



PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

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Program celebrates 1,500th adoption

Trio's tale teaches students lessons in overcoming adversity

Trio has not had an easy life. Born with a deformed front leg, Trio had to overcome a disability from the start. But that's what makes him special—his ability to overcome obstacles.

“He just loves life and is determined to make the best of any situation,” said Pam Wiles, assistant Puppies for Parole coordinator at Farmington Correctional Center (FCC).

Trio's story is yet another mark in the long line of successful adoptions—1,500—since the start of Puppies for Parole on Feb. 1, 2010.

An animal control unit that picked Trio up listed him as “unadoptable” due to his deformity. The chocolate lab was rescued from the shelter only to come down with parvovirus a couple days later. He was quarantined, fed intravenously, and medicated, but eventually bounced back from the disease.

Not long after his recovery, Trio was enrolled into Puppies for Parole (P4P) for obedience and socialization training.

“He did not know he was different than any of the other dogs,” Wiles said.



Students at Mann Elementary School in St. Louis play with Trio during a visit from the Healing Species program.

Wiles explained that one of Trio's major obstacles while in training was going up and down stairs, but with the help of his offender handler at FCC, Trio learned to master them. Stairs would not be Trio's last obstacle to overcome.

Shortly before he was ready to complete the P4P program, Trio broke his deformed leg and had to have it amputated. However, this still did nothing to quell his spirit and

energy. He was adopted for a very special purpose by Kelley Luckett.

Luckett is the director of Healing Species Midwest, a program that takes rescued dogs into schools to teach children. Healing Species is a 10-week outreach program that teaches character and compassion education. School officials have noted that after Healing Species sessions, classroom acts of empathy increase and acts of aggression decrease.

Trio is Luckett's partner in the program, which serves St. Louis-area schools.

“All the students love Trio and get so excited when they see him coming,” Luckett said. “At the end of each lesson,

Missouri leads nation in number of prisons to implement dog program

In just three short years, the Missouri Department of Corrections' Puppies for Parole program has spread into almost every prison across the state.

From the humble beginnings of just two dogs walking into Jefferson City Correctional Center on Feb. 1, 2010, the program has now adopted out more than 1,500 dogs from 19 prisons. Although other states such as Florida, New York and Arkansas have similar dog programs in their prisons, Missouri has the most prisons that utilize the program. Out of the state's 20 prisons, only one, Fulton Reception & Diagnostic Center, does not have a dog program. Since this facility

is a diagnostic center, it doesn't house offenders long enough for the program to operate out of its housing units.

"My original vision for Puppies for Parole was to save healthy dogs from euthanization by matching them with offender handlers who would also benefit from the program by having to care for something outside of themselves," said

DOC Director George Lombardi. "The program has achieved this and so much more. We now have placed some of our dogs with those who have special needs such as disabled individuals, veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, autistic children and long-term care facilities. As the program



Boonville Correctional Center staff walk Douglas and Sissy inside the prison for the first time. BCC is the 19th and final prison to implement Puppies for Parole.

continues to grow, the possibilities are endless."

Boonville Correctional Center (BCC) was the 19th and final prison in Missouri to come online with the program. The institution held its program kick-off on March 19. BCC started with two dogs, Douglas and Sissy. By the end of the first eight-week training cycle, four dogs had graduated from the program, and all four had been adopted. BCC plans to expand its program in the near future to increase the number of dogs and offender handlers in its program.

Becky Ehlers, BCC deputy warden of offender management, said that since the program started, there have been improved relations between staff and offenders and

improved morale at the facility.

"This is a great program in so many ways," Ehlers said. "It has such a positive effect for all involved—staff, offenders, the dogs and the future families who will adopt them."

Douglas' handler said the experience of training the dogs helps inmates learn how to overcome their own problems.

"Douglas came into my life on Feb. 5, 2013," he said. "I could see that he had some of the same issues that I had, such as trusting people, patience, dealing with change and being uncertain about his future. I knew that if I could help Douglas, I could help myself."

Another BCC inmate shared, "I now know what it means to give and receive love and to finally do something that makes me proud, but most importantly makes my family proud."

There is much on the horizon for Puppies for Parole, promising a bright future for all those involved. The program recently began a partnership with Community Treatment, Inc. (COMTREA) to develop helper dogs for COMTREA's therapy center in Hillsboro. Puppies for Parole graduates have already been placed in several veterans homes and mental health facilities around the state as "house dogs." The program will see the number of these house dog placements continue to grow as plans are underway to place helper dogs in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities as well. 🐾

Lap dog makes for special birthday surprise

For Jeremy Weir, the saying “good things come in small packages” is a truism when he thinks about his little canine companion, Chillie.

The first day Chillie arrived at Eastern Reception & Diagnostic Correctional Center (ERDCC), Tina Cain knew the spunky chiweenie was the perfect dog for her son Jeremy. Cain, a corrections officer at ERDCC, had been waiting for just the right dog to fill the void left when Jeremy's dog had passed away a few years back. Knowing Jeremy's love for both dachshunds and Chihuahuas, Cain knew Chillie—a mix of both breeds—fit the bill.

The little girl got her name because it was a “chilly” day when she was found by a farmer and brought to ERDCC's partnering shelter. Someone had dumped her at the farm and left her to fend for herself.



Once the shelter enrolled Chillie in Puppies for Parole, it didn't take long for her to become popular at ERDCC.

“She has everything,” said Jonna Grubbs, Puppies for Parole coordinator at ERDCC, “good looks, great personality, and full of joy and life.”

“She has everthing... good looks, great personality, and full of joy and life.”

—Jonna Grubbs,
Puppies for Parole
coordinator at ERDCC

Grubbs said Chillie was “an instant star” in the program and made a great lap dog, because she always enjoyed the attention of any offender in a wheelchair who placed her on his lap. Being around so many people in wheelchairs was great training for her, as her new owner is wheelchair

bound—Jeremy is a quadriplegic.

Cain decided to surprise Jeremy with Chillie for his birthday. On April 5, Jeremy didn't know why his mother had brought him to the prison. He soon found out.

Grubbs escorted Chillie into a room where Jeremy was waiting with his parents. Chillie had on a shirt with a Superman logo on the back and her name printed on the pocket. Knowing how much her son loves Superman, Cain had the shirt made special for Chillie.

When he saw the small dog approach, an excited Jeremy let out, “Mom, what have you done?”

Chillie seemed just as delighted at their meeting, because as soon as she was set on Jeremy's lap, she began licking his face.

Cain reports that Chillie is very spoiled and happy in her new home.

“(Jeremy) loves her,” she said. “She has filled an empty spot in his heart.” 🐾

DOC announces partnership with Bridle Ridge



Potosi Correctional Center presents a sign to (left to right) Judy Finnegan, COMTREA associate vice president; Steven Huss, COMTREA CEO; and Ghada Sultani-Hoffman, COMTREA executive vice president of children and youth services. The new sign will go up at the Bridle Ridge Acres health center.

On March 8, the Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC) announced a new partnership with Bridle Ridge Acres at its Puppies for Parole graduation held at the Potosi Correctional Center (PCC). Bridle Ridge Acres is a 45-acre campus located in Hillsboro. It is owned and operated by Community Treatment Inc. (COMTREA). Bridle Ridge, a new comprehensive health center, will offer general practice medical care, dental care for children, equine and canine therapy, behav-

ioral health care, mental health care, substance abuse care and family therapy.

“We are very pleased to forge this new relationship with Bridle Ridge,” said DOC Director George Lombardi. “This partnership coincides with the mission of Puppies for Parole, interdicting the euthanization of healthy animals by finding them a higher purpose. Since the program’s inception, it’s always been a vision of mine to have our offenders train dogs for those with special needs. This partnership is a natural fit for us, and I

hope it serves as a catalyst for many other relationships with organizations that assist those with special needs.”

Through Puppies for Parole, offender handlers at PCC bring shelter dogs through several steps of training to prepare them for adoption. From those that complete the program, specially chosen dogs will go through additional training from professionals to be used for canine therapy at Bridle Ridge. Certain selected dogs will also be offered to nursing

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Hound helps fill void of lost hunting dog

The bond between a boy and his dog is a strong one.



Officers Unit for the Florida Department of Corrections. Malloy, two other officers in the K-9 unit and two Holmes County sheriff's deputies were tracking a man suspected of killing his parents when the suspect opened fire on the men, striking Malloy 13 times. Malloy, a 22-year veteran of the Florida DOC, died in route to the hospital.

Malloy's cousin, Kay Malloy, is the Puppies for Parole coordinator at Potosi Correctional Center. When Dalton learned of Kay's involvement in the Missouri Department of Corrections' dog program, he told his mother, "Have her get me a dog."

Kay knew just the one for Dalton. Jake, a 2-year-old treeing walker hound, was making great progress in PCC's program. The extremely hyper hound was considered unadoptable when he was rescued by K9

Rescue & Rehab of St. Louis, which partners with PCC's Puppies for Parole program. Jake was enrolled in the program and Kay earmarked him for Dalton.

"There was just something about him," Kay said of Jake. "Then when I heard him bark, I just knew."

On March 7, Jake graduated from the program and soon after was brought to his new forever home in Chipley, Fla.

Dalton has been working with Jake several times a week to teach him to raccoon hunt, and the two have had several successful hunts together.

"Jake is loving his new home, and he and Dalton are inseparable," Kay said. 🐾



Top: Dalton Pettis and Kay Malloy introduce Jake to his new home. Above: Colonel Greg Malloy

When 17-year-old Dalton Pettis' hunting dog June died before Thanksgiving last year, Dalton was devastated. Not only was June special to him because of their bird and raccoon hunting adventures together, but because June was given to him after the death of his beloved uncle.

Dalton's uncle, Greg Malloy, had trained June. Malloy, his daughter, Dalton and June loved to deer, bird and coon hunt together.

Malloy was killed in the line of duty on Feb. 2, 2011. He was a colonel for the Holmes County Correctional Center in Bonifay, Fla., and a member of the Elite K-9

'Amazing journey' ends with mother finding companion dog for son

Tami seemed to have exhausted all possible options when it came to finding a companion dog for her 7-year-old son, Liam.

Time after time, she had tried to secure a therapy dog for Liam, but each time, it would somehow fall through. Liam has Asperger's syndrome but is highly functional. Tami wanted to find her son a dog for three reasons. The first was to help him with his anxiety about being alone, especially at night.

"He doesn't sleep through the night," Tami explained. "He gets up several times."

Tami believes just having a dog in his room would help.

Secondly, Liam has trouble connecting with other children. Tami hopes Liam would be able to read to and play with a good companion dog.

Lastly, Tami said her family has always wanted a dog—a family pet. Sierra will be their first family dog.

Sierra is a graduate of Algoa Correctional Center's (ACC) Puppies for Parole (P4P) program. She is a 2-year-old black lab mix that was brought to ACC's partnering shelter as a stray. When Tami saw Sierra's picture on the P4P website, she said Sierra just stood out among the others.

Tina Sutton, ACC's P4P coordinator, helped prepare a video of Sierra for Tami. After everything she'd been through with her previous attempts to obtain a dog, Tami wanted to be sure Sierra was the one.



Liam, Tami and Chloe pet Sierra at Sierra's graduation from the Puppies for Parole program held at Algoa Correctional Center.

She had tried four or five organizations that train therapy dogs trying to find one for Liam. Even though the cost ranged from \$6,000-\$10,000, she was still put on a three-year waiting list. When she went through a private party to get a dog, the first night Tami brought it home, it bit her daughter, Chloe.

Chloe attends preschool with Rebecca Smith's daughter. Smith, who works for Purina, has been an advocate of Puppies for Parole. It was through Smith that Tami learned about the program.

Tami said Chloe has been telling everyone about Sierra and can't wait to get her home. Chloe's been drawing pictures of her and has already bought a collar for her.

"She has always wanted a dog, and so she is super excited," Tami said.

Tami, Liam, and Chloe traveled to Jefferson City to attend Sierra's graduation from ACC on March 14 and meet Sierra for the first time.

Liam has always been hesitant about the idea of having a dog, because Tami said he's afraid of becoming

PUPPIES FOR PAROLE



Missouri Department of Corrections

TRIO

we have Trio time, and all the kids love to give Trio hugs and pets.”

“We are extremely proud of Trio and delighted that he is working with Healing Species,” Wiles said. “He will be interacting with children that are very impressionable. He will help them to understand that they are OK, and that someone loves them no matter what their appearance is, no matter what they've been through.”

“He has truly persevered and continues to take all the bumps life hands him in stride,” Lockett said.



Life recently handed Trio another “bump” as well. He will soon have to have knee surgery.

“Through all of this, he has the warmest and gentlest personality,” Lockett said. “You should see how he lights up when he hears the kids' voices. Since Healing

Species teaches about empathy, his personality, despite his struggles, is truly a testament to the program.”

Trio's offender handler is also excited with the lab's success. He said every child Trio helps through the program is one less person that will be incarcerated. 🐾

BRIDAL RIDGE

homes, schools, hospitals and other institutions.

Those dogs selected for canine therapy with COMTREA will aid with autistic children, wounded veterans, troubled children, mentally ill, victims of domestic violence and others.

Judy Finnegan, COMTREA associate vice president said, “Animal Assisted Intervention is a promising frontier in health and mental health. We are so pleased that through our partnership with the Department of Corrections, COMTREA will have specially trained 'helper dogs' that will benefit many in our community. It seems like this partnership completes a circle: A dog is saved—a dog is trained and a person in need is helped.”

DOC strives to reduce recidivism through the Missouri Reentry Process and programs such as Puppies for Parole and Restorative Justice.

“These important and necessary programs help offenders connect to something outside of themselves,” Lombardi explained. “Altruism is a key component of successful reentry to society. When offenders learn altruism through these types of programs, it significantly reduces the chance they will return to prison.” 🐾

AMAZING

too attached.

“He doesn't want the dog to die,” she explained.

Tami said she has to introduce Liam to new things slowly. She explained that Liam's first impression is a lasting impression, so it's important his first impression of a new dog be a positive one. That's why she wanted to find a dog that was already trained.

At the graduation, Liam held back from Sierra at first, but eventually did start petting her. When it was time for Tami and Chloe to

take the leash from Sierra's offender handlers—the symbolism of the changing of ownership—Liam stepped up at the last minute and took the leash himself.

“He's warming up to the idea,” Tami said. “It was a good introduction to him.”

Sutton watched as Sierra went to sit with her new family after the passing of the leash.

“It was at that moment I truly believe if Sierra could talk she would have been saying, 'This is my family, see guys, I got a family,'”

Sutton said.

Sutton said she believes Sierra will make a great addition to Tami's family.

“She is smart, loving and extremely sweet,” she said.

Tami will soon bring Sierra home to the suburbs of Chicago where she can be Liam's companion and the family's first dog.

“We're so thankful for the opportunity to work with the program,” Tami said. “This has been such an amazing journey.” 🐾

“THE LAST WORD”

Graduation speech...

Respected staff, distinguished guests, fellow trainers, friends, I am honored to stand before you and speak about the impact Potosi's dog program has had on me and the rest of us who live and work here. It is hard to believe how far we have come since the graduation of the inaugural class of EDNAS' (PCC's Puppies for Parole program) dogs almost two years ago. We only had four dogs then, and for our first foray into the world of dog training, my cellmate and I had the good fortune of getting a rambunctious dog named Brock. Brock was a 2-year-old, chocolate lab mix, and after only a few weeks of strained shoulders, blistered hands, and frayed nerves, we figured out that what he was mixed with was wild Tasmanian devil and stubborn Missouri mule. To quote our former trainer after he tried walking Brock for a total of five minutes, “We had our hands full with that one.” There wasn't a leash he wouldn't try to snap, a baby gate he wouldn't knock down, a piece of gum or trash he wouldn't put in his mouth, an article of clothing he wouldn't ruin, or a leg he wouldn't try to dominate. In those 12 weeks, Brock took a heavy toll on us, mentally, emotionally, and physically—some of us quite literally have the scars to prove it. In fact, that little terror was so unruly that the name “Brock” soon became synonymous with bad behavior.

Despite all this, he, along with the other three dogs, were adopted into their forever homes. As frustrating and aggravating as he was, however, after he left, I was left with the overwhelming thought that I had let Brock down. “I wish I could have done better by him,” I remember saying at a debriefing when that cycle was over. Brock was not a bad dog; we just were unable to communicate what we wanted from him. Soon thereafter, I recalled something that Ms. Lambert told us before dogs first came to this prison. Speaking on the subject of discipline, she explained that the word “correction” was actually a misnomer; “redirection” was the more appropriate term. You see, in their world, dogs don't consider their actions as “bad” or “good,” they are just drawn to whatever grips their attention; so, it is our job to find appropriate ways to redirect their focus on something positive.

I can't say for certain, but it seemed that many of us latched onto this sentiment of redirection, which in turn inspired us to come up with more creative and considerate ways to effectively connect with our dogs, whether it is by turning a Kong toy into a doggy piñata to burn off a hyperactive dog's energy, using a ping-pong ball to hold a shih-tzu's focus, or transforming a leash into a horse halter to bring a wayward dog to heel. But what I think is most inspirational is that by striving to find ways to shift a dog's attention from something negative to something positive, our own focus was being redirected from ourselves to something beyond ourselves. “It's not about me; it's about the dogs.” I don't know how many times I've heard that expressed amongst this group. And it's this caring change in perception that has helped each of us overcome challenges far greater than those Brock ever put us through.

What's more, the innovative notion of taking offenders in a maximum security prison—we whose own names are synonymous with bad behavior to many—and having them rehabilitate dogs has given us the opportunity to learn from these miraculous creatures something that years behind these walls never could teach: how think, feel, and act compassionately.

Those of us here who call this place home—who, like Brock, were wild, stubborn, and unruly—have ourselves taken a heavy toll on society, and regrettably, there are families and communities who bear the mental, physical, and emotional scars to prove it. I have learned over the years that, unfortunately, those will never go away. But through the Puppies for Parole program, we now have the opportunity to leave a different kind of indelible mark, perhaps on the life of a little child who finds the strength to endure a frightening courtroom proceeding by cuddling a furry friend, maybe in the life of a war veteran who finds comfort in a loyal, four-legged companion, and most assuredly in the lives of these 16 EDNAS graduates, the forever families they were always meant to be with, and the men who taught these dogs how to walk, and in turn learned from them how to heal.

—Offender at Potosi Correctional Center