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PUPPIES BEHIND BARS



PHOTOS BY VALERIE SHAFER

TRAINING INMATES TO RAISE PUPPIES TO BE GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND
THE PUPPY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Summer 2002

Spring Blooms for P.B.B.

April gets called the cruelest month, but for Puppies Behind Bars the evening of the 27th was sweet indeed. Juliet and Michael Patsalos-Fox hosted a smash-hit cocktail party at their beautiful

house in Bernardsville—P.B.B.'s first New Jersey fundraising event since the program expanded into the state's Edna Mahan women's prison last spring. Many among the crowd of 200 guests, who included Bedminster mayor Joe Metelski, former governor Tom Kean, and Eileen Ford (scouting for model dogs?), were moved to tears by what

they heard from two former inmate puppy-raisers, Susan Hallett and Chris Rogers, and from Judy Goldman, a blind nurse who received the first P.B.B.-raised guide dog, in 1999. P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga noted that she had just received permission to expand the program at Edna Mahan prison by three dogs, for a total of ten, and that this would bring the number of New Jersey inmate puppy-raisers to 18 women. A pair

of labradoodle puppies (a mix of Labrador and poodle) named Juliet and Michael, in honor of the Patsalos-Foxes, started their training at Edna Mahan last month.



Left: Arlene Taggart with Jerry and Eileen Ford Right: Frederick and Mary Horn chat with former governor Tom Kean



The house, which was full of lilacs, exotic tulips, and cherry-blossoms from the Patsalos-Foxes' exquisite garden, was also full of dogs and kids. Not only was Judy Goldman accompanied by her guide dog, Lucie, but two puppies-in-training, Rosie, a four-month-old yellow Lab from Edna Mahan, and Kyra, a six-month-old yellow Lab from the Bedford Hills women's prison, came with

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The Paw of Unintended Consequences

Four years ago, the first Puppies Behind Bars newsletter went out. The front-page story was "A New Leash on Life: How We Got Started." In it, P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga described what had inspired her to found the organization: a labrador retriever named Arrow, who'd been released for medical reasons from Guiding Eyes for the Blind's training program. After adopting Arrow, Gilbert Stoga learned about the special breeding and intensive training that goes into the making of a guide dog. She also heard about the

success of Florida and Ohio programs in which prison inmates raised guide dogs for the first 18 months of their lives. She quit her job and started P.B.B. with five Guiding Eyes for the Blind puppies at New York's Bedford Hills women's prison.

We haven't lost our affection for canine puns, but so much else has changed since then. P.B.B. is now working in four state prisons, three in New York and one in New Jersey, and expects to start the program in the federal penitentiary system

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Spring Blooms for PBB

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their weekend sitters, showing off their best party manners. Equally adorable were the children, sons and daughters of the Patsalos-Foxes and of P.B.B. board member Jan Brady, who served hors d'oeuvres wearing special Puppies Behind Bars t-shirts.

"I hate benefits, and I didn't really want to come tonight," one guest told Gilbert Stoga. "But I'm so glad I did. This is about the most worthwhile event I've ever attended." One of the

reasons the party was such a success, Gilbert Stoga says, is that "it gave such a complete picture of what we do. People got to see the puppies-in-training and the final product:

Lucie. They got to hear from former

inmates and from a P.B.B. guide-dog user about how their lives were changed by the program." Another reason was the enormous commitment of time and energy by Juliet Patsalos-Fox and Jan Brady. Along with a



Left: Hostess Juliet Patsalos-Fox. Center: Mayor Joe Metelski of Bedminster, N.J. with Tom Dillon and Steve Fuerst. Right: Amelia Patsalos-Fox and Julia Pressler serve sushi and smiles.



Left: Guiding Eyes for the Blind board member Don Matthews with P.B.B. board member Jan Brady, P.B.B. President Gloria Gilbert Stoga, and Gloria Badgley. Right: Benefit committee member Nancy Pyne with Charlie Chapin.



dedicated benefit committee—Mary Johnston, Katherine Jones, Christiana Masucci, Lorry Newhouse, Nancy Pyne, Arlene Taggart, Cissy Viebranz, Helen Wagner, Catherine Wannemacher, Jenifer Armand

de Lille, Deborah Ely, Joan Kalkin, Mary O'Mealia, Bunny Price, and Ann Scher—they opened new hearts and minds to the important, life-altering work of Puppies Behind Bars.

The following is the text of Chris Roger's speech. It was the first time he had told his story to a large audience, and it was a powerful moment, both for him and for his listeners.

“Hi, my name is Chris. I was a puppy raiser, and that's probably what I am the proudest of in my life. I was one of those kids who you say, “What happened?” “He was a good kid.” “He was so talented.” Yes, they were right. I was a “good kid.” I was an altar boy, and I was good in school. I was “talented.” I started taking classical piano lessons at the age of 7. I played other instruments. And then you say, “What happened?” I'm not going to make any excuses. My life went downhill. So far downhill that I tried to commit suicide several times. The last time, I tried by jumping off a seven-story roof. In the hospital, the nurses kept telling me I was alive for a reason. Well it took me a long time—17 years in prison—to find that reason.

When I was 18 years old, I committed a crime and was sentenced to 15 years to life. The first 14 years in prison were very quiet and lonely. I didn't talk to a lot of people, and I didn't make a lot of friends. I spent my day either at work or in my cell, reading. It was around 14 years into my sentence that I heard my boss talking about a program with dogs that was starting in the facility. I had heard

rumors, but you learn to not believe them real quick. But now I heard it for real. They put out a list of “requirements” and I was okay with all of them except for one: You had to have at least two years left before going to the parole board. I only had eight months left. I begged my boss to please let me at least talk to the person who ran the program. It took a little while, but he finally gave in. He made an appointment for me to be interviewed by Gloria.

My self-esteem was so low I had trouble answering her questions. She asked, “If you were me, what would you look for in a puppy raiser?” “Why should I let you in the program?” I told her I grew up with dogs and always loved them, and I that I was more comfortable with animals than I was with people. She asked if there was anything else, and I said, “Yes, I am 99% positive that when I go to the parole board I will be told to do two more years”. This was not because I was bad or anything, but because once you're locked up, society doesn't think you're worth a second chance. Anyway, Gloria let me in the program and I felt great. And when she brought those first four puppies into the facility it was like I was alive again. Then I got Doris. She had the saddest eyes. I would talk to her all the time. I loved watching her play, and I loved being with her. Doris was a great puppy: she was

obedient, well mannered, and an all-around good dog. Except for one thing—like me, she didn't have enough confidence. But that's okay, because now she is a good P.B.B. training dog [Gilbert Stoga uses Doris as a teaching aid in the prison programs].

My second puppy, Hunter, was the greatest. He had problems, and we were working on them real hard. He had just the slightest chance that he could make it as a guide dog. As Hunter got older, his problems got bigger, and we all sort of gave up on him. But one person said he would be fine. Well, all it took was that one person, because tomorrow Hunter graduates as someone's guide dog. It just took one person to believe in Hunter, like it just took one person to believe in me.

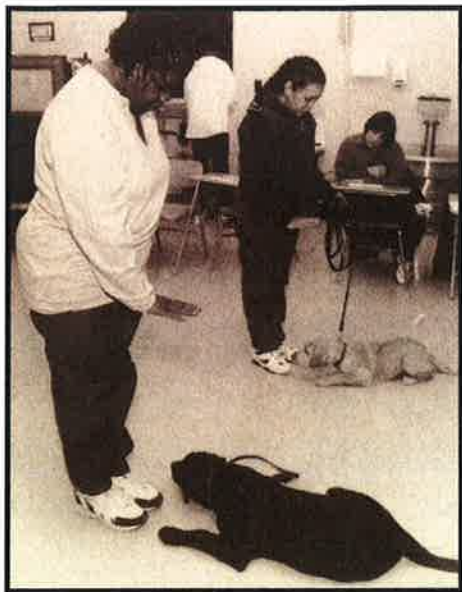
I'm here today, and Hunter is going to be a guide dog, because both of us were given a second chance, and both of us are working hard to make a difference in the lives of others. Thank you for giving all the puppy-raisers that chance. 🐾🐾

On April 28th, the day after Rogers gave his speech, Hunter graduated from the Guide Dog Foundation, in Long Island, becoming the guide dog to a very active insurance executive who works in downtown Chicago and travels frequently. Three cheers for Hunter—and for the man who raised him.

Portraits of Hope

The following photographs were taken over the past four years by Valerie Shaff, Matthew Rogers, Chris Maynard, Scott Mullin, and John Vecchiollas, as a visual record of P.B.B.'s work at the Bedford Hills and Fishkill prisons in New York and the Edna Mahan correctional facility in New Jersey.

These portraits of puppy-raisers with their dogs are a powerful testament to the transforming bond between the inmates and the pups.



Consequences

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this winter. We are now raising 31 dogs, with six in training at guide-dog schools, and by the summer we should have 20 working guide dogs throughout the U.S.

The P.B.B. success rate has been truly stunning. On average, only 50 to 60 percent of dogs raised for guide-dog work pass the rigorous tests for admission to guide-dog school. Last year, 87 percent of our pups made the cut. Among the P.B.B. dogs who didn't make it, five are companions to blind children, six are bomb-sniffers with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms or the N.Y.P.D., one is working at a detention center for juvenile offenders, and another is at a shelter for abused women and their children.

Guide-dog schools and blind people throughout the country are asking for our puppies. Initial doubts about dogs being raised in prison—fears for the dogs' quality of life and the quality of training they would receive—have been put to rest. P.B.B. is viewed as the preeminent dog/prison program in America. The responses of the guide-dog users who have received P.B.B.-

trained dogs have been heartfelt. They have told us again and again how terrific the dogs are, and how profoundly their lives have been changed.

Willi Richards, a 44-year-old blind man living in Brooklyn, was reluctant to try using a guide dog again after his first one knocked him to the ground while pursuing another dog on the street. Then Guiding Eyes for the Blind asked him if he'd accept a prison-raised dog. He had seen a tv program about P.B.B., and, as he tells it, "I felt if the dog was trained in a prison it was going to have gotten more attention and time." He was given a P.B.B.-raised graduate named Victoria, and she has changed his life so much that he felt compelled to go to the Bedford Hills prison and thank the inmates who raised her. "They gave me something wonderful," he says.

Judy Goldman, a nurse in Pittsburgh, has also visited the inmates who raised her dog Lucie. When Goldman used a cane, her husband, Lou, was terrified every time she

went out. He'd follow her, petrified she was going to fall, or get hit by a car, or get lost. "Now," he told the inmates, "I don't do that. She's completely independent." Even though Goldman had some vision, at night

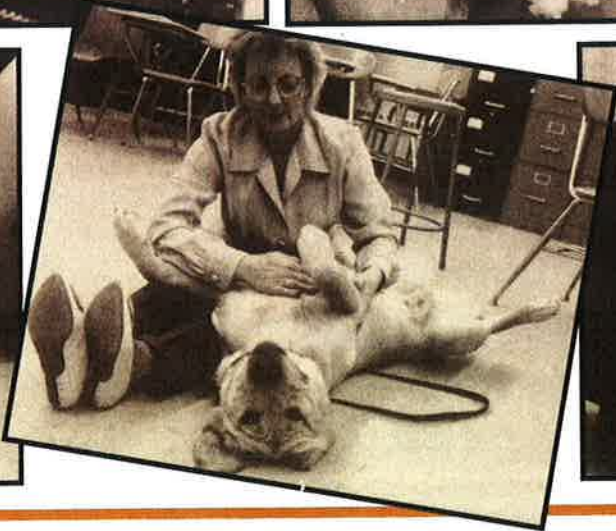
and in the snow she was completely blind. "I would never go out in those conditions with a cane," she said. "With Lucie I can go out in the snow again. I can feel it falling on my face. It's such a feeling of freedom and happiness."

—Judy Goldman Independence. Snow falling on an upturned face.

These are the kinds of amazing gifts that a well-raised guide dog can bring to someone who has lost his or her sight. You can imagine the pride of the inmates who heard Judy's and Willi's stories. And you can understand why, in achieving our goal of raising top-quality guide dogs, we found that we had another kind of success on our hands. P.B.B. was making a profound impact inside the prisons.

The inmate puppy-raisers have been extraordinarily responsive; they are loving to the dogs, committed to the long, hard task

“With Lucie I can go out in the snow again. I can feel it falling on my face. It's such a feeling of freedom and happiness.”



of training them, proud to be giving something back to society, and stoic when the dogs leave for guide-dog school. Like the blind people, the puppy-raisers find their lives changed beyond measure by the interaction with these dogs. "Dogs love you because they love you," says former puppy-raiser Susan Hallett. "And that helps to heal a lot of people. Things that you never thought were possible become possible."

Along with the love came responsibility and accountability. "Every program that comes into prison gives the inmate something," Hallett notes. "Puppies Behind Bars comes in and says, 'You are going to give back,' and inmates respond to that. Part of what is wrong with the whole prison system is that inmates are not given enough to do. They say 'mop this floor' or 'sweep that one.' But you know that nothing's going to really

matter if you do or don't do it. But if you're in a position where somebody's going to suffer because you don't do it, you take pride in doing it well."

And so, while raising guide dogs remains the cornerstone of the program, P.B.B. has been playing an increasingly important role in the area of inmate rehabilitation. Over the past few years, prison officials have described the impact of having our dogs in

DONATION FORM

I would like to be a **SURROGATE OWNER** of a puppy (minimum donation: \$3000.)

Please accept my donation for:

- 1 puppy's weekend visit to NYC (\$25)
- A sleeping crate for 1 puppy (\$85)
- Leashes and bowls for 1 puppy (\$50)
- Other amount

Please charge my credit card:

- Visa
- MasterCard
- AmEx

(Please list name as it appears on card. List billing address.)

Card Number: _____ Exp: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

- Add my friend to your mailing list

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Please mail your tax-deductible contribution with this form to:

Puppies Behind Bars • 99 Madison Avenue, 2nd Floor • New York, NY 10016



Two of P.B.B.'s canine graduates posed for pictures with guide-dog users Judy Goldman and Vladimir Matsuborchuk, both of whom say their lives have been fundamentally altered by these dogs.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

P.B.B. has three positions to fill. Qualified applicants, please send a cover letter and resume via e-mail or U.S. mail.

Director of Development

P.B.B. is seeking a Director of Development to help us expand. This person must have excellent social and financial skills, a good sense of humor, the ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, a willingness to work long hours, and excellent verbal and written communication skills. He/she must also be a self-starter and inspired by the mission of the organization. We offer a competitive salary, an enjoyable work environment, and the chance to be part of an effort that directly affects the lives of others.

Part-time Instructors

P.B.B. is also looking for two part-time instructors to work with inmate puppy-raisers. A love of dogs and a willingness to work long hours are essential, as is a valid New York State driver's license, a clean driving record, the ability to shoulder responsibility, a willingness to teach both male and female inmates, and the ability to work with volunteers and prison staff. No experience is necessary; we will train the right person. This position requires working in the prisons two days a week, with administrative duties that can be carried out from home. Ideally, we are looking for residents of Westchester or Dutchess counties. Excellent salary, as well as the reward of working directly with people who are trying to turn their lives around.

their prisons in glowing terms. P.B.B. board member Glenn Goord, who also holds the job of Commissioner of the New York State Department of Correctional Services (talk about glowing—check out what his colleagues have said about Goord, on page 6), says that, “Working with the dogs, the inmates are renewing their feelings of compassion and love. Those are very positive things that we want to send people back out to the community with.” Wayne Strack, former superintendent of the Fishkill men's prison, which is the second largest correctional facility in New York state, sees the bottom line this way: “The more positive things the inmates can experience in the prison system, the better they'll be when they return to society.”

Recently, inmates from the program have started to come up for parole, and two of them, Susan Hallett and Chris Rogers, have left prison to start new lives. Both are still involved with P.B.B. Hallett has a job as a

paralegal with the Legal Action Center. When she went on her first job interview, she recalls, “I told them that if I did it with P.B.B., I can do this job. I was able to take everything with that experience and say: ‘I can translate it into this job.’ And I got the job.”

“Working with the dogs, the inmates are renewing their feelings of compassion and love. Those are very positive things that we want to send people back out to the community with.”

—Glenn Goord

this is the real world, Gilbert Stoga and P.B.B. managing director Lisa Bruno have found other ways to make this a program that extends beyond bars. First, they worked with the N.Y. State Department of Correctional Services (that Goord fellow, again)

and the N.Y. State Department of Labor to obtain job certification as “Animal Caretakers” for inmates who successfully complete the 18-month P.B.B. training course. This means that the puppy-raisers' skills are recognized by the Department of Labor, and that upon their release they are qualified for referrals to animal-caretaking jobs listed in the D.O.L. employment directory.

Second, P.B.B. has begun offering qualified inmates the opportunity of taking a two-year correspondence course that will certify them as veterinary assistants. So the “new leash on life” that we hoped to provide four years ago has taken on a second, equally powerful meaning. When two guide-dog users, Advisory Board member Kent Stanley and his wife, Jenine, visited the Fishkill men's correctional facility three years ago, they spoke poignantly of the bond they shared with the prisoners, in terms of lost freedom. “They're prisoners of their actions,” Kent Stanley noted, “and we're prisoners of our biology.” Guide dogs can help restore some of that freedom to the blind. And raising guide dogs can help do the same for prison inmates—give them a connection to, and a stake in, the world to which they will return.

It would be great if we could employ every former puppy-raiser. But since

• **All A Board:** The P.B.B. board of directors has gotten a recent infusion of talent and commitment with four new members: **William and Katherine Rayner**, devoted supporters who have twice hosted and underwritten our annual fundraiser; **Jan Brady**, who has been at the forefront of our expansion into New Jersey's Edna Mahan correctional facility; and **Fredrick J. Patrick**, deputy commissioner for Community Affairs, New York Police Department, who has been on our advisory board since 1998.

• **Of Course, We Already Knew That:** **Glenn Goord**, commissioner of the New York State Department of Correctional Services and a charter member of the P.B.B. board, was honored in December with the Michael Francke Award, given by the Association of State Correctional Administrators for "outstanding leadership, contribution to corrections, accomplishment and service." Governor Pataki praised Goord as "the best corrections commissioner in the nation," and said that "the people of New York state are

fortunate to have such an outstanding professional at the helm of our corrections system."

• **Pups in Print:** The Workingman Press's 2002 Dog Calendar has a description of P.B.B.'s work accompanying the photograph of its June 14th dog. We don't recognize the pup's face, but the publicity is always appreciated. Other media outlets

that are spreading the good word: *The Philadelphia Inquirer* ran a feature about P.B.B. on May 6; Telemundo aired a segment about the program, our first exposure in the Spanish-language media; Columbia News Service (a partnership between the Columbia School of Journalism and *The New York Times* that is syndicated to 421 newspapers) put out a story on April 17; and the New York Department of Correctional Services' monthly *DOCS Today* ran a cover story in its May issue. Last but not least, a reporter from *Rosie* magazine visited the Edna Mahan prison for an article that will run later this year.

• **Of Pups and Partners:** On April 26, eight members of the Guiding Eyes for the Blind Graduate Council and their guide dogs paid a visit to the puppy-raisers of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. It was a day for sharing stories: the women at Bedford got to hear firsthand accounts of how important guide dogs are in the lives of the blind; the council members learned what the puppies mean to their raisers. "Though each group learned a lot from the other, one thing they already shared was a deep love and respect for the dogs," says P.B.B. managing director Lisa Bruno. "There was much admiration—as well as many pats—bestowed on all the four-legged attendees, from the most experienced working guide to the youngest puppy." The visit, a follow-up to the group's visit to the Fishkill men's prison two years ago, was organized by Becky Barnes, Consumer Outreach Coordinator for Guiding Eyes. As Bruno reports, "The consensus coming out of the visit was gratitude for the relationship between P.B.B. and G.E.B., and recognition of the value of the work we are doing together."

PAWS FOR APPLAUSE

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS

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New York, NY 10016