

PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

3,500th ADOPTION NEWSLETTER

Fall 2015



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: Jan/June Bug
P4P's 3,000th Adopted dog
ERDCC

Mission

To provide a safe, stable environment for dogs who have been abused or abandoned and transform them into adoptable animals, while creating an atmosphere for offenders to engage in positive behaviors outside themselves.

Letter from the Director



The Puppies for Parole program began in 2010 as a way to reduce the number of dogs living out their lives in cages or being euthanized. Its purpose was also to provide offenders with a positive and meaningful experience in an effort to transition them back into being successful members of a community when released from incarceration. Since starting this program nearly six years ago, I have seen the impact these dogs have made on the lives of the offender handlers and the people who adopt them, and in my time as director of the Missouri Department of Corrections, I have received many letters from handlers who have said this program changed their lives. I also have witnessed several graduations, and I have heard countless stories on how these dogs have changed a person's life forever.

Our program garnered national attention in April, when we graduated our 3,000th dog. Media outlets from Missouri sent around stories about the Puppies for Parole program across the country. Jan, our 3,000th graduate, received a lot of attention during her graduation. She is featured on the cover of this newsletter, but her update story is one her adopter wanted to share with us. Jan's new name is June Bug, and the joy she is bringing to the couple that adopted her is exactly what this program is about.

Success stories from adopters are only part of the impact this program makes. In this edition, you will get to read the speech that an offender handler gave at our 3,000th graduation ceremony. He explains how this program not only changed his thinking, but it program impacts the atmosphere of a correctional facility in a positive way.

The program's development and growth throughout the years could not have been done without the dedication of our partnering shelters, our staff and the handlers, who do so much to get these dogs ready for adoption. It's been nearly six years since this program began giving dogs and offenders a second chance, while having a positive impact on our staff members and the correctional atmosphere. I look forward to hearing more of these stories, as we keep building on the success of this wonderful program.

George A. Lombardi
Director
Missouri Department of Corrections



Changing the World

One puppy, one prisoner, one person at a time

Director George A. Lombardi, pictured above with an offender handler at a graduation, received this letter from a handler at the Potosi Correctional Center that explains how impactful the Puppies for Parole program is for him and how it transformed his life.

My first memory of the Puppies for Parole (P4P) program is a newspaper article in which the Director for the Department of Corrections of Missouri said there needed to be more compassion in prison and dogs are a great way to get it. I was skeptical that this program would come to fruition. Now I am very glad to write that it has and that it has definitely made this prison a more compassionate place. Hurting people hurt people. This is a well-known principle. And as a result of the presence and training of dogs here, there are less hurting people today.

I have been fortunate to be one of the dog trainers in the dog program at the Potosi Correctional Center called EDNAS, which stands for Every

Dog Needs a Stay. As a result, not only have the dogs changed this place, but the individual dogs I have trained have changed me.

There is a proverb which states, “He who waters is himself watered.” My intent in being a dog trainer was to help the dogs have a good home and a good life as well as to help people have a good pet that would really bring them joy and healing from whatever hurts them. But as I worked diligently toward this end, I found that as the dogs were transforming into obedient, loving pets, I was being changed as well. It was one of those “who is teaching who” moments.

The first dog I trained was deaf and tiny. Her name was April. Since she could not hear, I became very sensitive to what and how much I communicate by body language. It especially made me acutely aware of how I communicate negative things by my body language. And if this

little deaf puppy was affected by it, then certainly people are as well. So I focused more on encouraging and helping people simply by my body language, without ever saying a word.

Samson, Simba and Sierra were very scared puppies. Life had not been kind to them. But as a result of the P4P program, that was all about to change and it did in a big way. But, again, I found myself being changed

as well. These petrified little puppies had no idea, but they were transforming the world around them. What struck me so much was their willingness to forgive and trust people once again,

and to come out of their shell to interact with a world, which had hurt them deeply. Forgiveness became more my focus as a result of their extraordinary example.

Then there was Hope. Now that is something that men in prison and the world needs. Hope embodied it and made it



contagious with everyone she came in contact with. And that was a lot of people, because she was the happiest and most outgoing canine of her group. If you were sad, she made you happy just by watching her. If you were hurting, she made you forget about it for at least the moment. Oh, did I mention she was deaf and blind? You see, Hope was a walking, or I should say, a galloping life lesson. No matter how bad things are or what has happened to you in life, joy and an abundant life can still be yours. It just depends on how you look at it and respond to it. The choice is entirely yours.

Finally, there was Faith. She was like Hope, blind and deaf and happy as can be. But she was a 125-pound Great Dane - the "Gentle Giant" some called her. She reminded me of a circus elephant when she performed some of her tricks. She did them seemingly in slow motion, because of her size. The little puppies loved to play with her, nipping at her ankles. She could have injured one of them just by stepping on them, but she was so careful, mild and gentle with the little ones. So I considered how do I treat others who are vulnerable or weak in some way?

Well, the P4P program is not finished as long as there are puppies that need a second chance at a good life. So it looks like I have more changing on the way as well. That's good. I need it, and I thank the puppies and the program for it.

One new way the P4P program is changing the lives of the puppies and people is by training service dogs for COMTREA Comprehensive Health. These canines receive advanced training to perform tasks for special needs individuals such as children with autism. People's lives in some ways will now literally depend on the canines we train. As a result, the dogs we train are not only meeting the emotional needs of those who adopt them, but their physical needs as well. This type of training has caused me to focus much more on the needs of the person for whom the dog is being trained. By being part of this advanced training program, my life has a deeper sense of purpose in prison. Many prisoners are waiting to leave prison in order to have a purpose, but P4P has brought it right to our cell - prisoners with a purpose of helping puppies, as well as people. Now that's a powerful program.





P4P Update

Bella and Eli

In the 2,500th adoption newsletter, P4P featured a story about Bella, an Advanced P4P Certified Helper dog, and Eli, a young boy with some health issues. Bella means beautiful and there's no better word to describe the healing impact a formerly unwanted dog has had on Eli and his family.

Bella was a 3-year-old Golden Retriever mix that went through P4P training after she became collateral damage in a divorce, and she ended up at the Cameron Animal Shelter. She had been with her previous family since she was eight weeks old.

Eli's family, who was living in Illinois at the time, was searching for a helper dog that would have a calming effect on their young son, who has Sensory Processing Disorder and Hypogammaglobulinemia, a common type of immunodeficiency. Part of Eli's treatment routine includes weekly infusions administered by his parents, which is

difficult on both sides of the needle. For Eli, to whom the world is “too loud, too fast and too bright,” it is nothing short of traumatic.

Through P4P’s partnership with COMTREA Comprehensive Health Center, Eli’s mother, Anna, was able to provide her son some relief with Bella. She became a constant and loving companion who lies on Eli’s lap, while focusing his attention on her and keeping him tethered when life would carry him away. But Bella does more than keep Eli grounded; she is like a canine guardian angel to him.

Anna provided P4P with an update on Bella and Eli:

“I wanted to take a moment and give you an update after a year of having Bella in our lives.

She is an incredible animal. We absolutely adore her. Eli is still much calmer and her training has stuck with her. We are actually in the hospital now and he had his first IV experience with her. He has been pretty healthy since we’ve had her. She lies on the hospital bed with him and across his body. He stayed so calm with her.

We have recently moved to Potosi and everyone that meets her is so amazed at what she does for him. Every time someone says they are looking for a forever family member, I let them know to contact P4P. I cannot express enough the gratitude that our family has to COMTREA and P4P. We are forever thankful.”



P4P Update

Lynn Ballard of Missouri Task Force 1 and the Boone County Fire Protection District provided P4P an update about Toby, a FEMA certified human remains detection dog, who was adopted by Ballard through P4P.

“Toby is continuing to do an awesome job. This photo was taken at our recent North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA) certification in Kansas City, Missouri. Thanks again to the DOC for giving these dogs a second chance.”

She said of Toby, “More people need to know what they are throwing away. Toby is both FEMA and NAPWDA certified in human remains detection. We work with law enforcement, fire departments and FEMA to try and help locate missing loved ones. We are members of Missouri Task Force 1 and Boone County Fire Protection District. This requires hours of dedication to training with him, but I had a head start. Because of your program, I didn’t have to work on socializing or obedience. That is a huge advantage.”

Toby is a Dutch Shepherd mix, adopted two and a half years ago from Algoa Correctional Center by Lynn. Missouri Task Force 1 is one of 12 emergency response teams in the U.S. The Missouri team has been deployed to emergencies like the Joplin tornado in 2011, as well as national emergencies such as 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy.

Upon adoption, Toby was certified as a cadaver dog with NAPWDA, which allows him to be used by official agencies to find human remains and respond to disasters all over the country. Lynn later took Toby to Tennessee to take the FEMA HRD certification for the search-and-rescue canine, which includes proper command control, agility skills, barking alert skills to notify rescuers of a find, and willingness to overcome innate fears of tunnels and wobbly surfaces under the guidance of the handler.



FROM MINIMUM TO MAXIMUS

The P4P program at South Central Correctional Center (SCCC) in Licking has a history of rehabilitating dogs injured and scarred by human carelessness and cruelty. It's the program that gave Mya, Bear and Sparky second chances. The placement of Maximus, an 11-month-old, deaf English bulldog, at SCCC was the perfect fit. The name Maximus is a Latin name meaning greatest or largest, but this dog was a silhouette of starvation and neglect.

Maximus was placed on a local website for sale by a breeder who was attempting to sell him for \$50. A concerned resident bought Maximus from the breeder and contacted the Animal Shelter of Texas County, to assist in medical attention for the neglected canine. This shelter is the only shelter in the largest, rural county in Missouri and is constantly at its maximum capacity. The shelter contacted SCCC's P4P program for assistance in nurturing the dog back to health and teaching him basic obedience.

When SCCC received him, he weighed just 20 pounds, emaciated to the point that the handler's had to carry him to their cell because he did not have the strength to walk. His coat was patchy and rough, and he cowered when anyone would try to pet him.

Within two weeks, Maximus gained an additional 20 pounds and grew in confidence each day. His coat finally had a nice sheen and color to it, and although he was still a tad skeptical, he would approach individuals for attention rather than shy away.

Under the care of offender handlers at SCCC, Maximus achieved normal weight for an English bulldog. His confidence returned and he completed his training. When he graduated, he had a forever home already waiting for him.





Hannah and Bunny

Pit bull is a calming presence for young autistic girl

Some breeds of dogs have gotten a bad rap because they are deemed aggressive, and the Pit bull breed has been associated with some tragic stories. However, with the proper socialization and training, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) says that Pit bulls can be “...one of the most delightful, intelligent and gentle dogs imaginable.” For a young autistic girl with a fear of dogs and animals, it is a fact.

Bunny was a 2-year-old Pit bull mix that went through the P4P program at Western Missouri Correctional Center (WMCC) and came from Cameron Animal Control, having been picked up as a stray in the St. Joseph area. She was adopted by a mother for her daughter Hannah, who was diagnosed with severe autism. They drove six hours to meet her, and Hannah fell in love.

Hannah’s mother sent this letter to the P4P coordinators at WMCC, thanking them for bringing Bunny into their lives:

“Bunny has a huge job to do. She is Hannah’s companion, and a child with autism is different. Bunny has learned how to help Hannah in many ways. She learned that Hannah is comfortable with pressure on her tummy, so Bunny only lays her head on Hannah’s tummy. It actually is amazing how much Bunny listens to Hannah’s words, which

are few, and is aware of her emotions. When Bunny wants to be next to Hannah, and Hannah has her dolls spread out on the floor, Bunny tiptoes around them just to get right next to her.

Bunny has become the best part of our family. She is always gentle and patient with Hannah and is my best friend as well. I can honestly say that after that first week, we couldn't imagine life without her. Hannah and Bunny are inseparable.

Hannah is the only child at home and Bunny is her loyal companion and playmate. Bunny is completely tuned to her, and her calm temperament is exactly what Hannah needs. She knows that Bunny is gentle and trustworthy and will never hurt her.

Bunny even alerted me one day when Hannah opened the door to a stranger. I knew something was wrong because of her bark. That one instant could have turned out differently had it not been for Bunny.

Bunny follows Hannah wherever she goes, even if it means getting

splashed at bath time. Since we have had Bunny, Hannah's vocabulary, reading and social skills have greatly increased.

My daughter also loves to walk her in the neighborhood. This is huge for us, because Hannah used to take off running from me. Hannah loves to have the responsibility of a dog now, and running off is the last thing on her mind when she is walking Bunny.



When Hannah needs a squeeze, she will hug Bunny to get that sensory input. Bunny stays right by her to provide that constant calm she needs.

Bunny has not only improved Hannah's quality of life, but mine as well. Everyone who worked with Bunny did an amazing job of training her. I can't thank your team enough for what they have done for Bunny, Hannah and me.

Bunny has become Hannah's best friend, playmate, and has brought so much genuine love to our home.

Thank you to the P4P program for changing our life."

Jan to June Bug

By Amelia Blanton





P4P's 3,000th Adoption

Amelia Blanton, an administrative assistant at Saint Louis University, received plenty of attention in April 2015, when she adopted Jan, now known as June Bug, the 3,000th graduate of the Puppies for Parole program. Her story, along with June Bug's, became known nationwide. Now, she is sharing the story of their new life together.

It's funny how quickly you become accustomed to things, that just six months ago, were not part of your routine. For my fiancé, Nate, and I, that means that, each morning when the alarm goes off, a big ball of fur, kisses, and cuddles is in our faces, ready to get up and get moving. It means that as I write this, the background noise consists of

a constant, "squeak, squeak, squeak," from her loving on one of her favorite toys. It also means that, once a week, I pull out my sewing kit to play surgeon on a few stuffed toys that have been opened. It means evenings of baking, not treats for Nate or I, but for her. But most of all, it means that our lives have been filled with more joy and happiness than

we could have ever imagined that would have come from 35 pounds of energy and love.

On April 16, 2015, we had the privilege of welcoming Jan, now called June Bug, into our home and hearts. June really is the perfect dog.

June loves walks – practically pushing you out the door once she realizes that is what is happening – car rides, playing (and destroying) her multitude of soft toys, chewing on her bone, and cuddling up on the couch with us.

I can't tell you how many times we have been complimented on June's behavior and her training. Nate and I can't help but laugh as we tell people that we can't take any credit for it and that it all goes to Michael and Paul, her handlers at the Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center (ERDCC). We have kept up with her training and have managed to teach June a few new tricks – to roll over (a crowd favorite), to "circle" where she walks around you in a circle, to weave between your legs making a figure eight pattern, and, most recently, to play dead when we say "Bang!" We tried to teach her to hold still while we put a

piece of food on her nose and balance it there, but she really has no interest in that trick.

Perhaps one of June's favorite things is going to work with me at the university. We have a dog friendly policy at work, so I usually bring June into work about once a week on Fridays. She knows now that when I pick up her bed in the morning she gets to go – and goodness does she get excited! We often walk around the building without a leash and she does a great job of walking right next to me. Students come in and simply fawn over her. People have started stopping by my desk on Fridays, just to check if she's there, and they are quite disappointed when she's not. She practically runs the office on days she is there and gets plenty of extra attention and love.

She's made other friends too. Our neighbor's dog barks at anything that moves, so as soon as June hears him, she walks around the house whining until we take her out to play with him. They will run around in circles and wrestle with each other – certainly quite the pair. Another friend is a shy dog, much smaller than June, who loves to



wrestle and walk with her. He's much calmer and relaxed with his friend by his side.

The biggest excitement in our house since getting June is that Nate and I are engaged. June was, of course, present for the proposal. She and I both thought the walk would be a normal one through Forest Park – one of us was a little more surprised than the other!

We are so grateful for the Puppies for Parole team. From Diana's Grove, where June was rescued, to the Missouri Department of Corrections, for its support of the program, to ERDCC, for the fabulous staff there who were patient with all my questions as we prepared to welcome June into our home. And, most of all, we

are thankful for Michael and Paul, her handlers at ERDCC, who surpassed our wildest dreams of how well she would be trained. You all have given us a gift that has brought us joy, laughter, and more cuddles and kisses than we thought possible.

Everyone who meets June falls in love with her, and we tell each person how grateful we are for the program and what it is doing for dogs like June, families like ours, and incarcerated men like Michael and Paul.

This is just the story of one dog and the people that she has brought joy to in her life. I hope our story spreads awareness for a program we hold so dear to our hearts.



Discovering an Inner Freedom

Offender handler gives 3,000th adoption speech

Iwould like to thank those responsible for being here today. I'd like to thank the Lord Jesus Christ for saving me. I'd like to thank Director Lombardi for his pioneering vision he launched five years ago. What a happy day it must be for you, having been vindicated, that Puppies for Parole has reached, rescued and adopted its 3,000th dog. The program had no guarantee of success and it was surrounded by controversy and uncertainty. Today, in light of its acclaimed success, your audacious vision has had a tremendous impact.

I'd like to also thank the program staff here at the Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center (ERDCC), Mr.

Kerry Kline, Mr. Stanley Lucas and Ms. Claire Stadt for their leadership and support.

It's a great honor to be asked to share with everyone what the program has personally meant to me, and its effect upon the greater community of the offender population.

First, P4P is a unique rehabilitation program. With typical offender programming, you listen to information and receive educational instruction. This experience and information remains untested until offenders are released and it's applied — or not applied at all. But P4P allows offenders to be responsible for another life, and in many cases, the dogs the offenders take care of are emotionally shattered, mentally withdrawn and physically injured.

One of the big personal payoffs

is that the program has been an opportunity to build my character. This comes as a result of being challenged to exercise patience with the dogs, diligence in consistent training techniques, and pursuing excellence in supporting and honoring the vision and values that P4P is founded on.

“ **I have learned that life is not about me... I have personally discovered an inner freedom and deep satisfaction in serving in a cause greater than my own.**

Another huge benefit has been the transferrable jobs skills I gained by participating in it. Skills like teamwork, goal setting, loyalty and problem solving that I've developed will help

me in my re-entry experience and securing meaningful employment.

I have also gained a gentler heart from the unconditional love a dog so freely and generously gives. With each new dog I have received and trained, my heart is enlarged with love. That's no small thing after 27 years in prison, with the hardening effect of

institutionalization and prison's jaded and jagged edges.

Since being in the program, I have learned that life is not about me; it's about others. I have personally discovered an inner freedom and deep satisfaction in serving in a cause greater than my own.

There's a statement that Ms. Stadt (P4P co-coordinator at ERDCC) made to me once

that changed my view of the importance of the program. She placed a dog in my care, which had been forced-bred, and the dog was so afraid. I had to literally carry her in and out of the housing unit for two weeks because she wouldn't walk.

I didn't know if she'd ever get well. Then Ms. Stadt said if we didn't get her to where she could function normally and walk, Lady (a Border collie mix), would probably spend the rest of her life in a cage at a shelter. That was a "eureka" moment for me. Having spent so many

years myself in a prison cell, the thought that Lady may very well never know a life outside a cage, helped me work very diligently to see her recover. And recover she did and was successfully adopted.

Puppies for Parole has had a tremendous impact not just on me, but on staff and offenders. I've watched corrections staff have a tough day and suddenly



be greeted by a fun-loving canine on the yard, and the staff members find relief from whatever mood that had weighed on them. I have watched the most hardened criminals melt and be softened by a dog's unconditional

love. I've watched the prison yard atmosphere tense and mean, and a dog – just one dog – let loose to frolic, play and bark change the mood to offenders smiling and laughing.

I've also seen offenders give up using drugs or cease some other illegal activity and start

doing what's right in order to earn eligibility into the program. P4P has been an attractive incentive for some offenders to take responsibility over their lives in order to change the negative direction it was taking so they could get into the program.

A powerful effect among offender handlers in the program that I've been amazed to see is how handlers have learned to reach a common goal, even when there are differences between handlers on how to best obtain those goals. Many of us have learned a key lesson in life: Things don't have to be done my way or by me all the time. Not insisting on our own way in life in P4P is a vital component in an offender's re-entry experience that can help him/her be a law-abiding citizen upon release.

In conclusion, I chanced upon an example of making discarded things useful if remade. Inflation has long since ruined the price factor, but not the message of the story.

If you picked up a piece of iron in a junk yard, that iron would be worth 1 ½ cents per pound. The same iron, however, could

be heated and made into other objects much more valuable. If the iron was fashioned and made into an engine block, its value would be seven cents per pound. If it was made into a mouldboard for a plow, it would be worth 15 cents per pound. If it was made into scissors or razors, it would be worth 25 cents per pound. If it were made into needles, it would be worth \$25 per pound. If it were made into medical instruments, it would be worth \$100 per pound. If it were made into tiny watch parts, it would be worth \$500 per pound.

I find it extraordinary that the social capital and usefulness of rescued canines and offenders can be significantly increased when department leadership uses innovative ideas and rehabilitative opportunities, such as P4P, to reshape offenders.

I'm grateful to my counterpart offender handlers for their diligent work with me. And I'm profoundly grateful to Mr. Lombardi for the opportunity to participate in such a distinguished rehabilitation program.



Best of Buds

Bud is next best thing to therapy dog for Steven

A mother tried unsuccessfully to procure a therapy dog from an outside organization for her son Steven, who needs a second set of eyes, at times, to ensure his safety and well-being. Steven did not qualify for a therapy dog because he can walk without using a dog to help with his balance. While Steven would have benefitted from a service dog, there was a long list of people with greater need waiting for a dog. So Steven's mom decided to go a different route and turned to P4P to adopt a companion animal. Although they had not requested an Advanced P4P Helper Dog, it sounds like they got a therapy dog after all with a dog named Bud.

Bud was a 1-year-old Beagle/Labrador mix that came into the P4P program at Western Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in St. Joseph from the City of St. Joseph Animal Shelter. The P4P coordinator at WRDCC felt Bud had the potential to become an Advanced P4P Helper Dog, but he had an injured paw, and at that time, the requests for helper dogs were for breeds larger than Bud, so he was not placed in advanced training.

Steven's mother sent the St. Joseph shelter this note to let them know what a special dog Bud is, and how he immediately bonded with her son: "When Bud arrived, he was greeted by Steven with hugs and kisses. Steven put a leash on him and walked him all around the outside of the

house explaining that while flowers aren't for peeing on, bushes are. Then, he introduced Bud to me and our other dog, Bandit.

The two dogs got along right away, in that they weren't really interested in each other at all. But after their baths, their play switches were in 'ON' mode. Bud liked playing chase with Bandit around the coffee table. It was fun to watch.

Bud absolutely loved the deer antler chew toy that we had waiting for him and the soft squeaky toy. Bud's tail hasn't stopped wagging. This lets Steven know that Bud is happy, and that makes Steven happy.

I believe this is a match made in heaven. Steven and Bud are perfect for each other. They take a walk every day, which is good for both of them. Steven has a friend and a companion in Bud. My heart is full, as I see how much they already love each other."

The mother followed her initial message with a postscript, which really underscores what a special dog Bud has become to Steven. "Something amazing happened

last night. I woke up at 2 a.m., so I went to check on Steven and Bud. They were OK, but Steven told me he had a bad headache, so I gave him some medicine and water, and went back to bed. I was awakened at 4 a.m. by the sound of Bud's collar. He was in my room sitting there staring at me, so I went to check on Steven again. He must have gotten up to use the bathroom, because his overhead light was on and he wasn't covered up. So I turned off the light and covered him up, and Bud jumped

right back on the bed and snuggled back in with Steven.

What a good dog, looking out for Steven! He knew the light needed to be off and that Steven needed under those covers. I

tuck Steven in every night, making sure his slipper socks are off, that he is under the covers and that his glasses are off. After just two nights of Bud observing our routine and the 2 a.m. check up, Bud knew Steven needed to be tucked in again.

Thank you so much for caring for and working with Bud. He is filling a huge void in Stevens's life. We are so grateful."

“ I believe this is a match made in heaven. Steven and Bud are perfect for each other. ”

– Steven's mother

”



From the handler's perspective

Here at Crossroads Correctional Center the name of our dog program is “New Leash on Life,” an appropriate name for a program that, over the last five years, has given second chances to well over 200 dogs. Our program, and others like it across the state, were designed to partner with animal shelters and animal advocate groups statewide to teach basic obedience skills, and to properly socialize the dogs to make them more adoptable.

After so many successful adoptions in our program, many of us dog handlers feel a sense of pride and accomplishment for the countless hours invested in working with and training our dogs.

My co-handler and I were given a male Golden retriever mix named Sonny. Sonny, like most dogs we receive, had no formal training of any kind. He arrived a very happy and friendly dog, who loved all of the other dogs here. He was sort of the class clown when it came to playtime, and was definitely the life of the party.

With set guidelines and objectives, we began working with Sonny on everything from walking on a leash correctly, to all your basics commands, such as sit, down and stay. He was also trained with a special emphasis on good manners, such as no jumping up on



people, no getting in the trash, no mouthing, etc. And as always, we needed him to learn his name and have a reliable recall.

After a few days bonding time, it was clear Sonny was already beginning to excel with most of his training. Sonny possessed something you cannot really teach and that's a gentle spirit. Even when other dogs would start playing rough with Sonny, he didn't seem to mind, and he enjoyed every minute of every day.

It was relayed to us that a staff member was looking for a certified helper dog for his autistic child. They needed a dog that would bond with the child, stay at his side and even sleep with him at night. And most importantly, they wanted a dog that would show the child unconditional love. Over the previous months, they had looked at several good dogs, but none seemed to be the right fit.

The staff member heard about Sonny and had us bring him up for a visit. The visit went well, and over the next couple months, Sonny visited him several more times. He then got to do a meet-and-greet with the child. Everything went well with the visit, and it was decided they would adopt Sonny when he

completed his training. They also asked if we could get Sonny to sit still during a church service without creating any disturbance. So the following week Sonny began attending church each week. Now, while we're not sure about Sonny's theological affiliation, we are sure that he did well going to the services, and he made several friends along the way. Sonny's big day arrived when he would be tested to see if he possessed the skills necessary to achieve his helper dog certification.

Sonny shined when it came to his testing, and our instructor passed him with flying colors. Then he was off to his new forever home.

It was such an honor for my co-handler and I to be a part of training such a special dog for such an important purpose. It has brought unspeakable joy to both of us after learning how very happy the family is with Sonny. Sonny and the child have bonded and forged a great relationship.

Sonny sleeps and cuddles up next to him, runs and plays fetch with him, and shows him the unconditional love he needs.

— Handler from
Crossroads Correctional Center

P4P Photo Gallery



Chachi - ACC



Dakota - BCC



Hunter - CCC



Blue - CRCC



Sally - ERDCC



Opie - FCC



Robbie - JCCC



Roo - MCC



Tony La Russa - MECC



Duke - MTC



Willie - NECC



Hazel - OCC

Recent Adoptions



Maisy - PCC



Buddy - SCCC



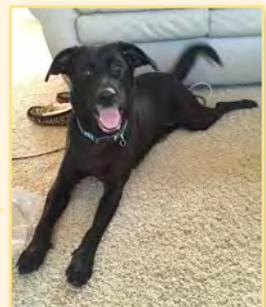
Boo and Herman - SECC



Shorty - TCC



Carson - WMCC



Brandy - WRDCC



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 on Facebook at:
facebook.com/MissouriPuppiesforParole



Missouri Department of Corrections

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