

# PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

4,000<sup>th</sup> ADOPTION NEWSLETTER

Summer 2016



Rescuing dogs from a lifetime of pain...

Releasing people to a lifetime of change.

**4,000<sup>th</sup>**

**Adoption**

Milestone

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: Marissa New and Creed

## 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



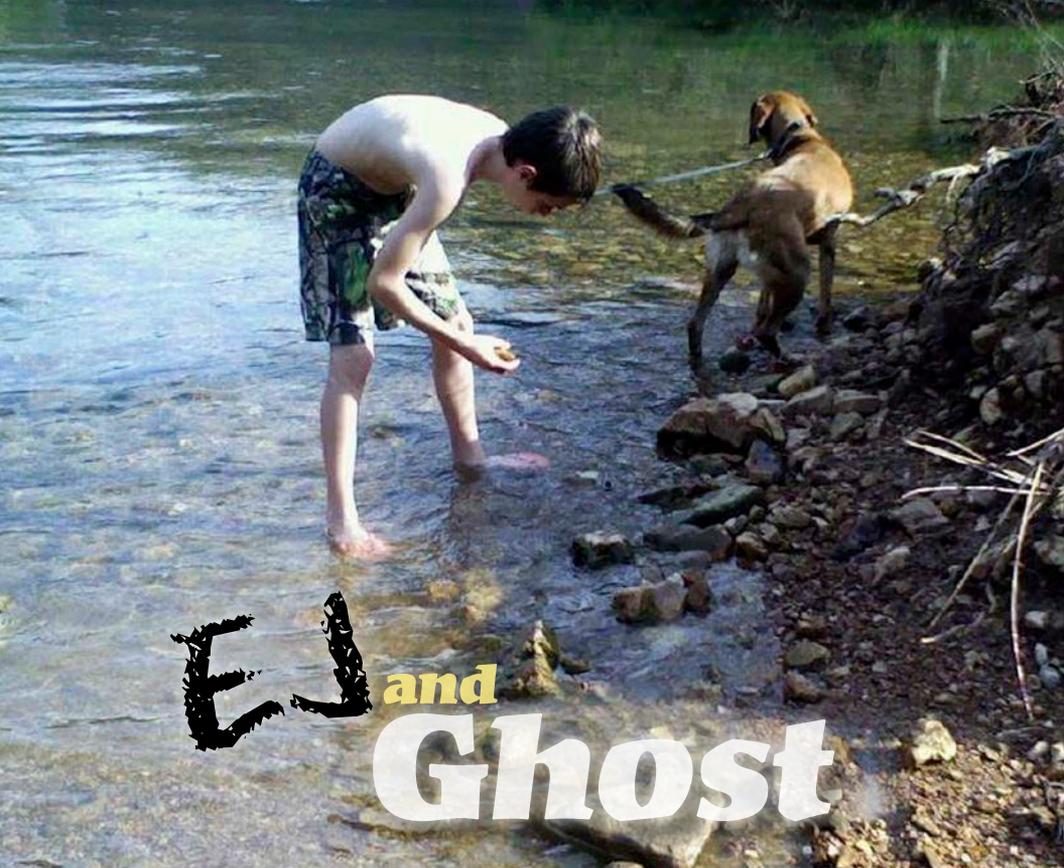
In February 2016, the Puppies for Parole program marked its sixth anniversary, and to date, more than 4,000 dogs have been given a second chance at a forever home. The impact our program has made on the lives of families and individuals who adopt our dogs is only half of what this program means to myself and our dedicated staff members and volunteers. This program may have begun as a way to reduce the number of dogs being euthanized or living out their lives in cages, but its underlying purpose was to provide incarcerated individuals with a positive and meaningful experience, in an effort to help them learn compassion and altruism. When incarcerated individuals learn these values and incorporate them into their lives, it increases their chances at being productive members of society when released back into their communities, which is the mission and vision of the Missouri Department of Corrections.

One of my favorite sections of these newsletters is, “From the Handler’s Perspective.” It highlights the transformative effect that our dog program has on incarcerated individuals, who volunteer as handlers in the program. In this edition, you will read an article written by an offender handler who was faced with a difficult challenge in the dog he was assigned. His letter illustrates how much he learned about himself and what he was capable of while caring for that dog.

While the transformative power of this program can be seen in the handlers who train the dogs, it also changes the lives of those who adopt them, especially one that has been through our Advanced Puppies for Parole program. In this newsletter, two adopters reached out to us since adopting a dog with advanced training, and tell how their dogs have made a dramatic impact on their lives.

Our program has grown beyond our expectations since it began in 2010. Its development and growth could not have been achieved without the dedication of our partnering shelters, our staff and the handlers, who do so much to get these dogs ready for adoption. As we keep building on the success of this wonderful program, I look forward to hearing more of these stories and sharing them with you.

George A. Lombardi  
Director  
Missouri Department of Corrections



# EJ and Ghost

## P4P Advanced Helper Dog lights the way for young boy

**A**dvanced P4P Certified Helper dogs are steadily finding their way to Missourians in need. Many of these dogs go to children with health issues that can make routine events difficult to navigate. With tail-wagging enthusiasm, Advanced P4P Helper dogs can go a long way to make what was an impossible situation possible.

For EJ, a boy with PTSD, ODD, separation anxiety, ADHD and a fear of the dark, a dog named “Ghost” is nothing short of a lifesaver. Ghost, far from being a fearful specter, is a comfort dog and is trained to turn on the light for EJ. It sounds like he is more of a guardian angel than a friendly ghost.

Ghost was a 2-year-old hound mix when he came into the P4P program at the Chillicothe Correctional Center. He was surrendered

to the Green Hills Animal Shelter in Trenton by a farm family, who tired of his habit of getting into the chickens. His name then was “Wiggles.”

Right away, Ghost showed himself as something special. As a quick learner and hard worker, he loved to play with the other dogs and loved affection from people. He would put his paw on someone for comfort, showing his potential to be a companion dog. In the course of his basic training,

he was identified as a candidate for Advanced P4P training, which he received at the Crossroads Correctional



Center in Cameron. From there, he was matched for an individual in need of a helper dog.

EJ is a regular high school kid interested in theater and involved in Future Farmers of America, but with an alphabet of disorders, he needed something to help make his days go more smoothly. EJ’s mother Kate had seen veterans getting relief with service dogs,

and this gave her the idea that EJ could too.

She looked on the internet about service dogs and was discouraged at the cost and the waiting list. So she went to a local Buddy Walk to ask around about getting dogs and was told to call the P4P program. From there, she applied and she received a picture of Wiggles a month later.

EJ liked the dog but didn’t think he looked like a “Wiggles,”

so Kate asked if they could change the name. EJ chose the name Ghost after a game he likes to play. Kate said, “I thought it was a great name because dogs

aren’t allowed a lot of places, and since Ghost will be going places with EJ, Ghost would be like a ghost or a shadow, because he would have rights that your average dog doesn’t have.”

About three months later, EJ and his mother drove six hours to the Green Hills Animal Shelter in Trenton to pick up Ghost. But it was on the drive home when they got to see

Ghost do his job.

“My son was getting worked up about the traffic on the way home and he started demanding me to pass the other vehicles. The next thing I know EJ is yelling ‘get this dog off of me,’ and ‘what is he doing?’ I pulled over and asked EJ if he was still upset with the traffic. He said, ‘No, I’m upset about the dog lying on top of me.’ I smiled and said ‘Then Ghost did his job, getting your mind off of what you are upset about.’ EJ hugged Ghost and said he was sorry to the dog.”

EJ’s mother says Ghost has been a blessing and so helpful in many ways.

“With my son, Ghost has cut the number of meltdowns from several a week to maybe one a month, if even that often. He turns the lights on and off for my son because he is afraid of the dark.

EJ is more comfortable with going places and is more willing to try new things, that before Ghost, he would never do, like camping. Unfortunately, Ghost isn’t allowed at school, which I feel is wrong. It would help prevent EJ from having meltdowns at school.”

Kate benefits from the dog’s presence as well and said

that when EJ went on his first mission trip, he had to leave Ghost home and the dog was a real comfort to her. Perhaps Ghost helped her worry less, not only when he was with EJ, but when they were apart as well. Of course, when EJ got home from the mission trip, Ghost was extremely excited to see EJ.

Clearly the bond the two have formed over the past year is very strong. Once, EJ was homebound for a month and the two were inseparable, but when EJ went back to school, Ghost tore up one of EJ’s gloves and a stuffed toy. EJ was upset and wanted to discipline Ghost, but his mother told him this was a dog’s way of saying he was mad that EJ left him and went back to school. She said, “EJ thought it was amazing that Ghost would be upset that the two of them weren’t spending all day together.”

EJ has continued Ghost’s training, teaching him how to open the screen door and fetching a ball. Ghost also has his own Facebook page with pictures of him and EJ and information about dogs.

Maybe Ghost isn’t exactly a guardian angel, but somewhere there’s a boy afraid of the dark who sure thinks so.





# P4P Goes to School

## Dogs bring education and fun to elementary students

**P**4P programs at the Crossroads Correctional Center (CRCC) in Cameron and the Farmington Correctional Center (FCC) in Farmington have stepped up community involvement by arranging for their dogs to visit local elementary schools. These outreach events, while providing education and fun for children, broaden the impact of offenders' restorative justice efforts, as well as highlighting the availability of quality, trained pets to the public.

The P4P program at CRCC, known as "New Leash on Life," brought information on the safehandling of animals and some tricks to Parkview Elementary in Cameron and South Harrison Elementary in Bethany, Missouri.

P4P Coordinator Ben Brooke and staff member Casey Hansen visited with students in first through third grade at South Harrison Elementary, and the visit was a huge success, with the entire school buzzing about the dogs all day long. Permission slips were sent out to parents to identify children with allergies or who might be fearful of the dogs, but there were no issues. The dogs came in a van and

were greeted and escorted to the classroom of approximately 40 students.

Brooke and Hansen brought in two dogs, Daisy and Duke, who helped with a lesson on approaching strange animals, how to let a dog sniff your hand and how to pet them. Daisy is a 2-year-old Border collie who came from a home with children and she loved all of the attention. Duke is a 4-year-old Great Dane mix who was very overweight and on a diet. He did great and all of the children were amazed at his size. He just laid down and allowed all of them to rub his head.

Parents of the children who participated say the children couldn't stop talking about the dogs and the program has been invited back for future visits.

Another visit took place at Parkview Elementary in Cameron, with an assembly of approximately 400 children. Volunteer dog trainer Heddie Ledger accompanied P4P Coordinator Ben Brooke on this visit. She delivered a presentation to the children prior to the assembly. She also had an informational video on canine expressions and looks. This was used to show how to pet animals safely. She also brought

a life-sized imitation dog named Roofus, which was introduced to real life P4P dog Gordie.

Gordie is an 8-month-old Greater Swiss Mountain Dog mix who is extremely smart. Besides introducing Gordie to "Roofus," Heddie also showed the kids some of the tricks that he knows, such as sit, stay, and lay down.

Gordie had been working on being able to tell the difference between the colors yellow and blue. In a demonstration to the assembly, he was shown two pieces of fabric, one yellow and one blue. The clothing was then placed in different hands and Gordie was asked to pick out one color. He picked the right color every time. The children and adults were amazed, because there is a common misconception that dogs are color blind. There is ongoing research that may be changing this view.

The school was very receptive of the visit and it was deemed a success. The children were not allowed to pet the dogs during the visit, at the request of the school, so hopefully they will be able to return and visit a classroom, where the children can get up close and touch them.

On the other side of the state, the P4P program at FCC, known as “AK94U”, got involved in their own community by starting a six-week program at Bloomsdale Elementary in St. Francois, where they spoke to approximately 90 third-graders.

They brought candy and stickers for the students. The highlight of the visit was a demonstration of obedience and tricks by P4P graduate Asher. They also

brought the assistant trainer’s dog Ottis to do some tricks. Those sessions were followed by the students lining up and getting to pet the dogs, but only if they could tell P4P staff

members something about the correct handling of dogs, such as what not to feed a dog, how to correctly pet a dog and asking permission from the dog’s owner before petting.

On the first week, they discussed how to correctly approach and pet a dog and what to do if a strange dog approaches. They

also talked about foods that are bad for dogs. They presented a poster from Dr. Sophia Yin that showed cartoon characters and dogs in different situations, such as in a car, walking in a park, running, etc.

On the second week, they discussed peer pressure and how it affected them. They played a game where they ran around the gym and the student running in the front did



something wrong and everyone watched to see who would follow and then discussed why they followed.

The third week was focused on

bullying and they spent the entire session on that subject. Each student was given a paper heart and asked to say one bad thing someone had said to them. They then folded the heart, and had the students say something positive. For every positive comment, they unfolded the heart. The students discussed how the heart was not the same



as it was before the hurtful things were said.

The fourth week covered internet safety and what to do if approached by a stranger. P4P staff members also gave some examples of online questions not to answer, safety in chat rooms and spotting misleading questions.

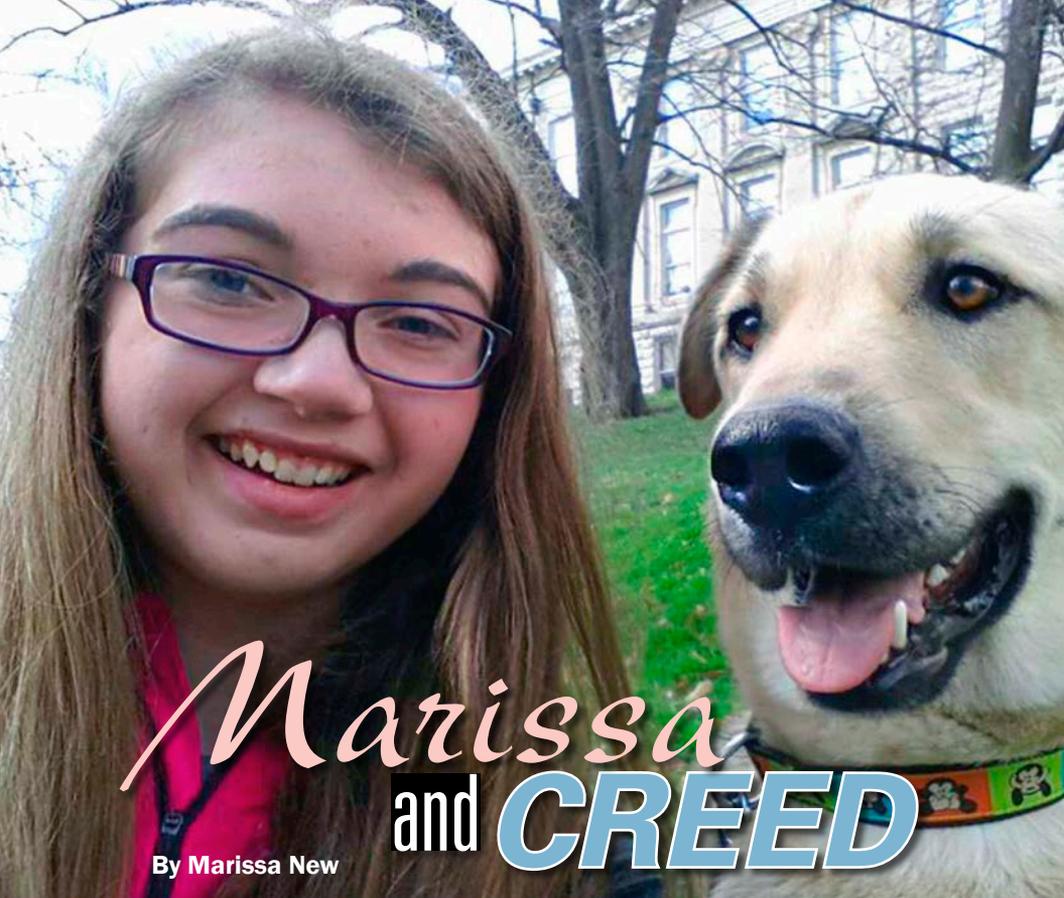
On the fifth week, they discussed signs of abuse and what to do.

On the sixth week, they focused on communication skills, and how and why communication is important.

The students looked forward to the visits from AK94U. They asked questions and they told

them about their dogs. They really liked Asher because he had a lot of energy and quivered with excitement when he came to the school. They liked that Ottis played basketball, threw away trash, brought his bowl, brought his trainer her shoes and threw dirty clothes in the hamper.

With the P4P program in its sixth year, the hope is that it will continue to find ways to help out in Missouri communities, offering offenders the opportunity to give something back and offering so many unwanted dogs a second chance at life.



# Marissa and CREED

By Marissa New

## A “Creed” to live by

*Marissa New believes she has found a creed to live by. But this belief is something that she can touch and feel, and has a tail that wags. As a college student at Southeast Missouri State suffering from sensory processing disorder, Marissa needed something to help her not to get overwhelmed. Creed needed a forever home. Now, she is sharing her story of how the two became a perfect match.*

**C**reed has definitely improved my life immensely. He goes everywhere I go, including to class. He has learned several new tasks to mitigate my disabilities. He has learned “watch my back,” so if I am in a store and my back is turned, he literally watches my back and lets me know if anyone

is approaching. He has also learned to “block,” in which he keeps people a certain distance away from me because being in crowded situations can cause me extreme anxiety. He knows how to provide deep pressure to regulate my senses when I am experiencing sensory overload. He also knows how to stop unwanted or anxious behaviors

such as excessive scratching. Most importantly, he is very proficient at performing his medical alerts. I take him everywhere I go, including to class, and he nudges my hand or sits

up if he detects my anxiety and sensory overload is becoming unbearable. He can alert up me to 30 minutes before I experience a “shut down,” in which I am basically unable to function efficiently because the sounds become murmured, everything gets blurry, and I am sometimes unable to talk. This allows me enough time to leave the situation and calm down.



I am not afraid to leave my dorm room anymore. Creed is a dog with an important job, and although he is always “working,” he loves what he does. His job isn’t “all work and no play.” We have a lot of fun together. We go to the river, the dog park, and we go for a lot of walks. We play fetch, he has play dates with other dogs, and so much more.

At the end of the day, we curl up together and just hang out. Sometimes, he even thinks he is a lapdog and climbs up into my lap!

Before getting Creed, I wasn’t able to

function. Sensory overload was my enemy, and I never knew when it was going to happen or what exactly triggered it. I couldn’t go to class, go shopping or even hang out with friends. If I did, there was likelihood of me experiencing a shutdown. I was constantly being hospitalized. I basically had locked myself away from reality.

After months and months of looking into different programs, I was desperate and just about to give up when I decided to contact the Governor's Office to see if they had any solutions. They sent me a reply, mentioning the program and they also forwarded my information to the Puppies for Parole Program. I was beyond thrilled!

That is the day my life changed and my journey began!

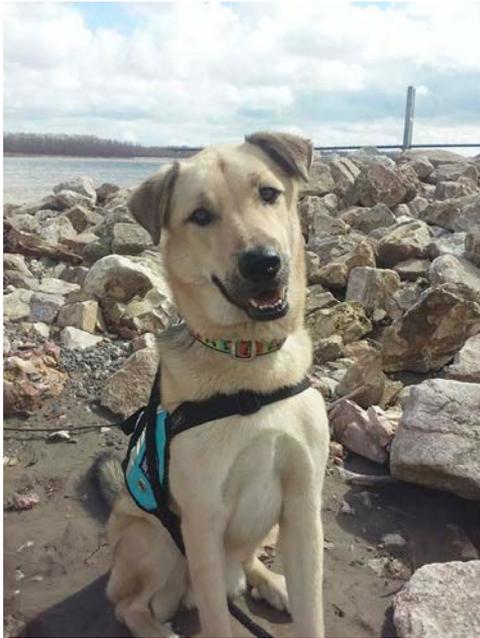
After waiting six months, I was finally matched with Creed! I couldn't wait to meet him! On Oct. 27, 2015, my dad and I drove six hours to go meet my

forever friend for the first time. I was so nervous and scared he wouldn't like me. I remember the moment I saw him for the first time, and I knew he was the one. Although he was a little apprehensive at first, he got

used to my dad and me quickly. Before I left, I remember lying on the floor with him. His soulful brown eyes looked at me and I told him that he was my hero. He wagged his tail, and at that moment, I knew I was not going to be alone anymore!

The first few weeks were miraculous. I felt free when I

was with him. Creed adjusted really well and somehow knew exactly what I needed when I needed it. It was like he was part human. I could tell him words he did not know, but he figured them out



quickly. If I had any questions about his training, or anything related to him, I could always ask the P4P staff members who worked with him at the Western Missouri Correctional Center in Cameron. During his first few



weeks, I taught him his tasks. He learned very quickly and always wanted to please.

My favorite thing to do with Creed is to go to the river. It is priceless to see his eyes light up, his tail wagging, and, most importantly, the beautiful bonding time we have together.

Having Creed by my side, I have learned what it is like to receive unconditional love and acceptance. No matter what I do, no matter what I say, no matter what I look like, he is right there by my side ready to give a helping “paw.” He has

also taught me patience.

I am a full-time college student majoring in the biomedical sciences (a.k.a Pre-Med) with a minor in psychology, and I also work part-time for the Department of Public Safety-Parking Services on campus. I would not be where I am today without Creed. I would have probably dropped out of college, and been forced to move into a group home.

I can't thank Creed and the program enough for everything they have done for me.



*At a P4P graduation at the Algoa Correctional Center (ACC), a 9-year-old girl named Addie gave short speech about her dog Bo, a Boxer/Lab mix that her family found as a stray on a cold night in the winter of 2015. They brought it to the Grabb Animal Shelter in Fulton, who is a partner with the P4P program at ACC. Bo would eventually be sent for training in the P4P program at ACC to make him easier to place for adoption. Addie, who loved Bo from the moment she saw him, wasn't sure if she would get to adopt him, but happy endings are a P4P specialty.*

"Hi, my name is Addie, and I would like to tell you a story about my P4P puppy, Bo.

One night last February we found a stray puppy. It was nighttime and it was supposed to get very cold that night. The puppy was very small and had short hair so we knew he would not make it outside overnight. He spent a couple of nights at our house while my mom and dad tried to find a new home for him. Unfortunately, they couldn't find anyone that wanted the puppy, until they reached out to the

Puppies for Parole Program. The kind people at P4P said that Bo could come and live at Algoa and he would have a trainer that would teach him all sorts of new things.

Bo went to Algoa, which was great for him, but I missed him every day. I thought about him all the time and prayed that he was happy. I was really hoping that maybe when he was done with his training we could adopt him. Bo was at Algoa with his handler for a couple of months. During that time, Bo learned so many important things. He learned to sit,

stay and speak. He was potty trained and crate trained. He also learned how to walk on a leash.

In April, my mom surprised me and said I was going to see Bo graduate from Puppies for Parole. She said we need to go and give him hugs and tell him good luck on his next adventure. I was happy that Bo was graduating, but I was so sad that I had to tell him goodbye. Bo walked in with his handler and he looked so cute in his graduation hat.

Each dog came up one at a time during the ceremony and they talked about who was going to adopt them and where they were going to live. It was Bo's turn and he walked up with podium with his handler. They started talking about Bo and said 'Addie, do you think you could take Bo home and love him forever?' I was so happy! My mom and dad

surprised me! We were going to be Bo's forever home!

Bo has lived with us for about seven months now, and he is awesome! He loves to snuggle, chase balls and go for walks. Before

Bo came, I did not like to sleep by myself and being in my room at night all alone was scary. Now Bo and I sleep together every night. He loves to be covered up on cold nights, and he snuggles you tight — some people might even call him a bed hog.

My family and I can't thank Puppies for Parole enough for giving us Bo. Without P4P, Bo would not have survived, and I wouldn't have my best friend."

“

Without P4P, Bo would not have survived, and I wouldn't have my best friend.

”



## **From the handler's perspective**

My ugly duckling came in the form of a Great Pyrenees by the name of Baloo.

When I was first informed that I would be receiving the Alcoa Correctional Center's honored 200th dog, I was excited and looking forward to the task. But when I first saw Baloo... after getting past the smell, that is, my thoughts were 'Oh boy, this is going to take some serious work.'

Baloo was a matted, stinky, stained, bag of bones, about 30 pounds underweight. And to make matters worse, Baloo was recently fixed. I could not give him a bath until his stitches were removed. He had open sores on both of his front paws and moved very slow. He was in no hurry for anything and had a personality much like Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh. Everything was 'O.K., I guess so.'

I got Baloo back and went straight to work. I grabbed two kinds of dog brushes and some extra waste bags to collect the hair that would be brushed away. I

brushed and brushed Baloo for the better part of 45 minutes and collected three bread bags of hair. Much to my efforts, there was little to no effect. Tsss, 45 minutes of brushing and hardly any progress... I still had a matted, stinky dog. But Baloo never contested – not one time did he resist. Most dogs are nipping and scratching to get away after just a few minutes,

but not my Baloo, he just stood there.

Moving on to our next problem; what to do about those paws? One look and you knew those things were loaded with pus. Mrs. Sutton and Mr. Johnson provided an antibiotic ointment and advised a warm compress. I was to apply the ointment three times a day and a compress at

night. I spent many late nights with a warm washcloth gently pressing the pus from his paws. It had to be uncomfortable to say the least, but yet again, my Baloo never contested. I can remember one night

“  
...this well-seasoned prisoner of 10 years cried over a dog.  
”

-Baloo's handler

in particular that I was going through this process as usual. I was pressing the pus from his right paw and it shot straight out like a water pistol. I'll give you one guess where it went...yep, straight in my face. That was a joyous moment and nevertheless memorable.

After a week, Baloo began to look better. His paws were clearing up, his coat

was regaining that once remembered fluffy look, and we could now remove his stitches. That means, ‘Yes!’ bath time. I got Baloo in the bath and began wetting him down. His fur soaked up the water and instantly started to gain back that white shine that was hidden under all that muck. I lathered him up with shampoo and followed with a bar of Irish Spring for extra measures, to nip the smell of course. Bathing that giant was like detailing a car. When all was said and done, he looked a little better than before, well, that is, after yet another brushing... which all went uncontested, once again.

A few days later Baloo was not himself. He was much more lethargic than usual. Baloo did not want to eat, drink or even move. I had to lift him to his feet to take him outside to potty. I immediately alerted Mrs. Sutton and Mr. Johnson. Our first assumption was the heat, so we decided to bring Baloo up

to the air conditioning in the office. I lugged that dog up and down three flights of stairs twice a day for the next three days.

But Baloo wasn’t getting better,

he was getting worse. The vet was immediately called and scheduled to see Baloo.

The next morning I was in Mr. Johnson’s office first thing to check on how my boy was doing. Mr. Johnson advised me that they were running a bunch of tests, and as soon as he heard something, he would be sure to let me know. It turned out that Baloo had an autoimmune disease. It’s basically when your body is fighting off an infection, and when it kills off that virus, it keeps fighting, killing off the good blood cells as well. His body was killing itself. There were only two options left and one was unthinkable. They were going to try some strong steroids followed up with some prayer. I asked everyone to pray for Baloo that night, because if the steroids didn’t work, the unimaginable would have to be faced — Baloo would be put to sleep.

A couple of days went by, and we lucked out. The steroids worked, and Baloo would be returning shortly. I paced the floor that day impatiently waiting for Baloo’s arrival. As soon as I saw him and he saw me, Baloo did something we hadn’t yet seen him do — he ran! He pulled the leash away from Mr. Johnson and he ran





to me, just like you see in the movies. I hugged that big white polar bear and streamed tears of joy and relief. Yeah, that's right, this well-seasoned prisoner of 10 years cried over a dog.

We gave Baloo seven pills a day, fed him three times a day, and loved him every moment of every day. That matted, stinky and stained bag of bones turned into a 120-pound pearl white lion of a dog. He was nothing short of a beautiful specimen of the canine

species.

Baloo was adopted by a young woman from Probation and Parole who instantly fell in love with the matted giant.

This storybook tale would not have been possible if it weren't for the staff, offenders and supporters of this program. I hope that Baloo's story, the story of some real life underdogs, makes an impact on other lives as well, for it surely changed mine... forever."

**— Handler from  
Algoa Correctional Center**

# P4P Photo Gallery



**Cowboy** - ACC



**Doughby** - BCC



**Gabby** - CCC



**Wally** - CRCC



**Alanna** - ERDCC



**Max** - FCC



**Ace** - JCCC



**Brock** - MCC



**Hoonah** - MECC



**Jackson** - MTC



**Taz** - NECC



**Diesel** - OCC



**Gus and Tucker** - SCCC



**Aero** - PCC

# Recent Adoptions



**Benny** - SECC



**Chatz** - TCC



**Bogart** - WMCC



**Gunner** - 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](http://doc.mo.gov) and click on the Puppies for Parole tab.

You can also find us on Facebook at:  
[facebook.com/MissouriPuppiesforParole](https://facebook.com/MissouriPuppiesforParole)



Missouri Department of Corrections

Summer 2016