

## **K-9 Pen Pals Expands Offerings through Partnership with Domesti-PUPS**

*(9/17/2008)*

K-9 Pen Pals to announce its new partnership with Domesti-PUPS at their upcoming graduation and fourth anniversary celebration, Monday, October 6th at 1:00 p.m. at the Nebraska State Penitentiary.

For the past four years, the K-9 Pen Pals program has given second chances to shelter dogs and inmates. The K-9 Pen Pals programs takes shelter dogs from the Capitol Humane Society in Lincoln, the Central Nebraska Humane Society in Grand Island, and the Beatrice Humane Society to the Nebraska State Penitentiary where selected volunteer inmate handlers provide nine weeks of socialization and basic obedience training, which includes the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen designation. The dogs are then adopted to area families as pets. "Our program helps shelter dogs become better canine citizens and have a second chance at a lifelong relationship with a loving family," says Dr. Gene White, K-9 Pen Pals President, "It's also a great rehabilitative measure for the inmates." Inmates must focus on a dog and their needs rather than just think about themselves and their situation. Inmates are also given the opportunity to give back to society in a positive manner and contribute to a solution for the growing problem of uncared for and unwanted animals.

But the inmates have more to give. K-9 Pen Pals has recently partnered with another local nonprofit organization, Domesti-PUPS, to provide classroom therapy dogs for children and service dogs for disabled veterans. Domesti-PUPS has provided therapy and service dogs for over eight years on a local, regional and national basis. "This partnership is a win-win situation all the way around," says Domesti-PUPS Founder, Michelle Ashley, "we are excited at the opportunity to expand our services to a greater number of people."

Animals with extraordinary abilities to learn are adopted to Domesti-PUPS for advanced training in service or therapy work. Domesti-PUPS instructors train the inmate handlers on task training for the specific needs of a person's disability. "We lessen the risk of dogs being returned to the shelters for inappropriate behaviors through our adoption program, but when we can utilize a canine candidate for service work, we increase our ability to serve the public," adds White.

Domesti-PUPS and K-9 Pen Pals recently placed a companion animal for a local young adult with developmental disabilities, will be placing a classroom therapy dog in October, and two dogs will begin their service dog training during the next rotation.

### **About K-9 Pen Pals**

Established in August 2004, K-9 Pen Pals mission is to create a source of suitable trained dogs for adoption into caring home. To provide a rehabilitation opportunity for inmates to learn care, responsibility and accountability. Inmate handlers develop vocational skills, enhance their decision making abilities, enhance their writing and social skills, and increase responsibility and self-esteem. Inmates have the opportunity to give back to society in a positive manner and contribute to a solution for the growing problem of uncared for or unwanted animals. K-9 Pen Pals has had 115 handlers come through the program and has adopted 160 dogs to area pet homes.

### About Domesti-PUPS

Established in November 2000, Domesti-PUPS mission is to improve the quality of life for persons with special needs through the assistance of animals and to promote awareness through education. Domesti-PUPS provides service dogs for persons with disabilities, pet therapy programs, classroom dogs and educational programs.

### Note to Media Representatives:

Media representatives will be permitted to bring digital still cameras and video kits to the Visiting Room. Videotaping will only be authorized in the Visiting Room area. On site interviews with the inmate trainers and staff will also be authorized. Media representatives and their equipment will be subject to search before entering the premises and they must present picture identification (driver's license, etc.) to Front Entrance staff for admission.

If you are interested in attending this activity, it would be appreciated if you would confirm by e-mailing Win Barber, PIO at [Win.Barber@nebraska.gov](mailto:Win.Barber@nebraska.gov) or calling at 402-479-3227.

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