

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS

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PHOTOS BY ENRICO FERRELLI

TRAINING INMATES TO RAISE PUPPIES TO BE GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND
AND EXPLOSIVE-DETECTION CANINES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

THE PUPPY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Spring 2005

FOLLOW THAT LAB!

PART FOUR: *In Which Grant Becomes A Guide Dog*

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.

Stomping the snow off our boots, a group of twenty gathered in a room on a cold winter morning at Guiding Eyes for the Blind, one of the nation's top guide-dog schools, in Yorktown Heights, New York. All eyes were on the door to the left. Then, pair by pair, the graduating class of January 2005 entered. Each blind human and his Labrador guide walked across the room and stood in front of a chair.

The room was almost full. Then finally he appeared: big, handsome, spirited Grant, now the picture of serenity as he concentrated on getting a tall man to his seat.

As the name of each team was announced, the person sat and the dog slid his body under the chair. There was a whole line of black Labs facing in the same direction, like parked cars. And there was one yellow one: Grant, lying perpendicular to the rest of the row. No matter. He was settled with

his body touching his owner's leg. They were perfect together.

His owner lives in a small town in the Midwest. "Not much of a town," he said, "but it does have sidewalks." He came to Guiding Eyes

because a friend got his Lab there. "I watched them and it convinced me. I don't know why I waited so long [to get a guide-dog]," he said, "This boy is the best thing. I should've done this years ago."

One of the Guiding Eyes trainers said that because of all the snow and salt they had trained this group with the pups wearing booties. "Well, you just try getting boots on all four paws of an extremely interested Labrador!"

Somehow you knew Grant and his human were going to work out. The owner was even wearing a sweatshirt with a picture of a big yellow Lab on it.

"Grant and I are getting on a plane this week and he's going to live in our house where there's another dog," he said. "He and I are working on this together. We're getting a good routine down."

The newly slimmed-down Grant was sitting at his owner's side, not eating the cake in front of his nose. (Some may remember that one of Grant's big problems growing up was his love of food.)

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On January 22, 2005, Grant graduated as a guide dog.

BEDS, BARK, & BEYOND

A GAINST 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

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 cock-

tail hour by people wanting to thank him for his service to the nation as chairman of the 9/11 Commission.

Introduced by **Glenn Goord**, 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."*

OLD LOVE
NEW LOVE



Marie DeVito, Fran Hendrickson, and Susan "Ella" Bradley enjoying the afternoon with a pup.

P EOPLE SMILE. PEOPLE LAUGH. Barriers come down." That's how Susan Tomanio, director of elderly services for the City of Danbury, describes the effect of visits by P.B.B. puppies to the Danbury Senior Center. Last year, Tomanio and Fran Hendrickson, who is the coordinator for the senior center, decided to volunteer with Puppies Behind Bars, in hopes of bringing the dogs to the elderly. "We felt this was very important to our senior clients: to be able to relate to a dog and enjoy the warm, fuzzy, loving relationship," says Hendrickson.

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."

Watching the success of the senior center visits in Danbury, Puppies Behind Bars has teamed up with the New York City Department for the Aging to organize similar visits to the homebound elderly in Manhattan. "I hope this will become yet another important way in which our dogs help make the world a better place," says P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga.

ENRICO FERORELLI



More than 400 supporters gathered for Bowhaus 2004. The benefit raised \$129,600.

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 Scalamandre'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

P.B.B. needs your support!

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

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."



Skip (above) and Amber (top).

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."

PUPS IN PRINT

DONATION FORM

I would like to sponsor and name a puppy (minimum donation: \$3000.)

Please accept my donation for:

- 1 puppy's weekend visit to NYC (\$35)
- A sleeping crate for 1 puppy (\$85)
- Leashes and bowls for 1 puppy (\$50)
- Other amount

Please charge my credit card:

- Visa
- MasterCard
- AmEx

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

Card Number: _____ Exp: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Add my friend to your mailing list

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

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Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Please mail your tax-deductible contribution with this form to:

Puppies Behind Bars • 10 East 40th Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10016

PAWS FOR APPLAUSE

>>> **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 Turrentine** 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.**

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS

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