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NEWS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 23, 2018

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Puppies for Parole Celebrates 5,000 Dog Adoptions

When Brian Hogue met Ellie, it was love at first sight.

The four-month-old redbone coonhound from the Grabb Animal Shelter in Fulton, Missouri, was a new arrival at Algoa Correctional Center, where Hogue works. Already a coonhound owner, Hogue knew his family would be a perfect fit for the excitable, floppy-eared puppy. He called dibs. Before joining the Hogue home, though, Ellie would embark on months of hard work (and play) with Socialization Training for Animals' Reentry into Society, aka S.T.A.R.S.

S.T.A.R.S. is part of the statewide, donor-funded Puppies for Parole program, through which selected offenders in Missouri prisons train and socialize shelter dogs to prepare them for adoption. Training usually takes about eight to 12 weeks and covers basic obedience, though those who learn fast can move on to advanced skills, mastering agility and tricks. After they pass the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen test, dogs are placed for adoption through local animal shelters throughout the state.

Ellie's graduation is special. The now 10-month-old pup holds a designation as the 5,000th dog to be adopted through Puppies for Parole since the program's 2010 inception. Of those 5,000, she isn't the first to win the heart of a Missouri Department of Corrections employee. Most of her peers, though, find forever homes with civilian Missouri families. Some go to work as therapy animals in hospitals, assisted living facilities or counseling centers. Others get additional training to become certified service dogs supporting veterans and people with disabilities — thanks to organizations such as CHAMP Assistance Dogs, K9s for Camo and Missouri Patriot Paws.

On June 1, the Department of Corrections celebrates the 5,000th dog milestone with a ceremony at Jefferson City Correctional Center. We'll honor Ellie, her handlers, dedicated staff, adoptive families and Royal Canin, the pet food company whose donations keep P4P dogs well fed.

About Puppies for Parole: <https://doc.mo.gov/programs/puppies-parole>
Adoptions: <https://web.mo.gov/doc/PuppiesForParolePublic/>
Donations: <https://doc.mo.gov/programs/puppies-parole/donations>

An advance security clearance is required to cover the event. Contact 573-522-1118 or doc.media@doc.mo.gov.

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