

Inmates at Daviess County Detention Center are caring for litter of pups



Photos by John Dunham, Messenger-Inquirer/jdunham@messenger-inquirer.com, 926-0123

Jeff Mayes holds a Labrador mix puppy after the dog's nap time Thursday afternoon at the Daviess County Detention Center. The 35 inmates in the substance abuse program have cared for the seven puppies who were recently orphaned. "Their mom was killed," Mayes said. "She was hit by a car." The puppies are up for adoption, but the lone white pup is already spoken for.

Unexpected Guests



Chaz Ross pats one of the pups while it playfully gnaws on his sneaker Thursday afternoon at the Daviess County Detention Center. The inmates have been caring for the puppies since the day before Thanksgiving.

BY JAMES MAYSE
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

The inmate roster in the Daviess County Detention Center's substance abuse program got more crowded recently when the 35 inmates in the program found themselves hosting a litter of hungry puppies.

The puppies arrived the day before Thanksgiving. Since then, the inmates have been feeding the puppies, and cleaning up after them, in anticipation of the dogs eventually being adopted out to good homes.

The detention center is already the temporary home to several adult dogs that are

available for adoption through Saving Paws Animal Rescue of Kentucky. One dog — a rotund red heeler named Bull — lives at the jail's substance abuse building full-time.

The seven Labrador mix puppies came to the jail after they were found, motherless, at the county landfill.

"Their mom got hit by a car," said Scott Sparks, a member of the substance abuse program's dog crew, which supervises the care and training of the dogs.

"They were like the landfill's mascots," said inmate Chaz Ross.

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GUESTS

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Since their arrival, the inmates have been taking turns cleaning up poop, training the puppies and feeding them every three hours — day and night.

“Once they wake up, they’re definitely ready” to eat, Sparks said. “We have to wake up at 2 or 3 in the morning and again at 6 — kind of like having a baby at home.”

“It’s an around-the-clock job,” said Clint Mclimore, supervisor of the dog crew.

Linda Welch, director of the jail’s substance abuse program, said the puppies will eventually be adopted out through SparKy after they are potty trained by the inmates. The puppies will also receive their shots and be spayed or neutered by a veterinarian before they are placed for adoption.

“We have six dogs all the time,” Welch said. The dogs teach the inmates caregiving skills — which are skills some of the inmates never learned or lost due to their struggle

with drug or alcohol addiction, Welch said.

“It’s learning to take care of another being,” Welch said. “A lot of the dogs come in with some really bad behaviors, so a big thing is socializing the dogs.”

“As addicts, it kind of gets us ready to be out,” Sparks said. “It teaches you and gets you ready for parenting.”

“It has helped me to care for (others),” Mclimore said. “When I was out there, I wasn’t caring for myself or anybody else.” Working with the dogs and puppies “gets me out of myself,” Mclimore said.

Because some of the dogs the program receives from SparKy were rescued from abusive homes, the inmates are required to be gentle with the dogs — which greatly improves the chances the dogs will later be successfully adopted.

“Our dogs are treated with a lot of respect here,” Welch said. “(Inmates) aren’t allowed to yell at them or cuss at them.”

Inmates aren’t required to work closely with the dogs if they have a

canine aversion, but the inmates in the program must interact with the dogs at least somewhat, Welch said. Sparks said he has seen inmates initially shy of the dogs eventually warm up.

“The weirdest thing is they grow more attached to the dogs,” Sparks said. “A little companionship changes people.”

Mclimore said the inmates won’t give the puppies official names. “We felt if we named them, we would get attached to them,” Mclimore said. But a couple of the dogs have unofficial names, like “Tater” or “Big Al,” based on their size and personality.

“We try to let (the names) come to us,” Sparks said.

Caring for the puppies has been a good activity, inmate Jeff Mayes said.

“It’s for a good cause,” Mayes said. “It’s going to make some kid happy at Christmas” when the puppies are adopted out to families and it will be because of us, Mayes said.

Sparks said: “I don’t think the (substance abuse) program wouldn’t be the same without the dogs. It gives us a sense of loving and caring.”