



The National Enquirer

Doris Roberts: Let's send more puppies to prison!

By Rick Egusquiza
June 5, 2001

They're sending puppies to prison - and "Everybody Loves Raymond" star Doris Roberts doggedly supports the idea.

Doris, who plays Ray Romano's meddling mom, is a fervent backer of Puppies Behind Bars - a nonprofit organization which trains inmates to help turn the pooches into guide dogs for the blind.

"The whole thing began after a friend sponsored a dog and named it Doris after me," revealed the star in an exclusive ENQUIRER interview.

"That's how I got involved with this program which I think is extraordinary."

"I love Puppies Behind Bars because it's a win-win-win situation. You have prisoners interacting with a living creature that loves them. They learn focus, responsibility and self-esteem."

"And once a prisoner is released they have a new beginning - a skill - with which to get a fresh start. They're not sent back out into the real world and made to feel like they were thrown-away human beings.

"After a puppy is issued to an inmate, the prisoner cares for the pet for a period of 16 months. At the end of that time the dog is tested on basic skills and obedience. If the dog tests well, it then begins a second six-month training program to develop the specific skills needed to become a guide dog."

"And even if it doesn't make the cut, the dog is then given to a sightless child to keep as a pet. How can you lose in a program like that?"

"This whole idea began in the State of New York and is now being developed in other states."

"We're hoping it eventually will spread across the country and maybe even the world."

The Emmy-winning actress, who appeared on "Remington Steele" for four years, says she also embraced the program because her hectic schedule no longer leaves her sufficient time to care for a pet of her own.

"I had a wonderful dog for many years," Doris told The ENQUIRER.

"But these days I'm either on the set or out of town so much, my life has become so busy that it wouldn't be fair to the dog."



"But by keeping involved with Puppies Behind Bars I can still keep involved with our four-legged friends."

Though the cost to sponsor a puppy is about \$3,000, all contributions, no matter how small, are welcomed. Doris urges all ENQUIRER readers interested in Puppies Behind Bars to contact the organization at: Puppies Behind Bars, 99 Madison Ave., 2nd floor, New York, N.Y. 10016.

You can also visit the group's Web site: www.puppiesbehindbars.com.

"Please don't hesitate. It's a great cause. I recently sponsored another puppy and named him after my TV son Raymond," said Doris. "Soon we will have a puppy named for every member of the cast!"