



Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Governor Scott Walker | Secretary Cathy A. Jess

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Department of Corrections Celebrates Assistance Dog Week

MADISON – Following Governor Scott Walker’s proclamation of August 5 – 11 as Assistance Dog Week, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections is highlighting service dog training programs operating at a number of Department facilities. These programs decrease costs for community-based organizations training service dogs and enable inmates to give back to the community.

“As a Department, we recognize the importance of giving back,” said Department Secretary Cathy Jess. “Many inmates in Department custody are keenly aware that they have taken something from the community and welcome the chance to serve others.”

Service dog training programs operate at little cost to taxpayers, relying largely on community donations. Dogs to be trained are identified by a partner organization and trained inside a correctional facility for approximately one year. During that time, they receive training from inmates and community-based trainers. Each weekend, the dogs leave the facility to receive training which is not possible inside a correctional facility, like learning to cross a street or navigate a busy public space like a shopping mall.

“The partnership we have with Oshkosh Correctional Institution is nothing short of amazing,” said Journey Together Service Dog President Brenda Cirricione, who works with Oshkosh Correctional Institution. “Every time we place a dog with a client, we can see the joy and relief in their eyes, as this dog represents freedom from worry and anxiety. In that moment, the many hours, hard work, and dedication from DOC inmates are all worth it.”

Service dogs trained by Department inmates have been placed with veterans suffering from PTSD, elderly individuals with mobility issues, and individuals with varied medical and mental health conditions. Many times, services dogs provide the assistance necessary to enable someone to live independently in the community.

"Assistance Dog Week is a great time to celebrate the work that inmates do to provide more assistance dogs for the community," said Can Do Canines Executive Director Alan Peters, which works with Jackson Correctional Institution and Stanley Correctional Institution. "The work being done changes lives and saves lives of people with disabilities."

NOTE TO MEDIA: Pictures of service dogs who have gone through training are available on [Dropbox](#) (until August 13) or upon request from DOCMedia@wisconsin.gov.

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