

Puppies Behind Bars

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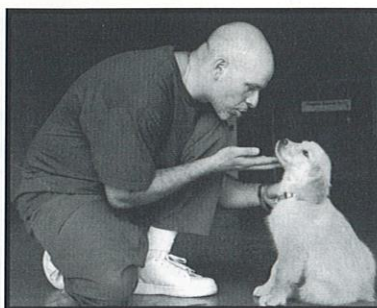
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PHOTOS BY VALERIE SHAFER

TRAINING INMATES TO RAISE SERVICE DOGS FOR THE DISABLED AND
EXPLOSIVE DETECTION CANINES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

THE PUPPY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

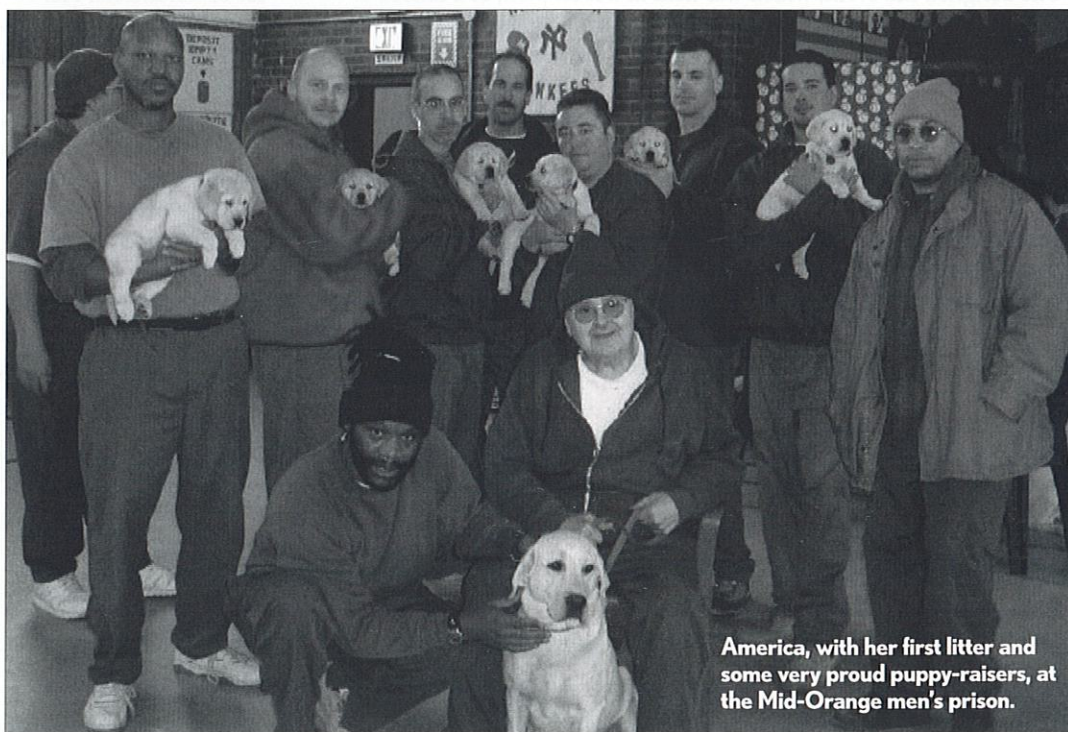
Summer 2007

BEST OF BREED

In May 2005, Puppies Behind Bars decided to expand in a new direction: Instead of buying all the pups for the program, it would start breeding some Labradors of its own. Two years later, P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga is counting her successes one litter at a time, in an initiative that has already produced 20 potential service

and effort is required to breed them as successful working dogs. While both service dogs and E.D.C.'s must be highly confident and extremely well mannered, the differences are as critical as the similarities.

Pups suited to service-dog work prefer to take human direction, and love to retrieve and carry



America, with her first litter and some very proud puppy-raisers, at the Mid-Orange men's prison.

dogs and explosive-detection canines (E.D.C.'s). For everyone involved, it has been an education in the art and science (not to mention the lexicon) of breeding dogs.

Though most people know Labs to be friendly, energetic, intelligent, social, and good-natured—qualities that make them excellent companions for humans—many don't realize how much thought

things in their mouths. They are low-key, with a remarkably even temperament. During formal training, a service dog ultimately learns 82 commands for tasks such as holding doors open, taking items off a shelf, bringing his or her own dog bowl to the sink, and turning lights on and off.

By contrast, E.D.C.'s need a higher energy

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OUR SPECIAL TODAY? GRATITUDE

At noon on May 16, the elegant Café Gray in Manhattan's Time Warner Center was packed with supporters of Puppies Behind Bars and with friends of Lori Gevalt. Not only is Gevalt the longest-serving member of P.B.B.'s board, but she has given it the kind of rainy-day, crunch-time support that only a very best friend will provide. She handled the surprise luncheon in her honor with her usual aversion to the spotlight—at first hesitating to enter the restaurant full of cheering pals—and then with the grace her colleagues have come to admire.

Founder and president Gloria Gilbert Stoga moved more than a few guests to tears with her tribute to Gevalt, which included a video made especially for the occasion, featuring the inmate who will be raising a darling little Golden Retriever named "Lori" to become a service dog. (The puppy made a personal appearance at Café Gray.)

Jan Brady, a former board member who now runs the P.B.B. program at the Edna Mahan women's prison in New Jersey, gave the crowd a behind-the-scenes account of the challenges and joys of her work. Brady told the stories of two

inmate puppy-raisers who had each struggled with the demands of the program—one successfully, the other not as well—and described how both women ultimately found new strength and self-respect through their experiences.

For those who knew about P.B.B.'s work, it was fresh insight into how the organization can change lives. For those who came to see what their friend Lori has been up to over the past ten years, it was more proof that she is a woman who deserves every bit of the thanks and applause

she got at Café Gray—even though, as Gilbert Stoga pointed out, "The luncheon had to be a surprise; otherwise, Lori would never have agreed to it."



Lori Gevalt, "Lori," and Jake Charest.

JESSIE'S GOAL Tenth-grader Jessie, an animal lover and budding philanthropist in Pennsylvania, raised \$1,305 for P.B.B. with a dog-walking event and raffle drawing she organized for her community. She designed the event, which was held in a local park, as a school project. To show its appreciation, P.B.B. gave the name "Jesse" to a chocolate Lab, which is now being raised at the Federal Correctional Institute in Danbury, Connecticut.

LAZY DAYS FOR LUCIE Lucie, the first of P.B.B.'s puppies to graduate from guide-dog school, has been retired, reports her companion, Judy, a blind nurse from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The subject of several P.B.B. newsletter articles dating back to her August 1999 graduation from the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind in Smithtown, Long Island, Lucie worked more than seven years as a loyal guide for Judy.

"It is time for Lucie to retire and enjoy the remainder of her life being a dog. I will keep her and continue to give her an enormous amount of love and care. She has given so much of herself for me," says Judy. "I am so very grateful to everyone at Puppies Behind Bars for the part they played in giving me a chance to live again. I have received so many compliments on how well behaved Lucie is, her impeccable manners, and her professionalism. I have always very proudly replied, 'Lucie was raised and trained by a wonderful group of very special people: Puppies Behind Bars.'"

TEAM JERSEY It looks as if the Garden State is also the Giving State, thanks to a \$10,000 contribution from the New Jersey Employees Charitable Campaign. Many of the donors in the group work at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, where P.B.B. raises future explosive-detection dogs. In honor of their continued support, P.B.B. will name a new Edna Mahan-based pup "Jersey."

GOODBYE, KATIE—HELLO, KATE Farewell, good luck, and many thanks to Katie Losey, who has left P.B.B. for the New York Public Library after two years as Director of Volunteers. Her successor, Kate Lorenz, was at a private equity firm when she decided she wanted to make a change in her career.

"The opportunity to work for an organization in which I believe was too good to pass up," says Lorenz, who had spent a year as a volunteer puppy-sitter for P.B.B. She has an M.P.A. from the Wagner School of Public Service at N.Y.U., and a degree from the French Culinary Institute.

PAWS FOR APPLAUSE

P.B.B. needs your support!

Puppy Kiss... \$\$\$...you decide!

Collar & Leash
\$25

Embroidered
Puppy
Jacket
\$50

Sponsor
a Pup
\$3000

Puppy
Food
\$100

Veterinary Care \$500

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Supplies
\$250

Inmate Vet
Assistant
Course
\$1100



VALERIE SHAFER

FOUR DOGS AND A **FUTURE**

One chapter of Jake Charest's story is too familiar: the toxic mix of teenaged boys, drinking, and drugs that led to a fight, that led to guy being badly hurt, that led to a conviction of attempted murder in the second degree.

Another part is more unusual. At 29, paroled after a decade in prison (during which his mother died), Charest has a job with Puppies Behind Bars, a home with friends and family, and a seemingly firm grip on his second chance.

He'd be the first to credit P.B.B. with making this possible. He spent his initial four years in prison "gathering dust," as he puts it, but the day he was transferred to the Fishkill Correctional Facility, he spotted an inmate with ... a dog.

"It was years since I'd seen a dog, or petted one," he recalls, though he'd had pets growing up in Brooklyn's Bensonhurst neighborhood—dogs, cats, hamsters. As soon as he could, Charest applied to be a puppy-raiser for P.B.B. At first he was denied, but he appealed the decision and asked some of the inmates in the Fishkill program to intercede for him with P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga, who was teaching there.

His perseverance paid off—as it would again when he was training his third dog for P.B.B. His first, Milby, sponsored by the same generous family that funded all the pups Charest would raise, was "solid from the beginning," he says. The next one, Skip,

"was high energy, a real 'dog's dog.' Harder to mold into a guide-dog, but more fun, more of a challenge." A black Lab, Skip was very good-looking, too; "majestic" is the word a lot of people used, according to Charest.

Then came Chesley. "I thought Chesley was going to be my first failure," Charest recalls. "He was a soft dog"—meaning sensitive, easily startled, and affected by loud noises and harsh voices—"and we thought we'd never live to see the day he made it to guide dog."

The answer was to take some of the pressure off both the pup and his raiser: "I went back and just let him be a dog for while, run wild, get that confidence," Charest says. "Then I started again, more slowly introducing things that startled him."

Charest stopped stressing, and Chesley not only made it as a guide dog, but ended up being used as a stud. The day the resulting litter was born, Charest remembers, "Carl [senior P.B.B. instructor Carl Rothe] called me and said, 'Congrats, Grandpa.'"

It was after he was transferred to the Mid-Orange prison, where the P.B.B. program is focused on raising explosive-detection canines (E.D.C.'s), that Charest began working with his fourth dog, Beacon. "Getting her was a compliment," he recalls. "I didn't have much knowledge of E.D.C.'s, but Gloria trusted me to seek out answers and get it done."

Raising dogs for bomb-sniffing work

was very different from raising potential guide dogs, he found, and more fun. "With guide dogs," he explains, "you're trying to teach them not to sniff, jump—90 percent of the things a dog does. With E.D.C.'s it's the opposite: You want the dog to be excited, to use its nose. You can play ball, tug of war. You have a better bond with the dog."

Getting out of prison can be a really tough adjustment, and Charest says he's surprised at how quickly he's made the transition: "The most difficult thing at first was how fast-paced everything was. They shove you out, and the whole world is moving so fast. I'm not really bothered by that anymore."

The other challenge has been learning "to make decisions on my own," he says. "Decisions were made for me for a long time."

So, now that he's working for P.B.B. on the other side of the bars—its midtown Manhattan office—what has he learned about the organization that meant so much to him as an inmate? "Well, life in prison is kind of simple," he answers, "When something went wrong with the program, I'd think, 'How hard could it be?'"

Much harder than he thought. "I've learned that a lot goes into it," he says, "and how many people are involved in giving to the programs—all the volunteers, the donors. I'm amazed by all the emails and phone calls I get every day from people wanting to help, just wanting to help what we do."

SAVE THE DATE: P.B.B. TURNS TEN IN OCTOBER!

There will be a COCKTAIL GALA on Wednesday, October 24, 2007 in New York City.

Check our website for updates and watch your mailbox for an invitation!

DONATION FORM

- ☐ I would like to sponsor and name a puppy (minimum donation: \$3000.)

Please accept my donation for:

- ☐ 1 puppy's weekend visit to NYC (\$35) ☐ 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: _____

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

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS | 10 East 40th Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10016

Best of Breed

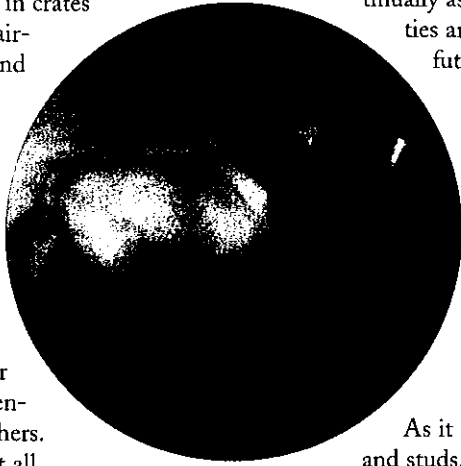
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level and a heightened sense of smell for their work: finding hidden objects based on smell alone, working in crates in warehouses, sniffing airplanes before take-off, and searching vehicles.

The first P.B.B. mothers, or "broods," Amy and America, have had two litters each. They were bred with different fathers, or "studs"—Apache and Colonel, respectively—who were chosen for characteristics complementary to those of the mothers. Amy's first litter of eight all became E.D.C.'s. (Her second litter was a single pup, and so Amy was retired as a brood.) America's two litters—a total of eleven pups—produced one suited to explosive detection, while nine had the temperament for service work. The litters may have been smaller than the average

(eight) for Labs, but every pup except one has qualified for P.B.B.'s prison programs.

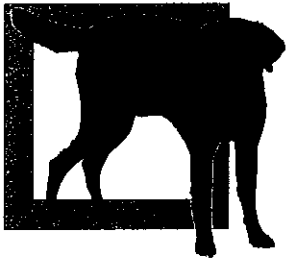
The breeding initiative depends on constant feedback from the instructors, assisted by the raisers and sitters, who continually assess pups' personalities and their potential as future studs and broods.



“During formal training, a service dog ultimately learns **82 commands** for tasks such as holding doors open, taking items off a shelf, bringing his or her own dog bowl to the sink, and turning lights on and off.”

As it produces new broods and studs, P.B.B. will find volunteer families to care for them between breeding times and litters. It will continue to purchase additional E.D.C. pups from breeders, and to partner with two top service-dog organizations—East Coast Assistance Dogs and New Horizons Service Dogs—whose pups return to the

can enter the prison—alongside their mother—at just six weeks old. For the dogs, it means a headstart on getting used to all sorts of new noises, smells, and experiences. For the puppy raisers, as Frank, an inmate at the Fishkill prison, says, “It teaches me what it is like to be a parent. This is as close to taking care of a baby as I’ve ever been.”



Puppies Behind Bars

10 East 40th Street, 19th floor
New York, NY 10016