



PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

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Newsletter for the Puppies for Parole Program - Missouri Department of Corrections - Public Information Office

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LITTLE GEORGE & SPENCER

The Best of Friends

Little George was all set to live out his life at the Chillicothe Correctional Center with staff and offenders. The red smooth-haired Dachshund had graduated from the Puppies for Parole Program and was all set to become the institution's house dog. However, sometimes things don't work out quite as planned.

Luann Reese works for the Department of Mental Health, and like many of her coworkers, she has been a staunch supporter of the program. She has an adult son, Spencer, who suffered from both a psychiatric and developmental disability. Spencer receives care and assistance for his disability, but for the most part lives alone in his apartment. He wanted a dog for a companion. Specifically, he wanted a Dachshund like the one he had as a child. Luann agreed a dog would be a nice addition for Spencer.

"When Spencer is alone he tends to be obsessive,"

she said. "He either likes to buy things or go places. It wasn't uncommon for him to call my cell phone 15 times in an hour. I thought a dog would be a good thing for Spencer because it would give him

companionship and help him learn some additional responsibility."

Spencer heard about Puppies for Parole from his uncle and combed the DOC's website looking at available dogs on the Puppies for Parole page. Spencer found a Dachshund and was understandably very excited. Not only had that dog been extensively trained in obedience and social commands, but it was also the breed of dog that he had been looking for. He told his mother about his find.



Little George and Spencer

Luann reached out to Department of Corrections Director George Lombardi, who founded Puppies for Parole, about the Dachshund her son discovered. Upon following up on Luann's inquiry, Director Lombardi learned that the Dachshund Spencer found had already been adopted. He knew Spencer would be crushed by the news. During a speaking engagement at the Chillicothe Cor-

rectional Center the week prior, Director Lombardi met another dog that was the institution's social butterfly, known as Little George. The dog's personality made quite the impression on the Director. So much so that Director Lombardi contacted Chillicothe's Puppies for Parole Coordinator Heidi Woods to inquire

➤➤➤ [Spencer page 2](#)



CHESTER MAKES AN UNEXPECTED

Most residents of Missouri's prison system don't wish to return once they are released. There is always an exception, though, and that was the case for Chester. Chester is a recent graduate of the department's Puppies for Parole Program at Crossroads Correctional Center (CRCC) in Cameron. After graduation, the canine was adopted by his offender handler's family. However, during a shopping trip with his new family to a local retailer in Cameron, Chester escaped and found his way back to the prison.

His story initially started with the Liberty Animal Shelter, where he escaped and was on the run for several weeks. An elderly woman found him and felt sorry for the starving stray. She placed food outside her door and eventually earned his trust. He was returned to the Liberty Animal Shelter. Due to overcrowding, Chester was transferred to the Cameron Animal Shelter, who partners with CRCC. He lacked the socialization skills needed to make him a suitable adopted companion.

As a last resort, Chester entered Puppies for Parole. His offender handlers worked diligently to earn his trust. He developed a strong bond with one of his handlers. After Chester graduated, the handler arranged to have the four-legged companion adopted

Return

by his family. The family picked up Chester on November 25. On the way home they stopped at a retailer to purchase a leash and a collar for their new pet. During a bathroom break, Chester escaped. The family members chased the loose canine, but he was too fast and ran off into knee-high grass behind the store.

The family contacted the police department and both Western Missouri Correctional Center (WMCC) and CRCC to be on the look out for Chester. About two hours later, the escapee was spotted running across the parking lot of WMCC back towards CRCC. The dog found his way back to the perimeter fence behind the housing unit that he resided in.

Staff on site said, "Chester acted like he was trying to get back home."

He eventually made his way up to the administration building where staff opened the door for him. Chester raced inside the building and headed straight for the visiting room where he was adopted earlier in the day. Staff corralled him and contacted his new owners. Chester was reunited with his new family and hasn't attempted to escape ever since. 🐾

about his availability.

SPENCER

"I knew that Spencer had his heart set on a Dachshund," Lombardi said. "I hated the fact that the one he found on our website had already been adopted, but by chance I came across Little George. After talking with Heidi (Woods) about Little George's personality and seeing him in person, I knew he would be a good fit."

Woods said Little George never encounters a stranger. He is always



Spencer and Little George getting some exercise and fresh air.

eager to greet people with the wag of his tail and even warms up to other new dogs without hesitation.

"We have never had a dog like him before," Woods said. "His personality is tremendous."

She admitted at first, when Director Lombardi asked about Little George, she was hesitant to give him up because the staff at Chillicothe had already grown so attached to him. Heidi said knowing the true >>> **Spencer page 3**



PUPPIES, PUPPIES, PUPPIES

ERDCC Handlers Have Their Hands and Their Laps Full of Orphaned Pups

The sound of clanging steel doors in the Puppies for Parole housing unit at the Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center (ERDCC) in Bonne Terre was overshadowed by the soft whimper of puppies. The institution's partnering shelter, Diana's Grove, lacked volunteers to care for three litters of puppies, one of which was orphaned, during the holidays. Even though, ERDCC staff and offenders had never cared for puppies as part of the program, without hesitation they agreed to lend a helping hand.

"Puppies require a tremendous amount of personal attention," said Cynthia Jones, director of

Diana's Grove. "They (puppies) are such a focus for love. Unfortunately, this time of year we have difficulty finding foster homes and volunteers to help care for them. We had a real dilemma with three litters. I never dreamed the staff and offenders at ERDCC would agree to help us out and take all of them. The one-on-one care they are receiving there (ERDCC) is a wonderful thing. This is a new thing for the offenders to take care of a mother and her puppies. We are so blessed they were willing to do this."

Offenders cared for a Beagle and nine 1-week-old puppies, a Rat Terrier and six 3-week-old puppies, and four 8-week-old Labrador [Orphans page 4](#)

purpose of the program, and knowing Little George and Spencer would be a perfect match, softened the blow of losing the four-legged mascot.

"Everything fell into place," Luann said. "We literally picked Little George up five days later. He has been such a blessing to Spencer."

Luann said Little George requires Spencer to be more active. She said Spencer takes his new friend on several walks each day. She also said Little George has also curbed much of Spencer's obsessiveness.

"I have cell phone records that show since Little George arrived in

January, the number of **SPENCER** calls from Spencer have decreased dramatically. He no longer becomes obsessive when his care providers leave. Little George fills a void in his life."

Spencer said Little George is his "best friend" and he doesn't know what he would do without him. "He is very good natured and he understands when I'm not feeling well and is there for me," he said. "He means a lot to me."

Luann said Little George hasn't gone potty once in Spencer's apartment and sleeps in his kennel without prompting.

"I would recommend Puppies for Parole to anyone who wants a

“He (Little George) is very good natured and understands when I'm not feeling well and is there for me.**”**

dog," Spencer said. "Little George is great and is a tremendous part of my life." 🐾

DOERING & NEWKIRK

Honored by Director Lombardi


During a recent visit to Jefferson City Correctional Center (JCCC), Veterinarian Mar Doering received a surprise. Doering was greeted by DOC Director George Lombardi who presented her with the Director's Coin of Excellence for her longstanding contributions to the Puppies for Parole Program at JCCC. Doering volunteers as the institution's veterinarian and also helps teach the offender handlers training techniques. She makes the trip from Holts Summit every other week, where she has had her veterinary practice, All Paws Medical and Behavioral Center, for 31 years. Doering said she was drawn to Puppies for Parole because of the program's mission of stopping the euthanization of unwanted **»»» Honorees page 5**



Director George Lombardi presents Dr. Mar Doering with the Director's Coin of Excellence.

Retriever-mix puppies, **ORPHANS** who were orphaned.

Jonna Grubbs, the Puppies for Parole coordinator at ERDCC, said the puppies had a tremendous impact on the institution.

"As soon as they arrived, you could tell a difference," Grubbs previously said in December. "It's quite a sight to see an offender talking baby talk to a puppy. The puppies arrived on Thursday (December 15) and the 3-week-old litter is already coming out of their crate and is in the process of being housebroken. Both of the momma dogs are housebroken. The 8-week-old puppies are also in the process of being housebroken. The offenders have really taken to them. This is totally different than anything we have ever done before. I think this has been a blessing for everyone involved." 

“It's quite a sight to see an offender talking baby talk to a puppy.**”**



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shelter dogs by giving **HONOREES** them the socialization skills needed to be desirable for adoption.

Michael Newkirk thought he was coming to Jefferson City to tour a prison or two and visit each of their respected Puppies for Parole Program. What he didn't know was that Director Lombardi had a surprise up his sleeve. Upon Newkirk's arrival in town, he was given the Director's Coin of Excellence by Director Lombardi. Newkirk is employed by Royal Canin, an international dog food company with its North American operation based in St. Charles.



Newkirk is employed by Royal Canin, an international dog food company, which has pledged to supply Puppies for Parole with enough dog food to sustain the program for one year at no cost.



Newkirk is an avid supporter of Puppies for Parole and was instrumental in fostering a relationship between the DOC and Royal Canin. Due to Newkirk's support, Royal Canin pledged to supply Puppies for Parole with enough dog food to sustain the program for one year at no cost. 🐾



Director George Lombardi (left center) poses with Michael Newkirk (center) after presenting him with the Director's Coin of Excellence during a surprise impromptu ceremony. Also pictured from left to right are: Cyndi Prudden, Matt Sturm, David Rost, Joan McDonnell, Lombardi, Newkirk, Dwayne Kempker, Tina Holland, Dave Dormire, Cari Collins and Michael Bowersox.

Editor's Note: The Director's Coin of Excellence is an award given to individuals who, by their contribution of time and energy, support the mission of the Missouri Department of Corrections.

MANDIMAI Fresh Off the Farm

MandiMai wasn't much of a hunting companion. She did however, like to chase chickens, but that didn't earn the affection of her former owner, who was a farmer. The farmer told his neighbor he had tried to get MandiMai to work the field during hunting excursions, but she was afraid of the sound of a gun; she only wanted to be right by his side. The farmer told his neighbor he was going to shoot the female German Shorthaired Pointer because she was of no use to him. This is where MandiMai's new leash on life begins.

The neighbor, recognizing how sweet MandiMai was, knew she would make someone a terrific dog. The neighbor convinced the farmer to take MandiMai to the Cameron Animal Shelter so someone else might adopt her. The Cameron facility is one of many animal shelters throughout the state that participates in the Puppies for Parole Program. The shelter sends dogs that are facing euthanization to the Western Missouri Correctional Center (WMCC). The dogs are assigned to inmate handlers who patiently work with the dogs each day teaching them basic commands, obedience and socialization skills, making them more socially acceptable for adoption. Once the dogs pass basic obedience tests, they are returned to the shelter.

Heddie Leger is a dog trainer who assists the offender handlers at WMCC with their training techniques. When she first met MandiMai, she noted that



Meghan Bodie smiles as she poses with her service dog, MandiMai.

the dog was very reactive and was scared of loud noises—especially the sound of the banging steel doors. “Once she felt safe, however, she really began to learn,” Heddie said. “As the barriers of fear began to melt away, her inner strength and beauty began to



MandiMai poses with her specialized service dog harness.

shine. She learned basic manners like sit, down, wait, stay, and began letting people handle her feet, and brush her (which she loved). MandiMai not only passed the Canine Good Citizenship Test, but also the CLASS program and the public access skills test, plus a behavioral assessment to see how she handled stress. The shelter manager and the trainer put her through the public access test, which meant that if someone wanted to train her to be an assistance dog; she could qualify to be registered with her new owner if that person would take the test with her.”

Minnesota college student, Meghan Bodie, suffers from a brain injury that causes seizures, coupled with Post-traumatic stress disorder from trauma she sus-

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tained as a child. For years, Meghan wanted a service dog, but did not have the thousands of dollars it would cost to purchase one, nor did she want to wait years on a list to receive one. By chance, she met Heddie. “Heddie told me about MandiMai and I thought she might be a good fit for me,” Meghan said. “I came to Missouri to meet MandiMai in person and it was an instant match!”

MANDIMAI

Meghan had experience training service dogs in the past. She said normally it would take two years or more for a dog to pick up on the type of training MandiMai had mastered in less than a year. “She (MandiMai) senses and lets me know when I’m getting ready to have a seizure so I can get to a safe place,” Meghan said. “She also knows how to go and retrieve help.” Meghan says MandiMai will alert her that a possible seizure is coming on by whining and pawing at her legs in order to get her to stop whatever she is doing. She also said MandiMai knows how to search rooms to see if anyone is in them to retrieve help. “MandiMai also knows grounding techniques to bring me back whenever I start having flashbacks,” she said. Meghan said whenever she goes to the hospital, MandiMai goes with her and stays right by her side. “She is the best thing that ever happened to me,” Meghan said. “I like to think we saved each other. She is more of a person to me than a dog, to be honest with you. I don’t know what I would do without her.” 🐾

“She (MandiMai) senses and lets me know when I’m getting ready to have a seizure so I can get to a safe place.”



Meghan Bodie hugs MandiMai during a hospital stay. Mandimai accompanies her owner to the hospital when she goes for treatment.

ROB & SHEP Love at First Sight

During seven months of participation in the Puppies for Parole Program at Algoa Correctional Center, offender dog handler Rob Summers played a role in training six dogs. He liked and valued the program so much that when he was released from prison,

he took Shep, one of the dogs trained in the program, home with him. Shep is a male lab and husky mix and was actually trained by two other offender handlers.

“When I first saw him and knew he didn’t have a home, it was love at first sight,” Summers said. He said he was drawn to the pro-

gram because of its goal to stop the euthanization of homeless dogs. Summers described the program as the “experience of a lifetime” for him. “I feel blessed to have been part of it,” he said. “The program has taught me a lot about responsibility.”

Summers is confident that his three year stint in prison will be his last. He said he has the highest respect for the staff at Algoa Correctional Center, where he was housed. >>> **Shep page 8**

LOOKING AHEAD From Director Lombardi

“When the idea of Puppies for Parole originated the overall goal was to help prevent the euthanization of healthy animals. In addition, I thought dogs would help make prisons safer, grow compassion within the prison population, give offenders the opportunity to give back to the community in an effort to repair some of the harm they have caused and help offenders learn job skills to use upon their release. Puppies for Parole has accomplished all that I had hoped and more.

“We have trained dogs to assist individuals with handicaps, illnesses and special needs, including children with autism. We have placed our dogs in Missouri Veteran Homes along with mental health facilities. We are now looking to place dogs with returning veterans who are experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and with children who participate in Special Olympics. Perhaps our most profound experiences with Puppies for Parole are due to “unadoptable” dogs who have come to us with handicaps. Puppies for Parole has served as a model for other state correctional departments. As the program continues to grow, we will continue to reach out and develop partnerships with organizations and individuals who can benefit from canine companionship.”

—George A. Lombardi
Director
Missouri Department of Corrections

“THE LAST WORD”

“I took Penny to the hospital to see all the sick guys that wanted to see her. There was one very sick person there; I cannot mention his name here. I asked if he wanted to meet Penny and he said, “Yes.” So I led her up to meet him. He put his hand on the side of the bed. He petted and felt her fur. He said she was soft and asked if she could jump on the bed. She was a little anxious at first, but she did with a little coaxing. She went up and laid down by his side. He started petting her and said that until we got the dogs in here, he had not seen of petted a dog for some thirty years. He got a smile on his face and you knew he went back in time in his mind to better days.

After a while we left. Later I asked how he was and found out that he had died that weekend in this sleep with a smile on his face. I think that Penny knew that he was not well. To her he was someone else to share her love, hugs and enjoyment of petting her to make them feel better.”

—Quote from Offender Handler

SHEP “Everyone there is tremendous,” Summers said. “The staff want to see you make a change for the better and genuinely want you to succeed. If the whole world was like this, the world would be a better place. Now it's about me getting out there and doing the right thing. I have to take care of Shep; he is like my child. I feel like as a result of Puppies for Parole, I got my heart back. I think I can go out there and show compassion and love again.”

Summers said, as he was getting ready to walk out of prison, he was skipping breakfast and heading straight to Wal-Mart so he could buy Shep dog food and treats. “From this point on it's all about taking care of Shep.” 🐾

FACTS & FIGURES

Puppies for Parole was...

- started on February 1, 2010, at the Jefferson City Correctional Center.
- nominated by the Department of Mental Health and received the Governor's Award in Innovation in 2010.

Puppies for Parole is...

- currently in 17 of the department's institutions, with two additional facilities coming online in the near future.
- funded strictly by donations. No state revenue is used to support the program.
- currently populated by 167 dogs in training.

Puppies are...

- assigned two offender handlers.
- required to pass the Canine Good Citizenship Test prior to completion of the program. Most dogs are trained in basic obedience.

To make a donation to Puppies for Parole or to view available dogs for adoption visit <http://doc.mo.gov/division/dai/puppies.php>.