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For Immediate Release...

Corrections News

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DOC announces partnership with Bridle Ridge at Potosi graduation

POTOSI – Today the Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC) announced a new partnership with Bridle Ridge Acres at its Puppies for Parole graduation held at the Potosi Correctional Center (PCC). Bridle Ridge Acres is a 45-acre campus located in Hillsboro. It is owned and operated by Community Treatment Inc. (COMTREA). Bridle Ridge, a new comprehensive health center, will offer general practice medical care, dental care for children, equine and canine therapy, behavioral health care, mental health care, substance abuse care and family therapy.

"We are very pleased to forge this new relationship with COMTREA's Bridle Ridge," said DOC Director George Lombardi. "This partnership coincides with the mission of Puppies for Parole, interdicting the euthanization of healthy animals by finding them a higher purpose. Since the program's inception, it's always been a vision of mine to have our offenders train dogs for those with special needs. This partnership is a natural fit for us, and I hope it serves as a catalyst for many other relationships with organizations that assist those with special needs."

Through Puppies for Parole, offender handlers at PCC bring shelter dogs through several steps of training to prepare them for adoption. From those that complete the program, specially chosen dogs will go through additional training from professionals to be used for canine therapy at Bridle Ridge. Certain selected dogs will also be offered to nursing homes, schools, hospitals and other institutions.

Those dogs selected for canine therapy with COMTREA will aid with autistic children, wounded veterans, troubled children, mentally ill, victims of domestic violence and others.

Judy Finnegan, COMTREA Associate Vice President said, "Animal Assisted Intervention is a promising frontier in health and mental health. We are so pleased that through our partnership with the Department of Corrections, COMTREA will have specially trained "helper dogs" that will benefit many in our community. It seems like this partnership completes a circle: a dog is saved – a dog is trained and a person in need is helped."

DOC strives to reduce recidivism through the Missouri Reentry Process and programs such as Puppies for Parole and Restorative Justice.

"These important and necessary programs help offenders connect to something outside of themselves," Lombardi explained. "Altruism is a key component of successful reentry to society. When offenders learn altruism through these types of programs, it significantly reduces the chance they will return to prison."

Puppies for Parole began during Lombardi's tenure as director in February 2010. It began at one prison with only a few dogs and has since spread to 19 prisons across the state and boasts more than 1,300 dog adoptions. The program specializes in saving unwanted, often disabled, shelter dogs from euthanization and giving them socialization and obedience training to make them more adoptable.

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