



Puppies Behind Bars



PHOTOS: PEGGY VANCE

TRAINING INMATES TO RAISE SERVICE DOGS FOR WOUNDED WAR VETERANS AND EXPLOSIVE-DETECTION CANINES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Spring 2014

THE MULTI-TASKING PUPPY: A Week in the Lives of Baron and Justice

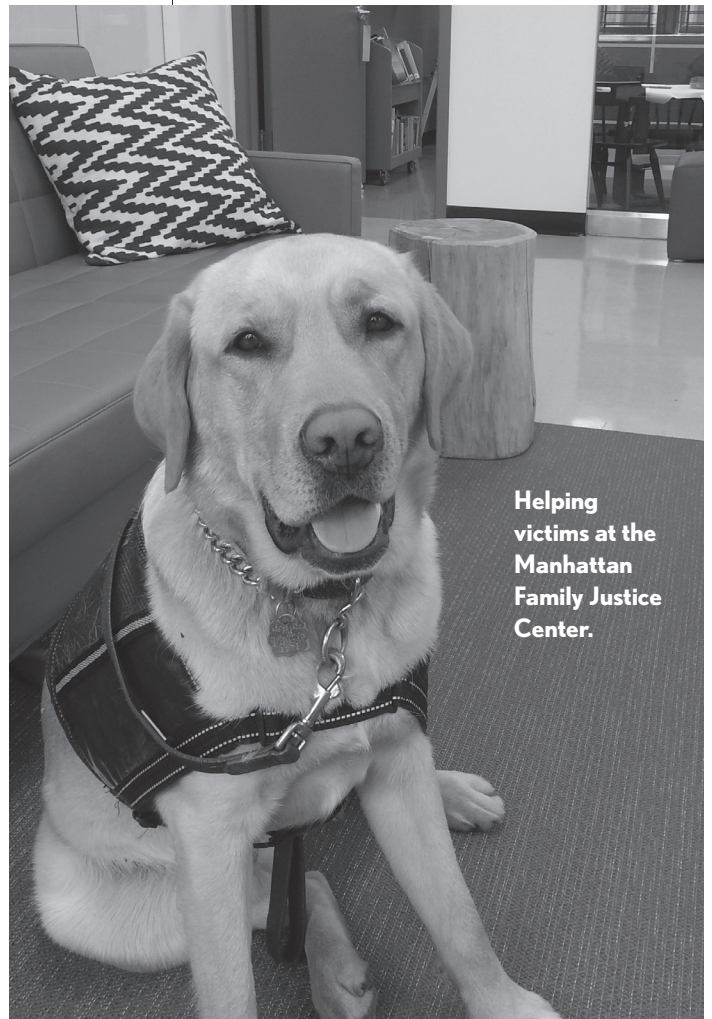
In most recent media coverage of Puppies Behind Bars, the focus has been on the profound difference its service dogs make to the wounded warriors paired with them. Veterans with P.T.S.D. or traumatic brain injury are able to start living their lives again—going to the store for a gallon of milk; taking a son to a Little League game; being able to sit through a lecture at college. Dozens more P.B.B. dogs have been trained as explosive-detection canines, working to keep Americans safe at home and around the world.

But what of the pups' first year or two, before the mission begins? How much difference can they make at such a young age? At this point in their lives, these dogs are receiving rigorous training in the tasks they will need to perform. They also undergo almost constant socialization to new environments. Doesn't sound as if they'd have much time to do anything for anybody, does it?

And yet, from the moment a pup arrives in prison, it begins to transform the lives of dozens, maybe even hundreds, of people. Skeptical? Based on the actual experiences of two outstanding young Labs, this is how a typical pair of P.B.B. puppies might spend their week.

It's Thursday morning and Justice has been in New York City since Tuesday evening, when a P.B.B. instructor took him out of Bedford Hills Correctional Facility to spend

the week getting used to the sights and sounds of a big city. Although the pups start their socialization to city life as early as four months old, this important aspect of their training never ends. It just gets more



Helping victims at the Manhattan Family Justice Center.

PHOTO: P.B.B.

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complex and interactive.

Justice is headed for the Manhattan Family Justice Center. Run by the Manhattan District Attorney's office, the F.J.C. provides comprehensive multilingual services to victims of domestic violence and their children, as well as to victims of elder abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, and child abuse. Clients go there to meet with a prosecutor; get legal advice on immigration, divorce and custody issues, and orders of protection; talk to a counselor; or apply for emergency housing—often while their kids play in the next room.

Two P.B.B. puppies visit the F.J.C. every week with volunteers Carol Lyden and Wynn Laffey. "We are very lucky to have Puppies Behind Bars as a partner in the new Family Justice Center," says Manhattan D.A. Cyrus Vance. "Our mission is to provide safety and support for victims of domestic violence. Having highly trained service dogs interact with victims and their children not only provides a calmer atmosphere, which helps us communicate more effectively with survivors, but a more caring and empathetic one. We owe that much to our domestic violence survivors and their families."

On this particular morning, Justice and another pup, Bear, take the elevator to the fifth floor of the F.J.C., where they will spend the next two hours. Clients waiting for appointments pet and play with the dogs, which helps take their minds off their troubles and lowers their stress levels. Occasionally, an F.J.C. staff person will ask if one of the pups can go into the interview room with a victim, especially if that victim is a child, since a dog's presence often helps people to open up about traumatic events. The pups are also a boon to F.J.C. staffers, who need to decompress from emotionally

MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Charity Navigator has awarded Puppies Behind Bars four-star status, the highest possible ranking, for the seventh year in a row. Charity Navigator is an independent nonprofit that evaluates charities based on finances, transparency, and spending on mission and program costs versus administration and fundraising. In his letter to P.B.B., Ken Berger, president and C.E.O. of Charity Navigator, wrote, "Only 2% of the charities we rate have received at least 7 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that Puppies Behind Bars outperforms most other charities in America. This 'exceptional' designation from Charity Navigator differentiates Puppies Behind Bars from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust."



SEPTEMBER: REMEMBER!

For the second year, the **Samuel Freeman Charitable Trust** has awarded P.B.B. a challenge grant to support its Dog Tags program for wounded Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. All donations earmarked for Dog Tags will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$55,000, through September.

TWO FOR THE TEAM

Both of P.B.B.'s newest employees have come out of the program at Fishkill Correctional Facility. Given their exemplary attitudes, skills, and dedication, they were hired after earning parole.

"Before I was blessed with my administrative assistant position here at Puppies Behind Bars I began as a puppy raiser in Fishkill," says **Tito Tyson**. "In 2011, I

joined the program and learned as much as I possibly could. Soon thereafter I was given a beautiful black Lab named Nyma. In 2012, I was fortunate enough to bring Nyma to her fullest potential and have her graduate with the perfect veteran for her. In 2013, I became a group leader and helped other men solve problems, come together with common goals, and grow as individuals inside the program. I fell in love with what I was doing, and in late 2013, I was released from prison and given the opportunity to continue growing myself within the organization. I couldn't be happier with the staff, and with my outlook on what's next in my life with P.B.B."

"I helped raise eight puppies between 2004 and 2014, and was a group leader at Fishkill from 2012 to 2014," says **Gary Aurigemma**, who is also now an administrative assistant at P.B.B. "I feel that all of the things that I have learned from being in the program have also come to define me as a person. Learning to be: a puppy raiser; a leader; someone with patience; a dog trainer; a teacher; someone who loves to help others; someone who can be depended on. P.B.B. has taught me all of this and so much more. To have a chance to continue this work is a blessing. P.B.B. has high expectations of its puppy raisers and I'm sure the same goes for its staff. Hopefully, I will be up to this new challenge."

CANINE COMMENCEMENTS

In the past six months, P.B.B. has had 21 canine graduates: 15 explosive-detection canines (E.D.C.'s) and six service dogs. (Since E.D.C. puppies are in the program for about a year, while service-dog puppies stay for two-and-a-half to three years, more

E.D.C.'s graduate on an annual basis.) Thanks to the efforts of the female puppy raisers at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility and the Federal Correctional Facility at Danbury, P.B.B. graduates are now working as explosive-detection and arson-detection canines for agencies including the C.I.A., A.T.F., F.B.I., and local sheriff's and fire departments in Miami, St. Louis, Maryland, northern Virginia, and Washington, D.C. P.B.B. instructors Jan Brady, Joan Neumann, and Jill and Mike Wynn attended some of these graduations, beaming with pride to see so many pups they'd taught and nurtured graduate as working dogs. Volunteers Nancy Cuniff and Lynne and Larry Dawkins also went to recent ceremonies, amazed to see that the pups they've been scheduling for outings since the dogs were 12 weeks old were now full-fledged E.D.C.'s, ready to help keep Americans safe.

On October 20, three newly trained Dog Tags service-dog/veteran teams were honored at AXA Equitable Center in Manhattan. Anderson Cooper presided over the ceremony, at which the canine "Anderson" (named by P.B.B. in Cooper's honor) was paired with Cory, from Missouri. Castle was partnered with Jeffrey, who lives in Pennsylvania, and Bentley with another Jeffrey, from Georgia. Three more teams graduated in a private ceremony at Fishkill Correctional Facility on February 4. Murphy went home to Pennsylvania with Tracy, Skye accompanied Mark back to Mississippi, and George is now partnered with Christopher in Tennessee. These six most recent canine Dog Tags graduates all serve Army veterans, but they join another sixty P.B.B.-trained dogs serving wounded warriors from all branches of the armed forces in 26 states across the country.

charged interactions with their clients.

Baron, meanwhile, is spending his Thursday at Fishkill Correctional Facility. When he's not in the puppy yard with the other dogs, he goes with his raiser to the raiser's job in the library, where he's welcomed by prison staff and inmates. In prison, social interaction is usually kept to a minimum, but puppies bring people together. Some of the inmates who encounter Baron today may not have been near a dog in years. His presence alone brightens up their day. And when the inmate who is raising Baron takes a short break from his job to drill his pup—having him retrieve a pen or turn on a light switch—it's a source of wonder and amazement around the library. The inmates will have the experience of seeing the talented puppy to talk about later in the day, maybe even with their families when they call home that night.

Working with Baron in front of others gives an enormous sense of pride and purpose to his raiser. After lunch, they go to the facility's medical unit, to visit inmates in long-term care. The pup happily greets staff and patients, including terminally ill inmates. Some of the ambulatory patients walk up and down the hallway with Baron, who has given them a reason to get out of bed and move, helping their recuperation tremendously. As for the patients who can't get up, Baron gently puts his front paws up on the edge of the bed so they can pet him. To those stuck in a hospital bed within a prison—the ultimate in confinement—his visit is a godsend. The staff are just as pleased to see him as the patients.

That evening, Baron and his raiser go to the big people yard (as opposed to the puppy yard), where they encounter men from all over the prison. Then it's playtime with the other puppies and raisers in their housing unit until



Giving and getting love during a Paws & Reflect visit.

PHOTO: P.B.B.

lights-out.

Justice spends Friday in the P.B.B. office, and goes out with staff to walk around Manhattan, visit stores and restaurants, travel on buses and, in general, experience the chaos that is New York City on a weekday. Sporting his service-dog-in-training jacket, he brings smiles to many frantic and frazzled people on the street.

Baron is also going out on a socialization trip, leaving Fishkill with a local volunteer "puppy sitter." At 3:00 p.m. on the dot, all nicely groomed and looking sharp in his jacket, he goes to the prison's front gate to be picked up. Baron's raiser has written a letter for the sitter, explaining Baron's personality, schedule, and issues he needs to work on.

First, dog and volunteer visit a local nursing home where Baron cheers up the staff and residents. Next stop is the local school,

where she has a P.T.A. meeting. Baron lies so quietly next to her that afterwards people are surprised to notice him, saying they didn't realize there was a dog in the room. When the volunteer takes him home, he gets some fun time—playing with her children and their golden retriever—before being driven back to the prison at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday is quiet for Baron and his raiser, as they spend the day in the housing unit and adjacent puppy yard. Justice, on the other hand, has an important mission, as does the volunteer who picks him up that morning. They're part of P.B.B.'s Paws & Reflect program, a collaboration with Citymeals-on-Wheels, which has a small but genuine impact on some of New York City's homebound elderly.

Paws & Reflect is not just great experience
Continued on back page

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for service-dogs-in-training, it gives homebound seniors a chance to spend time with a dog, and to help with P.B.B.'s mission. They get a sense of purpose, as well as some company, as they work with the younger volunteer, acclimating the pup to a new environment that often contains medical and mobility equipment. Today Justice brings a ray of sunshine into the life of someone whose world has become more confined because of age. After his Paws & Reflect visit, he is handed off to another volunteer, who will keep Justice in N.Y.C. for more socialization until the pup finally returns to his raiser at Bedford Hills on Sunday afternoon.

Baron's Sunday is special: He and his raiser go to the prison visiting room to spend time with the raiser's family. The room is full of families, including kids, who are amazed at the commands that Baron can do. Visits are a treasured time for families, but they can be stressful, too. Baron's presence helps to relieve a lot of the tension, and he loves the attention he gets. Busy and crowded, this is a great place for a dog to learn manners and self-control.



Heading out for socialization with a volunteer.

Justice and his raiser spend Monday catching up from their week apart, but on Tuesday they get back to their routine. Justice's raiser is an

aide in Bedford Hills' Infant Center, which houses women with infants under two. The atmosphere can be chaotic, and therefore a good test of any pup's social skills. (In fact, P.B.B. brings dogs into Bedford Hills on "swaps" from other prisons, so that they can have the experience of being around very young kids, while the children get to learn how to interact with a dog.) Justice is already a pro with the little ones, delighting them every time he does a "Salute" or a "Shake."

Baron and Justice are destined for lives of service, so training is the main focus of their lives for the 24 months they are part of P.B.B. But whether these pups are just going about their business inside prison, or accompanying volunteers into the world beyond bars, they already have a power far beyond their dog years. In any given week, abused kids, dying patients, homebound seniors, and many more are just a little happier because Justice or Baron—or another canine angel like them—has wagged a tail, offered a paw, and given out some of that priceless puppy love.