



Rescue dogs get second chance with help from inmates at Larch Corrections Center

Posted: Apr 18, 2017 5:41 PM PDT

Updated: Apr 18, 2017 10:36 PM PDT

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CONNECT



CLARK COUNTY, WA (KPTV) -

Some shelter dogs in Southwest Washington are getting a second chance at a normal life, but it starts with a trip to prison.

The Humane Society of Southwest Washington has teamed up with Larch Corrections Center in Yacolt to allow inmates to train dogs with behavioral issues in order to make them more attractive to families looking to adopt.

"It's definitely a win-win," said Jennifer Rylander, who supervises the program for the humane society. "The dogs get a second chance. The handlers get the opportunity to learn some life skills."

The dogs learn simple commands, like "sit" and "stay," and the men who train them spend 24 hours a day with them for six weeks.

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"I know the animals needed love. I knew that I was able to provide that. Maybe learn some responsibility," said Demetrius Route, who has served 12 years for murder.



Route, who qualified for the training program because of his good behavior while serving his time, sees the program as a transition in his life.

"It give me the satisfaction also of knowing I can care for someone other than myself," said Route. "And that's big for me because I've taken so much away, I want to give back now."

Christopher Baker has served three and a half years for violating a no-contact order. Like the other handlers, Baker is close to finishing his sentence. But for right now, he spends all of his time with a dog named Max.

"I feel like I'm doing something better with my time, as far as being able to go home and take care of my kids, my family the way I care for him," said Baker.

Larch Corrections Center launched the dog training program back in August, 2016.

So far, 15 dogs have gone through the program, and all of them have found new homes.

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