

Go East, Young Pups



In 2022 Puppies Behind Bars expanded to two additional correctional facilities: Green Haven in Stormville, New York, where we are training service and facility dogs; and Eastern in Napanoch, New York, where we are raising explosive-detection canines (EDCs). This article focuses on Eastern Correctional Facility.

The partnership with Eastern dates to December 2021, when facility administrators invited Puppies Behind Bars (PBB) instructors to tour the prison. After working with facility staff to determine how the program would work best, we provided an overview about PBB to the general prison population. About 120 incarcerated individuals attended the presentation; 35 of them filled out applications to be considered for acceptance. After security background checks and personal interviews with PBB, 18 men were selected. Our first class took place May 12, 2022.

On November 3, 2022, Zeus, Maggie, Dallas, Bo, and Celeste entered Eastern and were handed to five very happy (and somewhat nervous) first-time puppy-raisers.

Before dogs could actually be brought into Eastern full-time, many details had to be worked out. A dedicated housing unit for the 18 puppy-raisers had to be located; a large, outdoor space for a new doggie recreation yard had to be selected and fencing installed. PBB also purchased all

educational materials and school supplies for the raisers, as well as dog kennels, beds, food storage bins, toys, leashes, bowls, exercise equipment, and medical supplies for the puppies. We installed industrial fans in the classroom and a new washer-dryer unit for the dogs' towels and beds. PBB also bought a lawn mower to keep the puppy yard safe and tidy. Once all of this was completed, we were ready for dogs. Up until this time, we borrowed dogs from other PBB facilities for class day to give hands-on training to the new puppy-raisers.

Class day for Eastern is every Thursday, with one six-hour dog training class each week. Our curriculum is a complete course that covers dog training and handling, animal husbandry, basic veterinary care, grooming, canine learning theory, and body handling. The trainers complete tests, homework assignments, and essays every week.

On November 3, 2022, Zeus, Maggie, Dallas, Bo, and Celeste entered Eastern and were handed to five very happy (and somewhat nervous) first-time puppy-raisers. On January 5, 2023, the second group of eight-week-old puppies—McDermott, Murphy, Oakley, Calvin, and Lynne—were a welcome addition.

Once we knew puppies were coming, we recruited local volunteers and held sessions to train them. Thanks to our volunteers, our puppy-raisers, prison staff, and, of course, the puppies themselves, all the dogs in Eastern Correctional are thriving and well on their way to becoming EDCs. We anticipate they will graduate in the coming year.

Photo by Elias Friedman/The Dogist.

Our Volunteers: A Special Breed



PBB volunteers play an essential role in making our puppies the most successful working dogs they can be. For our six prisons, we have nearly two hundred volunteers, who are devoted to getting our puppies exposed to the sights, sounds, smells, and scenarios of the outside world.

We understand that with busy lives, it can be hard to find time to volunteer. Research shows, however, that the benefits of volunteering can be enormous. Volunteering can reduce stress, combat depression, be mentally stimulating, and provide a sense of purpose. It also bridges connection to a wider community, boosts self-confidence, increases physical activity, and elevates happiness, overall. Who can refrain from smiling while spending time with one of our pups?

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Our puppies are lovable, happy-go-lucky beings who enjoy going out on the town with volunteers. While out and about, the dogs encounter all sorts of things they can't while inside a correctional facility. Important experiences like seeing their reflection in a mirror for the first time, or hearing a fire truck, or even something as simple as foot traffic in an apartment hallway are important for our puppies' budding confidence. In order for PBB pups to become well-rounded individuals ready for work, they need many positive outings with a variety of different people.

This helps them understand that every human who handles their leash is a friend, and it helps them practice being well-mannered in all situations. However, it is not all on the pups! Our volunteers must be consistent with the commands they give and must know how to handle specific situations. So, all PBB volunteers go through a two-day training.

At the two-day training we introduce the equipment we use, how to hold the leash, how to give commands correctly, how those commands should be executed, and what to do if a pup doesn't complete a command. We discuss the proper way to enter or exit a door or elevator, the proper way to curb the pups on busy New York City streets, how to socialize with other dogs, and the importance of reading your dog's body language.

There's no question that we expect a lot from our volunteers, because PBB volunteers play a huge role in our pups' success. Without being socialized to the world at large, the dogs would be missing a crucial piece in their development. This is why the training is so important and why it is important to maintain a good volunteer base.

We are thankful for our volunteers! Without them, Puppies Behind Bars would not be able to do what we do—graduate immensely loved, well-trained pups whom we pair with veterans, first responders, and law enforcement officers.

Spreading Joy: Out and About With Our Puppies

One of the very exciting and rewarding activities we do with our puppies is take them on weekly outings to the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the Manhattan District Attorney's office.

When going on field trips to NYPD, we visit the Employee Assistance Unit as well as various precincts, where our puppies are greeted with delight. Additionally, our dogs

Albee loves reading with the children at the Family Justice Center and getting massages from them.

have made many friends at the Hospital for Special Surgery and Staten Island Hospital, where they provide doses of dopamine to staff and patients alike.

We bring in dogs from our prisons who are ready to spend a day in New York City. Here, we can both evaluate how they perform in different situations, as well as

watch the puppies bring joy and smiles to every police officer with whom they come into contact. Our dogs-in-training all love meeting their canine friends already assigned to NYPD; these dogs, Jenny, Piper, and Glory, support the mental well-being of employees throughout the department.

Meanwhile, our dog Albee serves as a facility dog for the Manhattan DA's office. He loves reading with the children at the Family Justice Center and getting massages from them. His favorite greeting is tunneling between friends' knees for hip scratches. Even the officers at each security checkpoint know him by name. PBB is grateful not only to have these opportunities for socialization for our dogs, but for the relationships with these two agencies, which allow us to bring hope and healing to many.

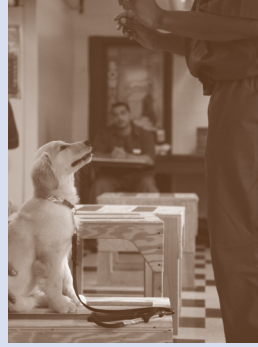
Left: Marisa Sullivan/NYPD, Right: Puppies Behind Bars.



A New Beginning

After serving almost 31 years in prison, I was released on March 15, 2023. For 15 of those 31 years, I was part of the Puppies Behind Bars program and can recall the moment when I found my passion. I saw a 10-week-old black Labrador retriever puppy named Magic sitting on a “jump-on box” doing the most perfect “watch me” command for his puppy-raiser. I was mesmerized by this seemingly insignificant interaction, which for me, was a life-changing moment. The connection between puppy and raiser struck a deep chord, and from that moment on I knew what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

I raised 13 dogs while incarcerated and worked with so many others that I’ve lost count; but I can say each and every one was unique. Puppies Behind Bars was an island of sanity and safety within the correctional system; the values it instilled are incalculable. On days when hope was but a faint flicker, I could always turn to my four-legged beacons of light to buoy my flagging confidence. I was fortunate to be part of a program that sought to bring out the best in me and allowed my humanity to thrive. PBB affected not just my life, but all the lives connected to mine.



When the opportunity to continue working with PBB was offered post-release, you can only imagine the great joy that enveloped me. “Yes!” was my immediate response. To say I am excited to work with

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a program and with a group of people who share my deep passion for raising, training, and, most importantly, loving PBB’s pups is a gross understatement. My fellow staff members have welcomed me warmly, for which I am, and will always be, deeply grateful. What could have been a difficult transition—returning to society after three decades—has proven anything but.

I am learning new and exciting aspects of PBB, including my first taste of helping care for new puppies in our early socialization center, and I pinch myself daily. I now get to nurture PBB’s future from day one, as well as to help socialize our older pups through excursions into, and explorations of, the larger world. It doesn’t get better than this. Working for Puppies Behind Bars is an absolute labor of love, one I anticipate being a part of for many years to come. —by Mark Marszalek

Left: Photo by Peggy Vance. Right: Puppy performing the “Watch Me” command. Photo by Peggy Vance.

End of an Era



After 38 years of service with the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, and as Acting Commissioner since 2013, Anthony Annucci announced his retirement, effective August 11, 2023.

Commissioner Annucci has been one of the strongest and most trusted advisors and partners of Puppies Behind Bars. Always willing to consider what was best

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for the incarcerated individuals in his system, always proud of their successes and accomplishments, always a stalwart proponent of animals' abilities to heal, Commissioner Annucci has been with Puppies every step of the way this past decade. We could not have innovated, we

could not have expanded, we could not have succeeded without his guidance and friendship.

When Puppies proposed that active-duty police officers come into New York State correctional facilities to work side by side with the incarcerated individuals, Commissioner Annucci immediately saw the merits of such a radical idea—and revealed in its success.

He never failed to stop by the “puppy unit” whenever he was visiting a facility in which we work; he was never too busy to speak with the incarcerated individuals about their puppies; he was never too busy to pet a dog and receive a kiss in return.

How incredibly lucky we have been to have worked with him these past ten years! We will miss you, Commissioner, and wish you the best.

Left: Acting Commissioner Annucci (4th from left), with veterans, at PBB Team Training Graduation, Fishkill Correctional Facility, August 2018. Photo by Peggy Vance. **Right:** Acting Commissioner Annucci, speaking at PBB Graduation, Fishkill Correctional Facility, August 2018. Photo by Peggy Vance.



Paws to Remember

*Master Sergeant (MSG) Zoe:
October 14, 2009–March 1, 2023
Zoe served in the United States Army
alongside Chaplain Karen Hallett from
February 15, 2012 to April 21, 2021.*



In the Spring 2013 issue of this newsletter, we featured an article on Zoe, a female black Labrador retriever raised in Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. Zoe was specifically trained to attend to her handler and others during times of stress, including grief and anxiety. She was paired with Army Chaplain (CH) Karen Hallett and officially commissioned into the service rank of Sergeant, by Army Brigadier General David Weeks, of the 411th Engineer Brigade.

Zoe served with the brigade in Afghanistan from March 2012 to February 2013 as a valued member of the unit ministry team. She traveled throughout the combat theater, visiting 29 forward

operating bases, logging over twenty-two thousand miles, and eliciting countless smiles. MSG Zoe was most appreciated when the brigade suffered losses or casualties. At a time when memorial ceremonies were a common occurrence, Zoe would sit with grieving soldiers, providing the kind of comfort that only a dog can bring. A soldier draped around her neck, snuggled with her on a cot, or wrestling with her on the floor were common scenes.

Upon her return from combat, the 402nd Field Artillery and 5th Armored Brigades invited MSG Zoe and CH Hallett to serve as part of their readiness training team. This elite team verified the readiness of units preparing to deploy to Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Somalia. Zoe inspired other chaplains to bring a Puppies Behind Bars facility dog into combat with their units and helped to pave the way for Army policy to allow this practice.

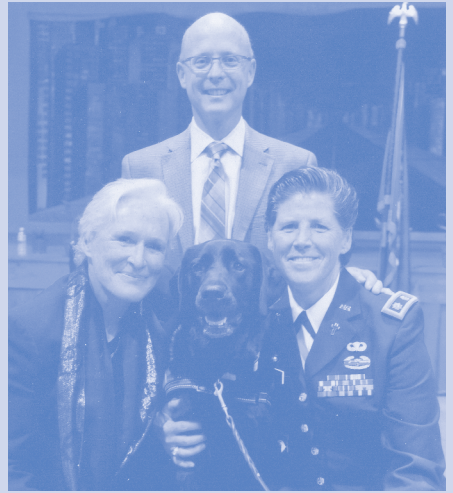
**Zoe served with the
brigade in Afghanistan
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unit ministry team.**

Everywhere Zoe went she brought joy to people's faces and opened doors for conversations. Following her retirement from active military service, MSG Zoe (retired) continued to serve with CH Hallett (also retired) during her visits to VA Medical Centers. During her off-hours Zoe

loved chasing radio-controlled monster trucks, stealing hats, and swimming in her backyard pool.

In August, MSG Zoe's ashes were scattered at sea, where she received full military funeral honors. A military team, including Chaplain Karen Hallett and Major Tom Hallett, rendered customary honors, complete with a flag folding and presentation to PBB founder Gloria Gilbert Stoga, a firing volley, and the playing of "Taps." The flag presentation symbolizes the gratitude of the nation for MSG Zoe's service. The firing of three volleys over the grave of a fallen warrior has its origin in the old custom of halting the fighting to remove the dead from the battlefield. Once the dead were removed, three-musket volleys were fired as a signal that the dead had been cared for, and the battle could resume.

"Taps" is an American call, composed in 1862 by the Union Army's Brigadier General Daniel Adams Butterfield. The call became known as "Taps," because it was often tapped out on a drum in the absence of a bugler. During the Peninsular Campaign in 1862, a soldier of Captain



John C. Tidball's Battery A, 2nd US Artillery, was buried at a time when the battery occupied an advanced position, concealed in the woods. It was unsafe to fire the customary three volleys over the grave, due to the proximity of the enemy, and it occurred to Captain Tidball that the sounding of "Taps" would be the most appropriate ceremony that could be substituted. The custom, which was adopted throughout the Army of the Potomac, was finally confirmed by orders, and continues as a funeral tradition today.

Thank you, Zoe for all you gave to so many. You were dearly loved and will be forever missed.

Left: Photo by Peggy Vance. **Middle:** Photo: Karen Hallett. **Right:** (Clockwise, from left) Glenn Close, Major Tom Hallett, Chaplain Karen Hallett and Zoe, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, December 2015. Photo by Peggy Vance.

Doggone It, We'll Miss You!



On March 10, 2023, after 22 years, Puppies Behind Bars closed its program in the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility in Clinton, New Jersey. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy decided to close the prison and build a new facility; in the interim, some of the incarcerated individuals were moved to a new location, which was unable to accommodate our program.

Jan Brady, who oversaw our work at Edna Mahan, was with Puppies almost since the first day we opened there in 2001. Jan participated in our evolution over all these years—from initially raising Labradoodles and Labrador retrievers to be guide dogs, to, after the September 11th terrorist attacks, raising explosive-detection canines (EDCs) for law enforcement agencies throughout the United States and the world. Under Jan's guidance, the incarcerated individuals grew into confident women with a purpose, with responsibility, and with a voice. Countless women started in our program afraid to even express an opinion, but with Jan's patience and nurturing, these women turned into leaders both for the program and for the facility.

Joan Neumann, a retired high school history teacher who joined PBB in 2010, brought her years of experience into our classroom. She helped the women teach our EDCs to use their noses to find hidden objects, and she helped the women work together as a cohesive group.

To say that Jan and Joan transformed the lives of hundreds and hundreds of women is not an overstatement; through their work they also transformed the lives of the women's families. Our puppy-raisers

met success after success working with Jan and Joan—and on those occasions when they did not, they learned how to deal with setbacks maturely and responsibly.

Along with Jan and Joan, Larry Dawkins spent years scheduling PBB volunteers and their pick-ups, all on a voluntary basis. An ardent supporter of the program, Larry dedicated hours of his time to spreading the word and aiding our important work. In recent years, he was accompanied by Jasper, a retired PBB dog whom he adopted.

While Puppies was very sad to close the Edna Mahan program, we are deeply appreciative of the commitment, rigor, and true passion Jan and Joan brought to each woman and each dog who went through our program. Along with Larry's dogged devotion, we know we would not be where we are today without them.

Our gratitude would not be complete without a special shout-out to our New Jersey volunteers, a stupendously dedicated group, who continuously gave their time during the 22 years PBB operated at Edna Mahan. We will be forever grateful for the deep commitment and involvement by all. Without you, our program, the incarcerated women, and the dogs they raised could not have met the successes they did.

(Left) Joan Neumann; (Right) Jan Brady.
Photo by Puppies Behind Bars.

Leading the Pack



It takes great courage to be a police officer. It takes creativity and innovation to be an award-winning one. For her above-and-beyond efforts and initiatives, Patrol Officer Heather McClelland of the Groton Police Department (Connecticut) was honored for Distinguished Service in Community Policing at a ceremony in Washington, DC, on June 5, 2023. United States Attorney General Merrick Garland presented awards to both Officer McClelland and her facility dog Chase.

In 2019, after recognizing that the stresses and strains on police officers were adversely affecting their mental health, and that tensions between police and the communities they serve were on the rise, Officer McClelland was the first

active-duty police officer to apply for a PBB facility dog.

Since graduating as a team, Chase and Officer McClelland have been providing emotional support within the Groton police department, as well as helping build relations within the community. Subsequently, numerous other police departments across the United States have requested and obtained dogs from us for their departments.

Top: Photo by Puppies Behind Bars. **Bottom:** (Left to right) Hugh Clements, Jr., Director of the Office of Community Policing Services; Groton, CT Police Officer Heather McClelland; Attorney General Merrick Garland; and Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta. Photo by Jacquelyn Martin/AP staff.



Final Bow (Wow)

On March 15, 2023, Eric Barsness, our Executive Vice President, retired from Puppies Behind Bars.

Eric joined PBB in 2009 as Development Director. Many of you have heard him grace our prison graduations with his beautiful bass voice, often in duet with our dog Dudley; you've spoken with him at our volunteer picnics; you have perhaps run into him getting dogs from some of our facilities; or you've worked with him socializing our puppies at the Scaife Family Foundation Early Socialization Center.

Eric's steadiness at the helm, and his extraordinary commitment to our program and to our supporters have helped us get to where we are today. Unfailingly, Eric stepped up to help. Our dogs have always been of utmost importance to him (Penny, whom he

adopted from PBB five years ago, has the life most dogs can only dream of), as has our mission. Articulate and passionate whenever he talks about Puppies, he has often turned someone with a simple question into a supporter whose life was transformed because they became part of our work.

While we will miss him greatly, we look forward to him staying involved in new ways.



Left: Photo courtesy of Eric Barsness. Right: Photo by Peggy Vance.

WELCOME WAGON

Susan Lobel joined the PBB staff on January 3, 2023, as our new Communications Director. A long-time admirer of our organization, she left a 25-year career in the interior design industry, ready to take on new challenges and to raise further awareness of the rewarding and fulfilling work we do.

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OUR MISSION

Puppies Behind Bars (PBB) trains incarcerated individuals to raise service dogs for wounded war veterans and first responders, facility dogs for police departments, and explosive-detection canines for law enforcement. Puppies enter prison at the age of 8 weeks and live with their incarcerated puppy-raisers for approximately 24 months. As the puppies mature into well-loved, well-behaved dogs, their raisers learn what it means to contribute to society rather than take from it.



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