

# Puppy Tales

## DAVISS COUNTY DETENTION CENTER SERVES AS K9 FOSTER HOME

**D**aviess County Detention Center has gone to the dogs. In fact, seven four-legged residents wander the halls and dorms of Building B at the detention center. There's bossy Bull, shy Mary, hungry Pilot, energetic Big Tony, inquisitive Arianna, big guy Jake and wandering Kennedy, all living in the dorms with the 35 inmates in the jail's Substance Abuse Program.

The canine program is one of several successful components of the GOALS Substance Abuse Program. According to its director Linda Welch, the GOALS program emphasizes the positive abilities of inmates while remaining focused on substance abuse issues. This particular GOALS program provides foster care for dogs from S.P.A.R.K.Y. (Saving Paws Animal Rescue in Kentucky), a not-for-profit, no-kill animal rescue based in Daviess County.

"The canine program allows inmates to care for another living being," Welch said. Each of the six dorms has a dog that lives with the Class C & D inmates 24 hours a day, Welch explained. "Many of the dogs come from less than desirable circumstances and need lots of tender loving care. The inmates are responsible for all of the needs of the dogs and to train them so they are ready for adoption."

Since the first of this year, SPARKY has placed 16 dogs with the DCDC GOALS program. The inmates seem to enjoy their canine companions, who provide a little of the comfort of home.

"Having the dogs around makes me happy," said inmate Keith, as he gave the "sit" command to Big Tony, a small, black lab puppy. "The dogs give us their love."

Another inmate, Kevin, said taking care of the dogs is almost like parenting. "We attend classes on caring for and training the dogs," he said. "They relieve some of the stress."

Jailer David Osborne said, "The dogs do provide a certain amount of therapy for the inmates and, at the same time, teach them responsibilities that they've never acquired."

Osborne initiated the K9 program five ago, after finding a neglected mixed breed on the street. Named Bull, this dog has become a lifetime resident of the jail and has been adopted as the program's mascot.

"Bull has been with the program from the start and has actually graduated off the stage at all 25 previous graduations – he is a healer and just naturally bosses and keeps the other dogs in line," said Osborne.

"One of the inmates said that Bull received a lifelong sentence," joked Welch.

### A CALL FOR HELP

In early February, the Daviess County Animal Center issued a call for help. Four distressed newborn puppies, whose mother became critically ill shortly after their birth, were in need of 24-hour care. Since the DCDC substance abuse program inmates were already experts at caring for dogs in need of love, attention and training, Jailer Osborne answered the call.

The director of the Daviess County Animal Shelter brought the puppies to the jail and taught the men how to bottle feed, clean and care for the tiny dogs. The puppies were from a litter of 10 and two had already died.

After numerous two-hour feedings, daily baths and lots of TLC, three of the puppies showed improvement. The littlest one was unable to take the bottle and did not survive. The inmates gave her the name Neveah, "heaven" spelled backwards.

But the other female puppy, Serenity and the two males, Big Tony and Rebos ("sober" spelled backwards) slept in cozy blanket-lined totes under the bunks of their primary caregivers. As their eyes opened and their strength grew, the tiny four-legged visitors ventured into their dorms and into the hearts of the inmates.

Osborne said, "Our K9 program is truly a win-win situation for both the inmates and the dogs, helping the inmates become better, more responsible people while at the same time saving the dogs' lives by training them into desirable pets for adoption."

As the late "Peanuts" cartoon creator Charles Schulz summed it up: "Happiness is a warm puppy." ■

