

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS



PHOTOS BY VALERIE SHAF

Training Inmates to Raise Puppies to be Guide Dogs for the Blind

THE PUPPY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Winter 2000 / 2001

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Some Enchanted Evening

On the evening of November 1st, William and Katharine Rayner opened their East Side townhouse to 300 people who, if they weren't already Puppies

Behind Bars, supporters when they arrived, certainly had been converted by the time they left. The Rayners' guests, Brooke Astor among them, exclaimed

over guide-dog-in-training Joshua, who sat by one of the bars looking very dapper in his P.B.B. training jacket. They heard from former Bedford Hills puppy-raiser Susan Hallett, who spoke eloquently about what the program meant to her both while she was in prison and since her parole last spring. And they lined up

patiently and eagerly to meet photographer William Wegman, famous for his anthropomorphic portraits of his Weimaraner dogs. Wegman autographed a seemingly endless number of copies of his book *Fay* for the crowd (some of whom bought four or five), with a couple of his Weimaraners, Batty and her son Chip, at his feet, and generously donated the proceeds of his sales to P.B.B.

The Rayners

Board Member Joan

LaCaille with Ann

Phillips



Kathy Rayner with Batty



William Wegman and admirer Leslie Lee



Billy Rayner with his cuddly namesake

had visited the Bedford Hills prison last April, and immediately saw the value of the puppy-raising program. "They offered to host this gathering for

us, and to underwrite all the expenses," says P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga, "but we had no idea what an amazing evening it would be in terms of the response—the enthusiasm and the generosity. I don't know how

to express our gratitude to Billy and Kathy."

Well, Gilbert Stoga and the Benefit Committee (led by Mary Ascheim, Virginia

Gilbert, and Kathleen McGilvery) came up with two small ways to say thank you: a pair of puppies, named Billy and Kathy in honor of the Rayners, will be starting their guide-dog training soon. The evening netted more than \$75,000 in sorely needed funds for the program.

Oh So SOCIALIZING

Puppies Behind Bars has a second and unique mission: to get its puppies out from behind bars as much as possible. While prison inmates provide the primary, essential training for the first 18 months of the pups' lives, producing the best possible guide dogs requires exposure to the outside world as well. That's where the loyal, devoted men and women known as "weekend sitters" come in. Recently, two of them, Jeri Silverman and Marjorie Coeyman, shared their adventures in weekend puppy-sitting. They came at the job from different perspectives. Silverman, a senior director at Publishers Clearing House, lives in the country; Coeyman is a city-dweller. Silverman is a veteran owner of Labrador retrievers and an early P.B.B. supporter, while Coeyman, who had long wanted a dog, learned about the program just this spring when she reported on it for *The Christian Science Monitor*, where she is a staff writer.

Jeri Silverman's first puppy, Jamie, has already graduated from Guiding Eyes for the Blind and became a working guide dog in October. "She was my first little job," says Silverman, "and she was wonderful." But more wonderful than the dog was the discovery of how much the program did not only for the blind but also for the inmates. "I went to this orientation session at Bedford [women's prison]," Silverman recalls, "and here was this roomful of women who obviously had committed serious crimes. And I'm thinking, They look like normal people. And I kind of picked one of the inmates and I said to myself, 'She looks like the toughest one; I know she's the one that I'm going to get.'" She was right; the inmate in question was Jamie's raiser.

But in the months that followed, Silverman got to see the vulnerable person behind the inmate's tough exterior; "I saw this enormous change in someone's personality and their emotional level.... It really confirmed to me what this program was doing as a rehabilitation process for people who never had anything positive in their lives. To this day it is the thing that is uppermost in my mind, whenever I get a new dog ... just watching these women and knowing that this truly is the most rewarding thing they've ever done."

After years of owning Labs and taking them to obedience school, Silverman was more than prepared to cope with Jamie's minor misbehavior. "Probably the biggest

problem with her was pulling on lead, but she was really receptive to correction," she says. "She just fell into place real quickly.... Now, when I get back from my next big trip, I will get a new dog, Penny. And as far as Lisa [P.B.B. managing director Lisa Bruno] is concerned, there's only one bad thing about Penny and that's that she steals food right off the table." It's a good bet that after a few weekends with Silverman Penny will be cured of that habit.

As a New Yorker whose life didn't allow for full-time dog ownership, Coeyman says that "the chance to enjoy these lovely dogs on a part-time basis, and at the same time help a cause I found very worthy, was irresistible." But she found discipline one of the hardest parts of the job: "My natural tendency would probably be to spoil the dogs rotten, so it was very painful for me to have to stick to rules like keeping them off the furniture and not feeding them any people food. Koki [the younger of the two dogs she has taken] especially seemed to be longing to cuddle with me on the couch anytime I put the TV on. And I of course was longing to let her. But I had to remind myself that she is being trained for a special role in life and that any bending of the rules on my part would only confuse her later. It is also hard sometimes to be always requiring the dog to walk on your left."

Silverman and Coeyman each noted the adoring reactions other people had to the dogs, who accompany their week-end sitters everywhere: restaurants, stores, shopping malls, social gatherings. "Everybody in town knew Jamie," Silverman reports, "and if I walked into a store on the weekends I didn't have her, the response was 'Where's Jamie?' It was like this celebrity dog. I took her to work with me for one entire week, because we thought that would be a good experience.... She was truly a perfect, perfect dog. Just a joy. It was all this kind

of socialization and being around people—I would always have people over, dinner parties, cocktail parties, and she was great."

As Coeyman learned, "what's required of a sitter is fairly simple: To keep the dog with you as much as possible in order to give him or her a broad exposure to different aspects of life, to develop a positive, happy rapport with the dog, and to reinforce the routine and discipline the dog is used to." When Coeyman took her first dog, Doris, P.B.B. taught her how to walk the dog on the leash, how the bathroom routine worked, and the appropriate

standards of behavior, as well as explaining Doris's schedule and food requirements. "All I had to do to prepare was to buy a sleeping crate and the right kind of dog food," Coeyman says.

Her only initial concern was fitting a puppy into her complicated schedule. But she ended up taking Doris and Koki on weekdays as well as weekends, to the delight of her office colleagues. "I pretty much kept the dogs with me at all times," she says. "When I visited friends or family they came along. They took trips with me in the car. They came to church with me on

Sundays. (They were good as gold and everybody loved them!) The one thing to warn puppy sitters about is that when you go out with the dog you will become an instant celebrity. If the dog wears its P.B.B. jacket, prepare for the fact that literally dozens of people will want to talk to you and ask questions. Even without the jacket the dogs are so beautiful that they attract attention and questions. I still can hardly get in the elevator of my office building without someone asking me about either Doris or Koki."

Both women praised the quality of the two-hour training and orientation session, and the flexibility of the program, even as they emphasized the commitment needed to be a successful weekend sitter. Silverman works on Long Island, drives to the Bedford prison to pick up her dog

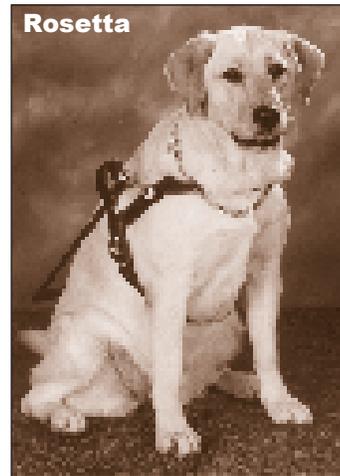
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PHOTO BY DOUG YOUNG

New Graduates, New School, New Jersey: The Pups' Progress

Jamie and Rosetta, yellow Lab sisters, are the latest P.B.B. dogs to successfully complete their training as guide dogs. They are the first of our puppies to graduate from Guiding Eyes for the Blind, in Yorktown Heights, N.Y., and both are going to blind women on the East Coast. (A third sister, Brenda, became a companion to an 11-year-old blind child in February.) Jamie was raised at the Bedford Hills women's prison until she was 11 months old, then was moved to the Fishkill men's prison for her final seven months. Rosetta was raised entirely at Fishkill. Congratulations to the puppy-raisers at both prisons. Nine puppies are being raised currently at Bedford Hills and nine at Fishkill. (Joining the pack at Fishkill in September was a puppy named Raymond, sponsored by Doris Roberts, star of the hit CBS comedy series *Everyone Loves Raymond*.)



P.B.B. is also preparing to expand to a third facility, the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility in Clinton, New Jersey. Edna Mahan, which is the state's only women's prison, has 1,200 inmates in maximum,

medium, and minimum security facilities. P.B.B. will choose inmate puppy-raisers in January, start classes in February, and the puppies, five in all, will arrive at the prison in March.

In addition, P.B.B. has started to work with a third guide-dog school, Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, in Smithtown, L.I, as well as Guiding Eyes for the Blind, which supported the program from the very beginning, and Guide Dogs of America, in California.

Socializing

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from the inmate puppy-raiser, then heads home—sometimes spending as much as three hours on the road. “Some people take different dogs on different weekends, and I felt I needed to bond with one dog, and feel comfortable with the animal, to train it or whatever needed to be done,” she explains. “But you know, you can have a different dog, you don't have to do a weekend, you can do a day, you can do an afternoon. And I was really committed to it. Of late, I'm travelling a lot on business, so I'm not going to have a dog now until the begin-

ning of next month. And that, for me, is a long time, because I was used to having a dog at least every other weekend.”

Coeyman described how the pups “filled my days with so much warmth and gentle entertainment. They have gentle, loving natures, which make them easy to love and easy to deal with. It was a sweet thing to wake up and find a dog waiting in the crate, tail thumping, full of love and joy.” And Silverman's appreciation for Jamie was summed up in a single sentence: “She would just give her heart to you.” Still, Silverman was surprised how deeply she missed the dog when the time came for Jamie to go to Guiding Eyes for the Blind. She had taken Jamie every other

weekend for about eight months, and recalls that “Everybody kept saying, ‘How are you are going to feel when you have to give her up?’ And I'd say, ‘Oh, I don't see her that much, it's not going to be that big a deal, and she's going to go on and do this wonderful thing.’ But, oh, no. P.B.B. just sent me a picture of her, like a graduation picture of her in her harness just sitting there, this perfect Lab. I opened up the envelope and tears were running down my face.”

— By Suzanna Andrews and Elise O'Shaughnessy

Donation Form

I would like to be a SURROGATE OWNER of a puppy (minimum donation: \$3000.)

Please accept my donation for:

- 1 puppy's weekend visit to NYC (\$25) A sleeping crate for 1 puppy (\$85)
 Leashes and bowls for 1 puppy (\$50) Other amount

Please charge my card:

Visa MasterCard AmEx
 (Please list name as it appears on card. List billing address.)

Number: _____ Exp: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State & Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Please mail your tax-deductible contribution with this form to:
Puppies Behind Bars • 99 Madison Avenue, 2nd Floor • New York, NY 10016

EYES on the PRIZE

William D. Badger has been president and C.E.O. of Guiding Eyes for the Blind, in Yorktown Heights, N.Y., since 1993. He doesn't appear to be suffering from any seven-year itch, however, and spoke with pride to P.B.B. board member Elise O'Shaughnessy about the guide-dog school he runs and its partnership with P.B.B. There are about ten guide-dog schools in America, graduating close to 1,500 dogs each year for a potential population of guide-dog users that is projected at about 30,000. (At present, there are roughly 10,000 people using guide dogs.) Guiding Eyes for the Blind, which graduates roughly 160 student-dog teams annually, has three programs: its month-long onsite training, home training, and a special-needs program—unique to G.E.B.—that trains dogs for blind people with additional problems such as deafness or impaired balance.

Guiding Eyes was founded in 1954, and is a non-profit organization, providing guide-dogs at no cost to the blind. Two P.B.B. puppies, Rosetta and Jamie, who were donated by Guiding Eyes and returned to the school to complete their training, graduated to become working guide dogs this fall.

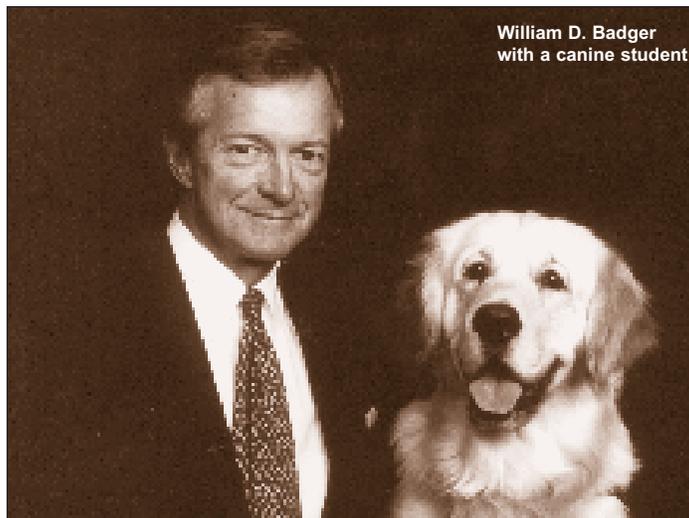
P.B.B.: What makes a good guide dog?

W.D.B.: The number one thing would be confidence. The dog must have a very strong, confident personality. It cannot be distractable. Then the dog has to have sufficient size and health. All of our dogs come from our own breeding colony, so we know exactly what the genetics are. We have one of the finest lines—if not the finest line—of Labrador retrievers in the world. But just like different children within the same family, dogs within the same litter may have different behaviors.... Some dogs are very confident; others are very soft and less than confident. They make wonderful pets, but they don't make particularly appropriate guide dogs.

P.B.B.: How do you feel about the Puppies Behind Bars program?

W.D.B.: It's been a real beautiful experi-

ence to see how that program has grown. We're just very, very proud to be associated with it and to be able to provide what we do from our side, which is the puppies they work with.... I think the relationship that has worked out between our breeding center and our puppy program director and Gloria and Lisa [P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga and managing director Lisa Bruno] has been very good. We're at the point right now where we want to take into our program all of the dogs that come out of the [P.B.B.] program that pass our training standards. Originally we started



out with the understanding that we would donate [P.B.B. dogs] to other schools until we were confident that all aspects of the [P.B.B.] program were going to meet our standards. And that certainly has proven to be the case in terms of Gloria building up her side of the program. We get involved, of course, in the area of the training regimen, but we have learned things as well. For instance, that puppies raised in the prison environment are exceptionally well-behaved. They probably get more attention than the typical puppies raised in the traditional families. Because of that, we have evolved a part of the program where we have some of the [prison] puppies stay with [traditional family] raisers to get a little more of the socialization they can't get in prison, and conversely, some of the puppies that are being raised with [family] raisers that need a bit more discipline are then

placed in prison, on sort of an exchange-student basis, in order to benefit from the extra training and attention they get from the inmates. It's being called the "Socialization Exchange Program." We're finding it adds another dimension to the puppies' maturation and development. So it has kind of that complimentary effect. And that program is very new. Our people, Lee [Nordin] and Jane [Russenberger], have been developing it with Lisa and Gloria.

P.B.B.: Do you think that guide-dog users are more comfortable now with the idea of guide dogs raised in prison than they were when we started three years ago?

W.D.B.: Yes, I really do. We've talked about it a lot with our students as we got into the prison puppy program, because we

wanted to make sure we were getting really good feedback and that there were no anxieties or any negatives that they were going to perceive by a dog being raised in prison. We had a lot of discussions about this right up front with Gloria, and she even asked me to address it in front of some of the prisoners. We were concerned that it might be looked at by some as a negative, only because of what it might do for their life in the future, once they had graduated with the dog: whether there would be any problem or any concern of, say, one of the inmates possibly wanting to

stay in touch and the person not wanting to have that kind of contact. So we were sensitive to that. But over the past few classes

where we have had [prison] puppies that we had brought into our training program, we have discussed this with incoming students very frankly—that we do have dogs in the program that were trained in prison, and we just want [the students] to be aware,

and if anyone has any concerns to express them to us and we'll make sure we're not assigning them one of those dogs. And we've had absolutely no negatives on that to date. So I think that just through word of mouth and the other communications grapevines that exist out there among the blind population, the guide-dog user population, I think the word has gotten around

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"We're just very, very proud to be associated with Puppies Behind Bars and to provide the puppies they work with."

—William D. Badger

WE'RE PSYCHED

Iams, which supplies all the dog food for Puppies Behind Bars, has completed a groundbreaking survey, conducted at the Fishkill men's prison, which measured the program's impact on the psychological well-being of the inmates. The study was designed by Dr. Jeffrey Kleinberg of the Post-Graduate Mental Health Center in Manhattan, and was conducted using two groups of inmates. Each group—one consisting of puppy-raisers, the other of inmates who did not participate in the program—took an initial psychological test, then was tested again 18 months later. The group of inmates who had spent the intervening year and a half in the P.B.B. program showed a distinct and qualitative improvement in their wellbeing, Dr. Kleinberg found. They were happier, more compassionate, and more optimistic; they felt more responsible, and that they were in a position to effect change in their lives. The men in the control group showed no such change in outlook.

CHASE SCENE

For a second year, Chase Manhattan Bank included P.B.B. in the roster of charities for its Global Day of Service, an annual event that encourages employees to volunteer. Seventeen Chase employees came to the Bedford Hills women's prison on Saturday, October 28th, at 8 a.m. They met the inmate puppy-raisers, had a 2-hour training session, and then took 13 puppies into New York or New Jersey for the weekend. Many of the Chase volunteers said they enjoyed the experience so much that they wanted to become regular sitters.

DOGS AND DRIVER

P.B.B. wants to hire a driver to take four or five puppies roundtrip between the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility and New York City one or two weekends a month. The dogs must be picked up at the prison on Friday night or Saturday morning, delivered to their weekend sitters at a central location in Manhattan, and returned on Sunday afternoon. We need someone with a clean driving record who is willing to learn how to handle the pups. If you are interested, please e-mail info@puppiesbehindbars.com.

PUPS IN PRINT

As usual, P.B.B. has gotten quite a bit of good press in the last few months. The Christian Science Monitor ran a lengthy feature story on August 16, written by Marjorie Coeyman (see story on page 2) with photographs by Melanie Stetson Freeman. Westchester Family magazine ran an interview with a family that does weekend sitting. And in its winter issue, Animal Fair magazine profiled P.B.B. in a section on charitable organizations that work with animals. Audiences in Europe are learning about the program too: BBC radio interviewed P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga for its American news roundup on October 26, and the popular French TF1 television show "Thirty Million Friends," which is all about animals, came to film segments at both prisons this fall; they hope to pave the way for P.B.B.-type programs in France.

BONES for the HOLIDAYS

The holidays are coming; your list of friends, colleagues, and family is long. Why not give a donation to Puppies Behind Bars in honor of your loved ones? We will send each recipient an attractive card with holiday greetings and the information that a generous donation has been made in his or her name.

For dog-lovers, or simply for people who know a good idea when they see one, P.B.B. has a great range of gifts: as in the past, you can send a Playful Puppy Package for \$10. This year, for \$25, our corporate friends can send elegantly printed cards advising their clients that a donation has been made on their behalf. And a signed copy of Fay, William Wegman's book of photographs of his Weimaraners, is available for donations over \$100.

This holiday season, instead of buying more stuff, give a present that is worth a great deal more—in human happiness and community service—than its price tag.

**For more information call
(212) 924-7404.**

**P.B.B. now accepts
credit card donations.**

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS

99 Madison Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10016

Eyes on the Prize

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that prison-trained dogs, providing that they are done properly, can be very good guide dogs. So I don't think that's any longer a concern.

P.B.B.: The majority of your dogs are raised how?

W.D.B.: There are about 600 families up and down the East Coast that raise dogs for us, from Maine down to the Carolinas. And this is through a very well-controlled and organized network of puppy-raisers that we have evaluated out in the field and we have area coordinators. It's really a field-force, if you will, that stays in very active contact with the puppy-raising families and oversees exactly how the puppies are being raised and makes sure that they are being raised through our proper protocols and evaluates the dogs monthly even while they are being raised. So it's a huge volunteer program among people who are without a doubt the most selfless individuals that I've ever met, that give their time and their energies and their families. They are raising the puppies for us only to return them, to give them up.

P.B.B.: Is it harder to find those families than it used to be?

W.D.B.: The answer is yes. We have such a large base now that to expand upon that is always more difficult. Especially when you've got the demographics the way they are and you've got multiple wage-earners in a household. It's just not that easy any longer to find that kind of environment or that kind of volunteer that wants to make such a total commitment. The puppy raisers in various regions conduct their own recruiting awareness efforts to try to attract new people and fortunately they've been able to supply all the puppy raisers that we need. But we can never have too many. That's one of the very interesting things about the P.B.B. program, that it allows us to in effect have a mini-district of puppy raisers using these prison facilities.

P.B.B.: You've been to Bedford Hills and Fishkill—what were your impressions and what was different from what you expected?

W.D.B.: I had a lot of reactions. I visited Bedford first, and that of course is a dramatically different situation than Fishkill, because of the inmates being women and because of the "cottage" living-quarters conditions, which I hadn't really expected. It seemed so non-prison-like to me. I was struck by the total commitment and dedica-

tion of these inmates and the real genuine affection and pride they felt in what they were doing. It was easy to become oblivious to the fact that these are convicted criminals, because they seemed like anybody on the outside you might run into, talking about puppies or dogs or something like that. I was struck by the ordinariness of the people there: they were just like us, just like you and me, except that obviously they weren't leaving that place. And when you think of the surroundings, the bleakness in the outlook on life—boy, these puppies really mean so much to them, and being able to have something that they can have some pride in, have some requited love from. It really was very moving. I was very impressed by what I saw there.

Similarly, in the Fishkill men's prison, I'd expected much more of the stereotypical prison personality. But, again, I thought these guys were just gentle, nice people. Obviously they'd committed very serious crimes, and they were there and, again, feeling like they were making a contribution, doing something worthwhile. And the thing that struck me, especially with the men, is that Gloria tolerates no lack of focus or anybody shortcutting. And in the discussions that we had with them, it was immediately clear to me the amount of respect that Gloria—and now Lisa too—commanded from the inmates. These are fairly large men with a difficult past, and the way in which she spoke to them and the way in which they responded to her—she is absolutely and completely in control here—they know it, and they respond accordingly. Obviously they're doing something that benefits us, benefits the blind. The reason for them being there is an issue that you just have to totally separate from what they are doing. And the fact is that they are human beings, with compassion, and they are trying to do something productive with the time they have to spend there for as long as that might be.

P.B.B.: Anything else that you'd like to tell us?

W.D.B.: I just would like to add that the response that everybody here at the school, at Guiding Eyes, has had to the program—across all departments that I've come into contact with—has been nothing but completely positive and enthusiastic. We're just pleased to be part of it and about the fact that we're partnering with it.

PUPPIES by the Hour

Ever wished you could go for a morning walk with your dog—but you don't have one? Felt the need for canine companionship at the end of a lousy day? As an extension of its weekend puppy-sitting program, P.B.B. is recruiting "short-term" sitters to take the dogs out of prison for an hour or several hours. If you live near one of the three prison facilities, and are willing to pick up and return the dog, you can have the joy of spending time with a puppy without worrying about feeding or sleeping arrangements. Contact Lisa Bruno, lisa@puppiesbehindbars.com, to find out about the training session and other requirements.

Becoming a Board

As the sharp-eyed will have noted from the front page of this newsletter, P.B.B. has a new Board of Directors: Burt Ehrlich; Lori Gevalt; Glenn Goord, commissioner, New York State Department of Correctional Services; Joan LaCaille, managing director at Ashforth Warburg Associates; Elise O'Shaughnessy, contributing editor to Vanity Fair and Wired magazines; Susan Segal, general partner of Chase Capital Partners. With the exception of Glenn Goord and Elise O'Shaughnessy, who have moved onto the board of directors, the stellar line-up of P.B.B.'s Advisory Board remains the same.

CAR TALK

Would anyone like to take over the last 20 months of P.B.B.'s lease on a 1999 Chevy Blazer? The payments are \$295 a month, and P.B.B. will cover all the costs associated with assuming the lease. It would be a cost-efficient way to acquire a temporary car, for a son or daughter who's going off to college, say, or for weekend use.

ROOM SERVICE

We're desperately seeking office space in New York City, either on a pro bono basis or at below-market rent. P.B.B. needs room for four employees. If you can help, please email gloria@puppiesbehindbars.com or call 212-924-7404.