NEWSLETTER READERS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING Grant from early puppyhood, through his training in the P.B.B. program at the Bedford Hills prison, to his acceptance by Guiding Eyes for the Blind guide-dog school. Now SHARON YOUNG, a P.B.B. volunteer, reports on Grant’s graduation as a full-fledged guide dog.

On January 22, 2005, Grant graduated as a guide dog.
Against the dramatic backdrop of New York Harbor and the Statue of Liberty, some 400 friends, admirers, and supporters gathered for Bowhaus 2004, the fifth annual Puppies Behind Bars benefit and auction on October 25. While reconnecting and making new connections, they admired the view, as well as twenty spectacular dog beds on display in the second-floor hall of the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Created by design talents including Mario Buatta, Michael Formica, John Saladino, and Scalander’s Donna May Woods, the beds ranged in style from Richard Jordan’s whimsically painted “Cirque du Chien” to Tom Scheerer’s minimalist wicker “Beware, Mod Dog.” They were auctioned off by Sotheby’s Hugh Hildesley, who skillfully and hilariously browbeat, cajoled, and teased his audience into parting with far more money than they had originally intended.

Hildesley wasn’t the only entertainer on stage, though. P.B.B.’s special guests, Lorraine Bracco and Edie Falco, also got big laughs, and much applause, as they spoke about the program and helped auction off a visit to the set of The Sopranos. But perhaps the most moving speaker that evening was former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, who had been surrounded during the cocktail hour by people wanting to thank him for his service to the nation as chairman of the 9/11 Commission.

Introducing Glenn Good, Commissioner of Corrections for New York State and the evening’s master of ceremonies, Governor Kean gave a speech that affected veteran P.B.B. supporters and newcomers alike with its passion, eloquence, and deep understanding of the many ways in which the program changes—and saves—lives.

The benefit raised $129,600 to further the work of P.B.B. Equally important, it was a warm-hearted, beautifully organized gathering that embodied the truth of one of Governor Kean’s most memorable lines: “Puppies Behind Bars is an organization for people who love people.”

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

Collar & Leash $25
Embroidered Puppy Jacket $50
Sponsor a Pup $3000
Puppy Food $100
Textbooks & Educational Supplies $250
Inmate Vet Assistant Course $700
Veterinary Care $500

P.B.B. needs your support!

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Soon after contacting P.B.B. instructor Lorraine Shirley, they made it happen. Since March 2004, the two women have been sharing the responsibility of picking up a dog at the Federal Correctional Institution at Danbury twice a month, bringing it to the senior center, supervising the visit, and driving it back. Between them, they have provided a group of isolated people with “the best medicine against loneliness” (in Hendrickson’s words), while the visits have been excellent socialization for the pups: new smells, new sights, and an exciting new place to explore.

Whether they’re strolling in the hallway or lounging in the senior center café, the pups are a healing, calming presence. “It causes spontaneous conversations [among the residents] about the dogs they had in the past and the love that was shared between them, and brings back many positive memories,” Tomanio reports. And, as Hendrickson points out, “We get all the joy of the dogs’ love without the tremendous responsibilities or worries of the day-to-day training and routines.”

E N R I C O F E R R E L I

Old Love New Love

Marie DeVito, Fran Hendrickson, and Susan “Elsa” Bradley enjoying the afternoon with a pup.

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He leaned his head into his owner’s hand who stroked the scruff of his neck. His tail wagged as we talked about how good-looking he is.

The new partner of another P.B.B.-raised pup named Amber could not stop smiling. He said that when they’re stopped, Amber often puts her right paw on his left foot, not taking it away until it’s alright to move again. The trainers at G.E.B. told him that although this move wasn’t part of the training program, it was fine because this was Amber’s way of keeping him safe. He wanted the inmates who raised Amber to know that “I thank them from the bottom of my heart. I couldn’t be happier. She’s lovely.”

The third P.B.B. pup graduating that day, Skip, was going to live in the Northwest with a young man who had already learned something special about his new guide dog: Skip was more interested in women than men. But, the young man said, “That’ll do just fine.”

As one of the drivers of the puppy shuttle, I’d had all three graduates—Grant, Amber, and Skip—as overnight guests. So when they recognized my voice, there was exuberant welcoming and I was covered in licks. Embarrassed that they were breaking discipline, I kept apologizing to the Guiding Eyes staff. That was okay, they said. The dogs were on lead [as opposed to in harness], so they knew they could be dogs for a few hours. And, after all, these are dogs that love...

If you’d been watching those newly bonded partners leave that graduation ceremony on January 22, you would have seen a once-rambunctious puppy, his attention fully concentrated on one man, turning his body with his paws to guide his owner back to their room. You would have seen the slow pace, the alert thinking. You would have seen Grant’s tail held high—and I would have dared you not to cry.

A sampling of the extensive media coverage P.B.B. has received since the last newsletter:

>>> “A New Leash on Life” was the title of Christina Cheakalos’s 6-page article on P.B.B. in the August issue of Smithsonian magazine. It explored in depth the process of inmates raising puppies in prison, and showed the purpose, self-respect, and hope the program provides. The equally powerful images, by noted photographer Enrico Ferorelli, documented a visit by guide-dog user Willi Richards and his dog, Victoria, to the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, where Victoria’s puppy-raiser, Mercedes Smith, is serving her sentence.

>>> New Yorkers were deeply touched by Dan Barry’s June 9 column in The New York Times about P.B.B.’s volunteer puppy-sitters, who play such an important role in the socialization of the dogs. More than 600 people contacted us after reading Barry’s story to express their interest in becoming part of the program.

>>> Bark’s winter issue focused on P.B.B. dogs visiting the elderly at the Danbury Senior Center, highlighting the work of program volunteers and Danbury Senior Center employees Fran Hendrickson and Susan Tomanio (see page 2). Bark also highlighted Toni and Tom Nagel-Smith’s experiences as volunteer puppy-sitters.

>>> On New Year’s Eve, the Spanish-language network Telemundo, Channel 47 in New York City, aired a piece on P.B.B. Filmed at the Mid-Orange prison, it brought the program’s work to the attention of a whole new audience.

>>> P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga was on “etown,” a weekly radio show that provides music, entertainment, and discussions for public and commercial stations. Her talk about P.B.B. was taped on January 23 before a live audience at the Boulder Theater in Boulder, Colorado, and aired on NPR stations across the country between February 23 through March 1.]

>>> Delta Airlines passengers can fasten their seat belts and get the P.B.B. story from Delta’s Sky inflight magazine. In a powerful article that begins by describing the intense emotional bond between inmate John and puppy Rudy, Mary Alice Kellogg writes, “This is not your typical man-meets-pup story, for John was raising Rudy specifically to let him go.”
NYLA-BONES, BERBER BONES, BOINGO BALLS... Who could ask for anything more? The puppies couldn’t, and their grandest wishes came true when volunteers at the Bedford Hills, Danbury, and Fishkill prisons conducted two holiday toy drives this winter. Barbara Schwartz, Carrie Moskowitz, Betty Lassi, and Sue Murray led the effort to make sure that there would be a lot of tail-wagging and thankful licks among the canine set.

STRONG NUMBERS In 2004, 87 percent of the P.B.B. dogs tested by Guiding Eyes for the Blind to determine if they were suited for acceptance into G.E.B.’s training program passed, while 96 percent of those tested by law enforcement agencies for professional training to become explosive-detection canines came through with flying colors. Congratulations to all the puppy raisers, sitters, instructors, and sponsors who have helped P.B.B. maintain such an extraordinary success rate year after year.

TEDDY’S LEGACY When Michael Martin, a longtime volunteer lost his beloved golden retriever, Teddy, to a massive stroke this winter, he sent an email to friends saying that if anyone wanted to honor Teddy they could make a donation to Puppies Behind Bars. Their tributes to this wonderful dog will help fund the training of other memorable pups.

MAKING THE TEAM After working for 40 years in New York’s garment center, Yvonne Torrentine decided it was time to retire, but she soon found she wasn’t cut out for a life of leisure. Looking for a job that would make her feel good at the end of the day, she is now working in P.B.B.’s office as the administrative assistant. A former puppy raiser at Mid-Orange prison, Jason has also joined P.B.B., to help train prospective New York City volunteers. Jason raised two pups: Rudy, who is now an explosive detection dog in Italy with the Italian National Police, and Chris, who was released for medical reasons and is now a happy pet.

DOGS FOR DEMOCRACY Both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions last summer were jobs for the pups of P.B.B.: Dignon, Sheeba, and Bowmann helped keep everyone safe in New York, while Eli worked security in Boston.

EXPRESS YOUR SUPPORT Choose Puppies Behind Bars as the charity of your choice on the American Express website. Visit www.americanexpress.com/give, and learn more about earning points while you donate.

JUST UNPACKED:
PBB has moved to new offices, steps away from Bryant Park and the lions at the Public Library. New address: 10 East 40th Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10016. New phone: (212) 680-9562. Same fax: (212) 689-9330.