

PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

2,500th ADOPTION NEWSLETTER

Summer 2014



**Rescuing dogs from a
lifetime of pain...**

**Releasing people to a
lifetime of change.**

Missouri Department of Corrections



Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor

George A. Lombardi
Director

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PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

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Cover: Bella and Eli
Crossroads Correctional Center

Mission

Our Mission is to provide a safe, stable environment for dogs who have been abused or abandoned for the purpose of creating adoptable animals suitable for a variety of community purposes, while creating an atmosphere for offenders to engage in positive behaviors outside themselves.

I am delighted to say that in the more than three years since its inception, our Puppies for Parole program continues to be at the forefront of finding suitable homes for unadoptable dogs, while teaching offenders compassion and altruistic behavior. Since this is our 2,500th adoption newsletter, we want to share with you how the program has evolved and how this unique program is still touching the lives of everyone involved.



With the help of donations, our partnership with COMTREA and the wardens at 19 of our 20 adult institutions, the program grew so much that we envisioned a way of bringing dogs to an advanced level of training to assist those with special needs or assist in special situations. In this edition of the newsletter, you will read about six dogs that received advanced training and are impacting the lives they touch. The Advanced P4P dogs featured in this newsletter bring pride to the handlers and staff members involved in their training, but most importantly, these dogs play an integral role in assisting those that they've been trained to help.

I'm also pleased to say that the success of our program has piqued interest on a global stage. In May, two members of Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, the famous animal shelter based in London, came to Missouri to get an up-close look at the P4P program. The main focus of their visit was to learn as much as they could about our program in the hopes of emulating it within the UK's prison system.

During Battersea's visit, University of Missouri Professor Rebecca Johnson presented some of her research findings to the two members from Battersea. As you'll read in this newsletter, Johnson is studying the effects of our P4P program on the offender handlers, the prison population as a whole and the staff working at the institution. Her research into our program is the first study of its kind that focuses solely on the effects of companion animals in a correctional system.

As always, I am grateful for those who have helped this program achieve its goals. Through this program, we have been able to give dogs a second chance, which has a positive effect on the offenders, our staff and our institutions. We hope to continue our efforts in teaching offenders altruistic behavior, which can significantly reduce the chances that they will return to prison, while helping reduce the euthanization of dogs throughout the state.

George A. Lombardi
Director
Missouri Department of Corrections



Studying the data

MU professor conducts research on P4P program

Ever since her days as a practicing nurse, Rebecca Johnson has always been aware of the importance pets have on the lives of their owners. She has seen how pets help promote well-being in their owners, as well as motivate them to get healthy after a hospital stay so that they can get home to care for their pets. Since becoming a faculty professor at the University of Missouri in Columbia in 1999, Johnson has been studying the benefits companion animals have on individuals. But it wasn't until she met Missouri Department of Corrections Director George Lombardi that she became interested in studying the effects of the Puppies for Parole program on the institutions and the offenders who train the dogs.

"I was intensely interested in the program because it seemed like a great opportunity to do some research to measure outcomes," Johnson said. "As I investigated other programs, it became very clear that no one

had measured any outcomes systematically."

Johnson began conducting her research, which is the first of its kind in the country, at four institutions that hadn't implemented the program. She started collecting her data at these four institutions to get a clear baseline of how the institutions were before the P4P programs were implemented. She then did follow up research at those institutions once the programs became active, and she was surprised at some of her initial data.

"It's very early on, but we have very positive comments from all of the offenders that we've studied," Johnson said. "We have a group of offenders who are working with the dogs and a group that is not. We will be comparing those groups on a number of things. From the point of view of the offenders in the program, there are universal positive exclamations about the program and how it benefits them."

Johnson's research is not only looking at the positive effects the program has on the offenders but also an offender's self-perceived health, self-esteem, the number of grievances filed and the amount of mental and physical health resources used before and after the P4P program was

implemented. But her research doesn't stop at the offenders, she is also looking at the effect the program has on the staff members.

"We're studying self-perceived health and job satisfaction," she said. "We hope to see that those who are involved in the project in some way or around the animals are positively impacted in those variables."

She is also seeing a trend developing with the two handlers who are assigned to train a dog.

"A team is forming among the handlers to the point that they are truly working together to help each other meet common goals," Johnson said. "That's something that typically offenders, who are out in the community committing crimes are not necessarily doing in constructive ways.

"It's a lot of work to train a dog and take 24/7 responsibility for it. These offenders rise to the occasion, and I think they can do that more easily if they work together as a team."

But the best part of some of the data that she's collecting may be something that can't be measured.

"One offender told me, 'no one has ever loved me like this dog has loved me,'" Johnson said. "That's a very profound statement."



Karma

Karma is a Great Pyrenees who recently graduated from the Puppies for Parole Program at Crossroads Correctional Center (CRCC) in Cameron, Missouri. Karma came from a litter of eight. Needless to say, Karma's family had their hands full with all those puppies, as well as Karma's parents. Five puppies in the litter were quickly adopted, leaving three that needed a home. One day, Karma's mother ran away from her home and was found on the doorstep of one of the correctional centers in Cameron. Staff at the institution called the manager at the local animal shelter and she found out where Karma's mother lived. When the manager contacted the family about Karma's mother, they said they had more puppies and the manager said she would take the ones they had left. Karma then entered the P4P program at CRCC.

Karma's stay in the P4P program was brief. She was at CRCC only three weeks before she passed her American Kennel Club Good Citizenship test, making her one of the youngest dogs, if not the youngest, in the state to pass the test. Our partner in the Advanced P4P program, COMTREA, had been looking for just the right dog to adopt to become a farm dog at its Bridle Ridge Acres farm in Hillsboro, Missouri. After seeing how smart, calm and loving Karma was during a demonstration of the P4P program at a regional meeting, COMTREA submitted application to adopt Karma. Soon, Karma was on her way to her new forever home. Although she may have been a little carsick during the seven-hour drive from Cameron to Hillsboro, she pepped up once she made it to her destination by greeting the horses, donkeys and kittens on the farm.

While she's cute as a button, Karma wasn't adopted for her looks. She was adopted for the therapeutic value that she can offer COMTREA's clients, such as hugs, kisses and lots of affection. But she'll also serve a

larger role while on the farm.

A Great Pyrenees is considered to be an elite protector of herds. These breeds have been used for hundreds of years by shepherds in Spain and France to scare off any predators that may harm those that they are protecting. These breeds also can be trusted around small, young and helpless animals, making Karma a perfect fit for all the animals residing at Bridle Ridge Acres.



Since her arrival, she has become more familiar with her surroundings and settled into her role at Bridle Ridge. Karma has already been active in working with boys from a residential program who have substance abuse and behavioral issues. She provides a calming influence and is instrumental in the therapy of these boys. Some of the comments from them are:

"When I have a lot on my plate and Karma is here she's good company to have around. When I'm concentrated on Karma I don't worry about things that bother me."

"I've seen when someone is having a bad day and Karma comes around that person's day gets a lot better. She relieves our stress and makes our days more bearable and makes us all happy."



When I have a lot on my plate and Karma is here she's good company to have around. When I'm concentrated on Karma I don't worry about things that bother me.

- COMTREA client



Agility course

Southeast Correctional Center (SECC) recently held a ribbon cutting ceremony for its dog agility course that was donated to them by Mark and Dorrie Krueger. The Kruegers had previously adopted a dog named Rusty from SECC and had been so impressed with the program that they made a very generous donation in the form of a canine agility course. Rusty, a 2-year-old English Pointer mix, came to the P4P program after he was abandoned and due to be euthanized. Rusty was trained and given a second chance and became a great ambassador for the Puppies for Parole program.

The agility course at SECC has allowed its P4P program to expand its training regimen by letting the dogs fulfill their natural instincts of chasing, as well as giving the dog and trainer a good workout. Agility courses also tend to strengthen the bond between a dog and its trainer/owner.



Rusty

Sarge was trained through the P4P program to become a first responder helping to comfort children during traumatic times. Rescued from a life of wandering the streets of Trenton, Mo., to a respite at Green Hills Animal Shelter, Sarge got a second chance with the P4P program at Chillicothe Correctional Center. Lynn Burns, a child therapist, adopted Sarge through COMTREA to accompany her in her work, making calls to children’s advocacy centers, courtrooms and as a first responder on the scene for childhood traumas. After passing his certification, Sarge began an active life as a therapy partner, soothing struggling and traumatized children.

Today, Burns says Sarge is doing wonderful and “the children that I work with are so happy to see him.” With his natural ability to sense human emotion and comfort stressed individuals, Sarge has also been helping adults cope with difficult times as well. He will be reporting for duty in the next few months to comfort grieving families of veterans and local heroes working alongside Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, Col. Don Ballard at Swan Lake Memorial Park in the Kansas City area. He recently visited a nursing home and enjoyed putting smiles on the faces of residents. Sarge may also soon be partnering with a local domestic violence shelter in providing support for victims.

Sarge



“...the children that I work with are so happy to see him.”

- Lynn Burns

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Reaching across the pond



UK's Battersea Dogs & Cats Home comes to Missouri to learn about the Puppies for Parole program

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home of London, England traveled to Missouri in May to tour some of the Puppies for Parole programs for the purpose of starting something similar in the United Kingdom. Battersea has a long history of finding forever homes for dogs and cats. For more than 150 years, Battersea has been working on the frontline of sheltering dogs and cats in the UK. Charles Dickens supported its mission in an article in his newspaper in 1862. The organization's recognition for helping dogs and cats didn't stop at famous British writers. Queen Victoria became a patron of Battersea in 1886. The Royal Family continued its support of the organization in 1956 when Queen Elizabeth II became a patron. Despite the rich history of the organization and all the support it garnered, Battersea's average for finding homes for its dogs and cats was nearly at a month. Battersea's Chief Executive Claire Horton was looking for a way to

reduce that time by making the dogs and cats at Battersea more adoptable so that it would be easier to find permanent homes. She came to Missouri to get an up-close look at a program that was doing just that.

Like many shelters across Missouri, Battersea has a number of dogs and cats that the organization can't seem to place anywhere and those animals just need a bit longer and more dedicated training.

That's why Claire and her Communications Director Dee McIntosh came to Missouri to learn about the Missouri Department of Corrections' Puppies for

Parole program. Claire wanted to see how Missouri's program worked and if Battersea could do something similar in the United Kingdom.

"The principles of corrections are the same but I think that there is an awful lot to be

learned from the way that the US handles corrections and the number of rehabilitation programs that have been put in place," Horton said. "While the UK has that, there are some things like the dog program that really haven't yet been touched. This is why we're seeing if

we can be pioneers in that."

Claire and Dee spent a week visiting with staff members in the Puppies for Parole program, its partners and toured four institutions, where they got to meet with handlers to discuss, not only the benefits for the dogs but the benefits to the offenders who



“ ...what I've seen in Missouri is that this dog program is making a difference for everybody whose life it touches. ”

– Claire Horton

train the dogs. The goal of their visit was to learn everything they could in the hope of emulating the program in the United Kingdom.

"The impact that this program makes is not just on the lives of the animals, but is on the

inmates, who are also a part of the program and the prison population as a whole,” Horton said. “We’re studying that and we’ve done a lot of research in the last year with a view to taking it back to the UK because there’s just nothing like this in the UK at all.

“We went into these facilities to really understand their Puppies for Parole program, which is a real innovation that brings dogs into prisons to be trained by prisoners.”

During their tour, Clair and Dee met with more than 50 offender handlers at Alcoa Correctional Center, Jefferson City Correctional Center, South Central Correctional Center and the Women’s Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center where they heard stories about how the program has had a positive effect on the lives of the handlers.

“We’ve listened to them and their stories and how it’s taught them compassion and to learn how to care for someone other

than themselves,” Horton said. “It’s taught them responsibility and how to communicate. ... They’ve learned how to share things, and most importantly, they have learned how to care and love. And I think that’s been missing from many of these inmates’ lives. It feels as though, and they would say the same thing, that there’s been kind of a softening there and it’s given them a sense of purpose.”

Claire spoke with one offender handler during her visit who told her that he was never going to leave the institution, but that he knows the dogs that he’s training are going to go to families with kids and be happy

ever after. He told her, “Every time one of my dogs goes out, it feels like a little piece of me goes outside, too.”

“I thought that was fascinating,” Horton said. “I also thought that it was extremely moving because he’s really giving something back to the community. I don’t think you can measure that.”



Claire meets with Rep. Jeff Grisamore of Lee’s Summit, left, after receiving special recognition by the Missouri House of Representatives at the State Capitol in Jefferson City, Mo. Director George A. Lombardi is pictured in the center.

Claire also got to speak with the wardens at the institutions and hear how the program has changed the atmosphere of the institutions, while making them more secure.

“From the wardens that we’ve spoken with, to the custody staff, and to the administration in the prisons, all we’ve heard is the benefit that the global population in each prison felt from having dogs there,” Horton said. “It has really made for a different atmosphere and a safer prison. Prisoners that want to get in on it will have to work hard if they want to be a part of the program. They have to stay out of trouble if they want to

benefit, even indirectly from that program.”

After spending the week in Missouri, Claire had seen exactly what she wanted to see and was ready to get back to her home and Battersea to begin her proposal to officials in the British government.

“I think everyone is going to win with this program,” Horton said. “I’m going to seriously take back to the UK government my hearty recommendations about bringing this program into the UK because what I’ve seen in Missouri is that this dog program is making a difference for everybody whose life it touches.”



Bella and Eli

A dog brings healing calm to a young boy and his family

Some say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. There is a little boy named Eli that sees beauty every time he sees his Bella, and his Bella is around him all the time. Bella, which means beautiful in Italian, is a Golden Retriever mix that was specifically trained for Eli in the Puppies for Parole Advanced Training program. But Bella's journey into the program didn't begin with her being a stray. She was given to the Cameron Animal Shelter by her family because they were going through a divorce and couldn't keep her around, even though she had been with that family since she was 8 weeks old. Now at nearly 3 years old, Bella was going to start a new journey in an unfamiliar setting.

When Bella entered the P4P program at Crossroads

Correctional Center in Cameron, you'd think she'd be pretty scared, but she wasn't. Bella adjusted well in the program and was very eager to be petted and loved. Training her was easy for the handlers because she was such an affectionate dog, but helping her find a forever home is where her story really begins to shine.

A family from Illinois was searching for a helper dog that would have a calming effect on their 6-year-old son Eli, who has Sensory Processing Disorder and Hypogammaglobulinemia, a common type of immunodeficiency. Part of Eli's treatment routine includes weekly infusions administered by his parent which, under the best of circumstances, is difficult on both sides of the needle. For Eli, to whom the world appears "too

loud, too fast, too bright," it is nothing short of traumatic. "Too much noise and too much motion and he [Eli] has a breakdown," says his mother Anna. A chance encounter with the large English Mastiff that belonged to family friend gave Anna an idea. When Eli became upset the dog would lay near, comforting him "and he became a different child." Anna mentioned this to Eli's immunologist, who suggested that Eli responded to stimuli and situations a lot like veterans with PTSD and that service dogs were great for these patients. He said, "Their bodies and minds expect a certain outcome when they go places like a doctor's office or hospital or even meeting new people," and that he "wished more kids could go that route because it could be life changing." When Eli was officially diagnosed with Sensory Processing Disorder by his pediatrician, Anna inquired about service/helper dogs and learned of Puppies for Parole and their



partnership with COMTREA. The P4P coordinator at Crossroads Correctional Center and the offender handlers learned of this family's request through the P4P partner COMTREA. Once they saw the request, they knew Bella would be the perfect fit for this family.

Soon after going through her advanced training, Bella finally got to meet her new forever family. They drove from Illinois to pick her up. It was an emotional meeting, as 6-year-old Eli finally got to see and pet his future friend and companion.

His mother said to the group that gathered to see Bella off that she had not seen her son smile like that in years.

Anna wasn't sure what to expect initially but she knew that Bella was going to be good for her son. Right away she noticed two areas that Bella was able to help. Eli's weekly infusions, though he still dislikes them, are much smoother. He holds on to Bella and she lays on his

lap, distracting him and keeping him calm through the process. Anna says that before Bella, "It would end in all of us crying. And now...it's a different experience than before." The other big area that Bella has had an impact on is when Eli and his family are in large crowds. "It used to be that we would get in a place like the zoo or even a large family gathering and he would get overwhelmed and end up crying, screaming or running away. He couldn't handle all the activity."

Because Bella is a certified service animal she can go anywhere he goes. Now when Eli gets overwhelmed he holds Bella instead of darting off. In the event that he does run, Bella is tethered to him and with her training she "stays", keeping him from getting too far. But Bella does more than keep Eli grounded; she is like a canine guardian angel to him.

Anna recounted a time they were at a park having a barbecue and with no one around; she decided to let Bella take a break from working. "Suddenly a man appeared from out of nowhere and began talking to the kids. Bella stood up and went to Eli, blocking him from the stranger

as if to tell him, 'this isn't safe buddy'. She always knows where he is and can feel when he needs her."

Reflecting on the changes that Bella has brought to their home Anna said: "It's so much more peaceful around our house. It used to be complete chaos from the time the kids woke up until bed and long after. And it's funny

because who knew that a dog no one wanted could have that kind of effect on a family who desperately

needed something to change. My son really is a different kid. I'm not afraid of going to large events anymore because I know that Bella is beside him and she makes him calm. I feel freer to allow my son to do things that we could never do before."

Bella, who didn't come into the P4P program under the best of circumstances, got a second chance in life and is bringing healing calm to a young boy and his family. When asked what Eli thinks about Bella he said "Bella makes my heart happy." Anna responds "...when his heart is happy, so is mine." There can be no greater proof of the success of this program.

“ Bella makes my heart happy. ”
- Eli



Larry & Johnny

How two dogs became heroes to the residents of Loch Haven Nursing Home

The names Larry and Johnny may never be as famous as Martin and Lewis, Holmes and Watson or Batman and Robin, but ask the residents and staff members at Loch Haven Nursing Home in Macon, Missouri and you might get a different story. Larry, a

Yellow Labrador/Shepherd mix, and a Chocolate Labrador mix named Johnny are canine heroes to the residents, offering friendly companionship while keeping a sharp eye out for them.

Larry and Johnny came into the Puppies for Parole

program in 2013 and graduated in the summer from Algoa Correctional Center. But the two Labrador retriever mixes didn't part ways after their graduation. When officials from Loch Haven came to Algoa Correctional Center to pick from a variety of dogs to be trained, they selected Larry and Johnny and specifically requested that the two dogs receive 'man down' training to help alert staff at Loch Haven if something had happened to one of their residents. Loch Haven

personnel made several trips to Jefferson City while Larry and Johnny were in the program to receive special training on how to handle the dogs.

After graduating from the program, Larry and Johnny went to their new forever home at Loch Haven and it wasn't long before their training would come in handy. One evening in November 2013, Sanford "Sandy" Carter, a west wing resident at Loch

Haven who can neither hear or speak, had fallen out of his wheelchair with no way to call for help. Larry, who routinely roams the halls looking in on residents and visiting them, had discovered Carter and began barking frantically to alert the staff that someone needed help. A nurse and some aids arrived at Carter's room to find Larry sitting next to him and barking excitedly.

“ The dogs sensed that these people have extra needs and they really responded to that.”

- Byron Freeman

Once they got Carter up and had determined that he was okay, Larry continued to sit with the resident, offering him

comfort and support. Byron Freeman, administrator at Loch Haven, said that following this incident, "it was clear to the residents and staff that they (Larry and Johnny) are more than just a home animal. They became a part of our family and they are here to take care of us like we take care of them."

From day one, Larry and Johnny have had a positive impact on the residents and staff. Residents that did not

want to interact with people quickly came out of their shell and engaged with Larry and Johnny, talking and petting them lovingly.

“The dogs sensed that these people have extra needs and they really responded to that,” Freeman said.

Sharing a story about a former resident who did not interact

with people and was really sad most of the time when he first came to Loch Haven, Freeman said that when the resident saw him and Larry coming down the hall, he looked up and grinned. After introducing Larry, the

resident began talking to him and telling Freeman how he used to have hunting dogs. From then on, the resident would have conversations with Freeman about the different hunts he went on and the kinds of dogs owned.

“It just really enhanced his life,” Freeman said.



Residents frequently show their love of the dogs with secret treats every once in awhile. Although Larry and Johnny are well trained and do not frequent the dining area of the home, residents at Loch Haven will save scraps from their meals to treat the dogs. The nursing home knows that residents enjoy

interacting with the dogs, so they distribute bags of healthy treats so the residents can have them in their rooms for when Larry and Johnny come for a visit.

The effect on the residents has been

profoundly positive, but it has also had an effect on the staff members.

“They just love them,” Freeman said. “They take them on walks when the dogs signal they need to go out. It seems to help relieve day-to-day staff stress that we can have. If you’re having a bad



day, how do you not respond to a dog that comes up and nudges you and is wagging its tail and grinning at you?”

During the week, Larry may be found wandering the halls of the nursing home while Johnny patrols the apartments. In the evenings and on the weekends, Larry goes home with Freeman who is his caregiver. Johnny is housed by Wendy Bouman, the manager of the Loch Haven Apartments. This down time is important for the dogs after a full day of interacting with hundreds of people. Freeman has a farm where

Larry can run and burn off steam, but when it comes time to go to work again, Larry is always excited to get there.

Freeman said he is proud that Larry and Johnny were a part of the Puppies for Parole program, and that the special ‘man down’ training the dogs received has become an important aspect of their role at Loch Haven.

“If one person is all they help save in that situation, it’s been well worth it,” Freeman said. “We hope incidents like that will be few and far between, but we know Larry and Johnny will be ready.”

Course teaches individuals the importance of pet first aid and disaster response skills

To complement and enhance the Puppies for Parole program the Missouri Department of Corrections provided Emergency Care and Safety Institute (ECSI) Pet First Aid and Disaster Response Training (CPR) for the institutions beginning in February. This training is a “train the trainer” program, where those attending are certified to train offender handlers, officers and other staff members who may need to provide first aid or CPR to dogs.

Credited with pioneering the first EMS training program available, ECSI training program is affiliated with the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and American College of Emergency Physicians. The content of the training materials is provided by Pets America, an organization focused on preventing and caring for pet injuries and illnesses. Developed by more than 300 veterinarians, the program utilizes the most up-to-date research, which includes teaching strategies, methods, plans and administrative forms.

Professional trainer CMatt Freeman, who has trained numerous DOC staff members, has been championing this important training since 2010 when Puppies for Parole was first getting started. Back then, Freeman, a long-time American Red Cross instructor was offering pet first aid at Jefferson City Correctional Center (JCCC) for staff and offenders, but the idea did not blossom there. It was a few years later when Freeman was at the training academy that the idea of offering pet first aid as a training course at the academy gained momentum. With the backing of Deputy Division Director Cyndi Prudden and Chief



of Staff Training Jim Wiseman, Freeman contacted ECSI and got permission to offer the certification through the training academy beginning in 2014.

Freeman spent 30 years in the armed forces including the U.S. Army and Missouri Army National Guard. Freeman came to the training academy four years ago. Prior to that, Freeman worked at Central Missouri Correctional Center before it closed and then at JCCC, including serving as Ad-Seg supervisor and as an assistant trainer.

The success of six training sessions throughout the state has allowed 80 individuals involved in the P4P program receive this vital training. As a result, each attendee is expected to conduct regular training sessions for new staff and offender handlers, sharing what

they have learned.

The content of the training initially focuses on preventing emergencies, pet first aid and how to respond to emergencies when they arise. The course underscores the importance of basic behavior training to the safety of the animals, particularly the use of commands to keep animals out of danger. Attendees learn how to interpret animal body language, how to safely restrain and how to safely transport an animal. Attendees also learn how to find and check animal vital signs. Instruction was provided on treating common illnesses, injuries, poisoning, trauma and shock. In addition, more serious emergencies are discussed like burns and cardiac arrest with in-depth training in animal CPR and first aid for the choking animal. Attendees learn how to deal with animals in a variety of travel scenarios. Finally, they learn the essentials of disaster management as it pertains to animals.

Offering this CPR/First Aid training to offender handlers enhances the U.S. Department of Labor’s apprenticeship program for animal trainers. Attendees receive a certificate from ECSI, a nationally recognized program that is good for two years.



From the handler's perspective

Piper makes her handlers proud



Here at Crossroads Correctional Center the name of our dog program is “New Leash on Life,” a fitting name for a program that has given second chances to well over 100 dogs and inmates alike. While the program was developed and aimed at the dogs for their benefit, those of us who have dedicated countless hours to working and training our dogs, also feel we have gained responsibilities and obligations to others, not just ourselves. After many successful adoptions, the program has given me personally a sense of pride and accomplishment, something my life has lacked for a very long time. ...

My co-handler and I were given a yellow Lab named “Piper,” who was selected for a special needs child. Piper had received her basic training at Algoa Correctional Center. There were a few doubters among us who wondered if Piper could successfully complete her training to become

certified. With set guidelines and objectives, we began working with Piper on everything from improving her leash skills to better, more reliable recall. We also had to improve her manners, no jumping up on anyone, no mouthing, etc. We also found out that the child Piper was going to loved to play ball, so we wanted to teach Piper how to play fetch.

After just a few short days of bonding time with us, Piper began to excel at most every area of training, but soon we discovered that she was scared or distracted by loud noises or unusual sounds.

So we made a decision to take Piper to work with us every day. We worked at the maintenance department at CRCC, doing plumbing and handling the tool room, so Piper became the tool room assistant. When she first arrived, she was very nervous of every tool box that banged on the counter. She also didn't appreciate the table saw, air compressor or other power tools. But as the days went by, Piper slowly began to be desensitized to the sounds that once scared her. Over time, she was able to lie down on the rug and take a nap. Piper became a mainstay at the maintenance department with everyone giving her attention. She could make a cloudy day seem sunny.

The dog we wanted to teach to play fetch quickly taught us and everyone around how to play ball. Piper loved to play fetch and soon was able to catch the ball from several feet away. She was so smart that she soon learned her commands by voice or by hand signal...

Piper's big day arrived when she would meet her future forever family for the very first time. ...

When our training class was over, Piper was allowed to stay behind as the rest of the dogs and handlers left. This was going to be the time

our trainer would see Piper and the family interact...

Our trainer was one of those who had never really seen what Piper was capable of, but we knew what she could do and now it was Piper's turn to show everyone else what she was capable of. With the stage set, Piper stole the show. She immediately won the hearts of all in attendance as she attached herself to the boy she was intended for. She followed all his commands and played ball with him. You could instantly see a bond being formed before your very eyes. ...

It was an honor for my co-handler and me to be a part of training such a special dog for such an important purpose. It has brought unspeakable joy to the both of us knowing how happy Piper's new family is with her, and although we and those at the CRCC maintenance department miss her, we were all fortunate to be a part of her life for as long as we were. We are all the better for it.

In closing, I'll say what my co-handler and I have told others concerning Piper's training, “We cannot take the credit for Piper. It was all God and Piper's doing. We just helped a little when needed and then got out of Piper's way.”

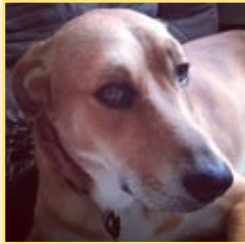
— Crossroads Correctional Center offender in the New Leash on Life program



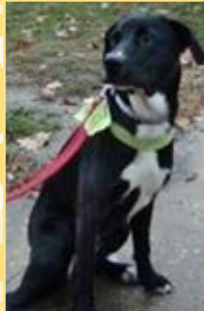
Recent Adoptions



Bane



Peanut



Jewels



Skye



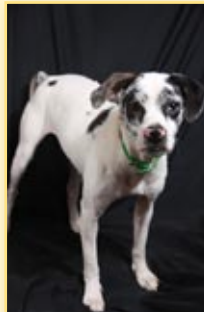
Stanley



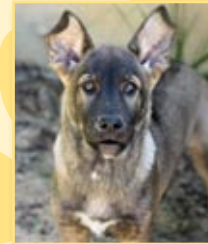
Twinkles



Julia



Happy



Ralfi



Zach



Pearl



Callie



Clyde



Duke



X-man

P4P Photo Gallery



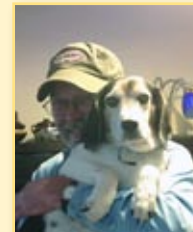
Gretel



Joker



Lucy



Ringo



Tucker



Zoey



PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

For more information about the
Puppies for Parole Program
or to view dogs available for adoption,
please visit doc.mo.gov and click on the
Puppies for Parole tab.

You can also find us facebook at
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Missouri Department of Corrections

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