on pace to complete the certification in less than one year. He said Stewey is trained to sniff out bones. The skill is utilized to locate unmarked graves.

“It’s incredible to witness how accurate he is,” Peek said. “We recently took him to a burial ground where there were unmarked graves. Stewey alerted on 18 of them. He is in one of the most challenging tracking fields. We search for graves that date back to the Civil War.”

Peek said Stewey goes everywhere with him and that they train every day. He said he couldn’t have asked for a better friend or companion. •



# Jack and Joshua

## *A tale of two rescues*

Thirteen-year-old “Joshua” has had a hard and difficult life. Joshua has a debilitating disease that restricts him to a wheelchair, hampers his upper body functionality and limits his ability to speak. Joshua and his sister, who also suffers from the disease, live in a state-run group home. The disease is hereditary for the two siblings.

Offenders at the Jefferson City Correctional Center (JCCC) are trying to boost Joshua’s spirits and make his life a little bit easier. Two offender handlers are training a 1-year-old Labrador Retriever mix named Jack for Joshua. Once Jack’s training is complete, the Lab will serve as a close friend and service dog for Joshua.

The offenders were provided with a list of tasks that Joshua struggles with. The teenager utilizes a motorized wheelchair to get around. At school, though, other students jump on the back of the wheelchair to hitch a ride. Often, Joshua is unable to communicate with the students to tell them to get off his wheelchair. Jack is being trained to bark when Joshua gives him a

signal. This will alert teachers that there is a problem. Jack is also being trained to push the access button to open automatic doors. The dog can also pick up items and give them to Joshua. A rope is tied to a door in the offenders’ housing unit so that Jack can be trained to grab the rope to open the door. These are just a few examples of the activities of daily living with which Jack is being trained to assist.

Staff at JCCC said Jack’s offender handlers are rallying around the boy. They are training this dog with the struggles Joshua encounters each day in mind. Normally, the Puppies for Parole training encompasses about eight weeks. Jack’s training, however, will take several months because it’s much more specialized and complex. The goal is to have the training complete by



*Jack takes a break from his complex, and very important, training. Jack is being trained to not only serve as a companion to a wheelchair-bound teen, but also to assist with his day-to-day activities.*

July 4, so Joshua can spend about a month getting acclimated with his new companion before he returns to school for the fall term. •

### **Make a donation ...**

The Puppies for Parole Program does not receive any general revenue funding from the State of Missouri to support its activities. Rather, supplies and support come from our partnering agencies, as well as from donations. To contribute to the program, you may: Mail a check or money order to Puppies for Parole; c/o Lenny Lenger, Comptroller; Missouri Department of Corrections; PO Box 236; Jefferson City, MO 65102 OR make a credit card donation via the Puppies for Parole website ([http://doc.mo.gov/division/dai/puppies\\_donations.php](http://doc.mo.gov/division/dai/puppies_donations.php)). All donations will be used directly for the Puppies for Parole Program. This could include items such as collars, crates, leashes, chew toys, some veterinary services, etc. while the dogs are enrolled in the program.

# Knuckles and Maribel

## *A friendship made possible by Puppies for Parole*

Susan Higgins hadn't had a good night's sleep in over two years. She and her husband constantly slept with one eye open because they feared what their 4-year-old daughter Maribel might do. She was known to get food out of the refrigerator or even go outside and venture out to the neighbor's house. Maribel suffers from Asperger's, a mild form of Autism.

Susan read several articles about how dogs can be therapeutic for those who suffer from Autism. She wanted to get a dog for Maribel, with hopes it would have a positive impact on her daughter. Susan is an employee at the South Central Correctional Center (SCCC). She knew the Puppies for Parole Program at SCCC had previous success training dogs for people with special needs. She went to Tina Holland, SCCC institutional activities coordinator, and asked her to be on the look out for a dog that would make a good service dog.

"She said, 'I think I already know of one that would'," Susan said. It was a Border Collie mix named Knuckles.

Knuckles' prior track record wasn't very positive. He had been returned twice to the Animal Shelter of Texas County after adoption because his new owners said he exhibited bad behavior. However, his attitude changed for the better after entering the Puppies for Parole Program, and Tina, along with his handlers, saw something special in him.

"I met with his handlers," Susan said. "They said they would teach him sign language to help Maribel communicate with him."

She said Knuckles learned the sign commands for wait, stay, sit, shake and lay down. She also said the handlers taught Knuckles not to beg for food. Susan said when she takes Maribel to public places, she always fears her daughter will run off because children with Autism have a tendency to get fixated on a subject and just take off towards it.

"It's really scary because we have been at Wal-Mart and she just takes off," she said. "Knuckles is trained



*Maribel gives her friend and companion, Knuckles, a well-deserved hug.*

to be an anchor for Maribel. When we go somewhere, Knuckles wears a harness that is attached to Maribel. When she starts to take off, Knuckles sits down so Maribel can't run off. It happens all the time. It's really a big deal because children with Autism just disappear."

Susan said her daughter doesn't typically talk to people. However, she said Maribel will carry on an entire conversation with Knuckles.

After not sleeping soundly for two years, Susan and her husband are now enjoying better nights of rest. Maribel now sleeps through the night because Knuckles sleeps at the foot of her bed.

"The first night we brought him home, she slept all night," Susan said. "That never happened before. He (Knuckles) has changed our lives. I had no idea a dog could have this type of impact. Knuckles is truly part of our family." •



# Memphis and Uno

## *Paroled to serve the mental health community*



*Ho, ho, ho! Memphis enjoys his first Christmas at his new home - Marshall Habilitation Center.*

Missouri Residential Services while Memphis, a mix breed from Jefferson City Correctional Center, went to Marshall Habilitation Center.

“We believe having dogs around the consumers promotes mental health in general,” Finnegan said. “The effects the dogs have on our consumers are similar to what has been seen in the prison environment. Most of our consumers have a lot of personal challenges of one kind or another. Having a friend like a dog, who is not judgmental and offers unconditional love, is very therapeutic.”

She said the dogs make the facilities more “homelike” and serve as a bonding tool for staff and consumers.

Finnegan said the consumers at Marshall knew in advance that they were getting Memphis. She said everyone was very excited in anticipation of the dog’s arrival.

“When he arrived, they greeted Memphis with all kinds of affection,” she said. “It was really fun for everyone involved to witness that.”

A chance encounter with actress Glenn Close at a benefit black tie event sparked Judy Finnegan’s interest in the Department of Corrections’ (DOC) Puppies for Parole Program. Finnegan is the Director of the Children’s Office for the Department of Mental Health (DMH). She was attending a benefit sponsored by the Missouri Mental Health Foundation in St. Louis at which Close was appearing. The actress asked her if the DMH was connected to the DOC. She then followed up by asking Finnegan if the DMH was connected with the DOC’s dog program.

“She (Close) said a lot of people are seeing the therapeutic link between mental health and dogs,” Finnegan said. “We went back and talked to (DMH) Director (Keith) Schafer. George (Lombardi) had mentioned to us that the DOC had a new dog program and we agreed the program was very innovative. Dr. Schafer saw the future collaboration possibilities between the dogs in the programs and the consumers (patients) in our facilities and programs.”

Puppies for Parole received the Governor’s Award for Quality and Productivity as a result of the Department of Mental Health’s nomination.

The state agency has since adopted two Puppies for Parole dogs who live at the Marshall Habilitation Center in Marshall and at Southeast Missouri Residential Services in Poplar Bluff. Uno, a Beagle from Southeast Correctional Center, went to Southeast

## *Memphis and Uno continued from page 9*

Mary Fangmann, superintendent of the Marshall Habilitation Center, said having Memphis allows the consumers the opportunity to learn the responsibilities of taking care of a pet. She said many consumers will transition back into the community and the experience of interacting with Memphis is something they will take with them.

“Studies have shown that having pets benefit people of all ages,” she said. “Memphis has been a great addition for us. It has worked out so well that we are looking at doing another adoption in the future.”

Brad Miller is the superintendent of Southeast Missouri Residential Services. He said Uno has been spoiled rotten since his arrival.

“The clients (consumers) have really taken a liking to him,” Miller said. “He (Uno) has had a very positive impact on our facility. The clients take him on walks daily and spend a lot of time with him. There is no doubt Uno has had a positive impact on their moods. Having him around takes the edge off.”

Finnegan said the DOC’s partnership with the DMH is working out so well that it plans to continue supporting the expansion of dog adoptions to facilities and providers throughout the state. She said having the dogs is something DMH can offer to consumers that is minimal in cost, but for many people will be very beneficial. The dogs are another tool to promote mental health.

“This is a program that really doesn’t have a downside,” she said. “It’s a win, win for everyone and will continue to grow.” •



*Uno enjoys some leisure time at his new home - Southeast Missouri Residential Services.*

### **Looking ahead ...**

*“As we look to the future of Puppies for Parole, the department is working to form a long lasting relationship with SSM Cardinal Glennon Children’s Medical Center. Working with the pediatricians, the joint effort will be to partner our dogs with children who have Autism. Research has shown dogs have a profound and therapeutic effect on their treatment. The department is also in the process of establishing a relationship with the Missouri Veterans Administration that will place our dogs in veterans’ homes around the state. We are also developing a partnership with the Missouri National Guard that will provide soldiers with dogs upon their return home from Iraq and Afghanistan. We are grateful for the success this program has had, the effect it has had on saving dogs, the impact it has had on offenders and the positive difference it has made in the atmosphere at our prisons. It is our hope to continue to help people in need who can benefit from dog companionship.”*

**- George A. Lombardi**

Director, Missouri Department of Corrections