



## Program lets inmates train therapy dogs in Spokane

Stephanie Stevenson Apr 18, 2019



"Prison is a very gray, dark environment at times, razor wire, thick concrete," Tom Mason, inmate at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center, said.

And then, came a flash of white, in the form of a poodle named Bentley. The two-year-old dog had been deserted. These last six weeks started and ended the same for Bentley, behind bars.



See the video at [https://www.khq.com/program-lets-inmates-train-therapy-dogs-in-spokane/video\\_770994dc-623e-11e9-927e-d70bee8683dc.html](https://www.khq.com/program-lets-inmates-train-therapy-dogs-in-spokane/video_770994dc-623e-11e9-927e-d70bee8683dc.html)

[https://www.khq.com/news/program-lets-inmates-train-therapy-dogs-in-spokane/article\\_2d1d9956-6219-11e9-b111-eb5aa863935d.html](https://www.khq.com/news/program-lets-inmates-train-therapy-dogs-in-spokane/article_2d1d9956-6219-11e9-b111-eb5aa863935d.html)

Bentley went from being un-adoptable, behind the bars of a shelter, to finding his new home behind bars at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.

"The dogs live with them 24/7, from the minute they come in, to the minute they leave," Valerie Turner, Ridge Dogs coordinator, said.

Bentley would spend his entire day with the men in khaki, who taught him more than 20 commands.

"He rangers from sitting, to hugging, rolling over, he even dances," Kendra Mullins, Ridge Dogs coordinator, said.

But then, a special request came for this little guy. The Northwest Counseling Center in Spokane needed a therapy dog, which is something this group hasn't trained for before, but Bentley was up for the task.

The inmates trained Bentley how to comfort people in counseling sessions. If someone is getting a brain scan, or Neurology and biofeedback sessions, Bentley can lay with them and help calm a client's nerves.

The best part, Bentley now gets to work with up to 40 people a day, and that's on top of all the men he's already impacted.

"He's brought laughter, joy, and smiles to everyone he's been associated with," Mason said.

The Coyote Ridge Dogs program has trained more than 5,000 dogs since 2007, and more than 200 men have become handlers.

"A lot of the trainers, who are the inmates, have actually said that this program saves them," Turner, said.

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Bentley was given a second chance after no one wanted him, and now, he gets to help hundreds of people, with just a wag of his tail.

If you're interested in adopting a comfort dog, you can visit the Ridge Dogs Facebook page and see who's next to be adopted: <https://www.facebook.com/Ridge-Dogs-219301358080610/>