



Prison Pet Partnership in Gig Harbor Expands Service Dog Training Program

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“By accepting purpose-bred dogs to train as service dogs, the program can rescue more animals from area shelters that would make good pets, but do not have the temperament for service work.” PPP Executive Beth Rivard. Photo from Prison Pet Partnership.

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Last month, the [Tacoma News Tribune](#) reported that the [Prison Pet Partnership \(PPP\)](#) at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCD) in Gig Harbor **will begin training dogs specifically bred to be service dogs.**

As I’ve written before, several Washington prisons have programs where offenders train dogs facing euthanization in local shelters.

Some of the programs also train therapy and service dogs to assist humans.

And we adopted our dog [Haley](#) from the [Freedom Tails Program](#) at Stafford Creek Correctional Center in Aberdeen.

The Prison Pet Partnership is the oldest of these programs. **It began in 1981** as the result of a collaborative effort between Sister Pauline, a Dominican nun, and the late Dr. Leo Bustad, former chair of Washington State University’s veterinary program.

Sister Pauline believed that **“inmate rehabilitation could be facilitated by the human-animal bond.”**

https://www.seattledogspot.com/prison-pet-partnership-service-dog-program/?fbclid=IwAR1HCKWytK_RI5HzhUZWz9JKIkp3SynGCfOI1OY4H-XOTXfLmEa1nrH6w

In addition to training dogs, **offenders in the PPP board and groom dogs from the public.** They also learn clerical skills by working in the organization's office.

"Grooming is a really decent, livable-wage job," PPP Executive Director Beth Rivard said. "It's definitely something they can do not only here but also when they get out of here."

Offenders must stay in the program a minimum to two years to get the experience they need to find a job in the per service industry after they leave WCCW.

Before its announcement last month, **PPP trained shelter dogs into service dogs** that provided critical help to "individuals who experience seizures, those who live with various illnesses such as Multiple Sclerosis, and those who have multiple disabilities by assisting them in their daily activities and giving them increased independence."

In its announcement, PPP announced it will begin "accepting purpose-bred dogs to train as service dogs." Ms. Rivard also noted that "by accepting purpose-bred dogs to train as service dogs, the program can rescue more animals from area shelters that would make good pets, but do not have the temperament for service work."

This is great news. PPP has been wildly successful for 35 years and a model for other prisons that started similar programs.

I'm sure this new program will be fantastic.

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