

# Shelter Dogs in Substance Abuse Rehabilitation

Fostering at-risk dogs in a drug rehabilitation treatment facility

**Tag Words:** Shelter dogs, substance abuse, rehabilitation, Philadelphia ACCT, pet over-population

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## Summary:

Proposed is a rehabilitation program in which inpatients in rehabilitation centers for substance abuse will be given the responsibility of fostering shelter dogs. The dogs will serve as a therapeutic tool for the patients to help aid in their recovery. The program will also greatly benefit the animals by providing training and socialization, thus making them more adoptable.

**Video Link (MK):** <http://youtu.be/N-vmC5xIW38>

## Overcrowding in Shelters (MK)

Overcrowding in animal shelters is a very real problem; nearly every shelter is overcrowded. Animals are turned into shelters for a plethora of reasons. Aggression towards people or animals or other behavior issues, not being able to treat medical issues, a lack of money to take care of animals, having too many animals, not being able to keep animals due to a landlord and allergies are just a few of the reason people relinquish pets to shelters; sometimes pets given as gifts end up in shelters; thus the rise in shelter populations post-holidays (1). The main cause is a lack of knowledge on how to train, maintain and take care of animals. For example, owners will often find spaying or neutering to be unfair to an animal. However, unsprayed or unneutered animals give birth to litters, which further increase the animal population. A large animal population leads to overcrowding.

Overcrowding leads to more than one animal per cage and/or smaller cages for each animal. With more animals in a small amount of space, the spread of disease is inevitable. Most shelters do not have money for proper veterinary care. The lack of care leads to more disease. Due to a lack of funding and a scarcity of volunteers, shelters are often understaffed. An understaffed shelter leads to less care for animals; this could mean cages could go without being cleaned and dogs may go without being walked for an extended period of time. This will lead to animals living close to their own excrements and lead to the further spread of disease (2). Overall, these factors lead to poor living conditions. In order to deal with overcrowding, euthanasia is inevitable. Every year, millions of animals from animal shelters are euthanized (3).

Due to the limited amount of space in shelters, animals can be housed for only so long before they need to be relocated to larger shelters or euthanized. This means that many animals may be perfectly healthy with incredible temperament, but due to a lack of space and funding to house them, they are euthanized. Many of these lives seem to be wasted. These animals could easily be adopted into good homes. However, due to a lack of knowledge, most people find a need to purchase a dog from a breeder or pet store. This is because most people do not know about puppy mills, or about how many animals are euthanized or forced to live their entire lives in shelters.

There is also a lack of funding for the maintenance of shelters. This lack of funding is due to the fact that many shelters are non-profit organizations or state run. Many states do not see the need to put funding into shelters which leads to a lack of staff, which in turn leads to poor living conditions due to a lack of maintenance. Due to a poor economy, a majority of the public is hurting financially. This means the public has less money to give as donations to the shelters.

The many animals euthanized could easily be trained and used in service and therapy programs. Interaction with dogs has proved to be beneficial for mind and body. Hospitals, psychiatric wards, nursing homes and other places housing the sick and/or elderly could benefit their patients through interaction with the dogs; this could serve as a holistic approach of treatment. Patients could potentially raise and train dogs. Fostering and training dogs into service dogs has proven to be beneficial in jail programs, for the same reasons interaction with therapy dogs leads to mental and physical benefits of all those involved with the dogs (4).

### **Attempts to Fix the Problem (KS)**

Many different groups are trying to work together to alleviate crowded animal shelters around the country. No-kill animal rescue groups attempt to combat the problem by pulling dogs from high-kill shelters and fostering the dogs until they can be adopted out. These programs successfully adopt out thousands of dogs per year, but pet overpopulation outweighs the rescue groups' abilities. Slim resources and volunteers limit the amount of animals a rescue can pull. Other groups try to focus on the root of the problem, unwanted breeding resulting in pet-overpopulation. The solution to this problem is to educate people to spay/neuter their animal. However, spay/neuter programs have not been as effective as needed due to myths and expenses surrounding fixing animals. For the problem to be fixed, both possible solutions need to be utilized. More fosters are needed to combat shelter over-crowding until there are no more unwanted litters due to animals being fixed.

### **Jail Programs (KS)**

Unique foster programs in jails have been able to combine both aspects of fixing the problem of shelter over crowdedness. Each jail program is unique, but they all revolve around inmates fostering and training rescue dogs to make them more adoptable. By doing this, the inmates are educated on pet overpopulation and the benefits of fixing animals. Jail programs have reported that inmates released from the program have went on to spay/neuter their animals because of the education they received during the program. These programs are involving both

aspects of the solution and therefore should be used as the model for new, unique approaches to fixing the pet-overpopulation crisis.

### **Unique Examples of Jail Dog Programs (KS)**

#### **Operation Second Chance**

Operation Second Chance is a program started in 2010 by the Gwinnett County Detention Center in Georgia. The jail is partnered with The Society of Humane Friends of Georgia to bring at-risk dogs into the facility. This program is the first of its kind in a correctional facility to allow short-term inmates to be enrolled in the program. The inmates must go through a background check to participate in the program and not have any violent charges against them. The program is operated in a separate unit from the rest of the jail. The staff provides the unit supervision and chose the inmates who are allowed to enroll in the program. The Society of Human Friends of Georgia provides all financial support for the program through donations, so no tax dollars go towards the program. The rescue group is also responsible for reviewing adoption applications, and managing the volunteers in the program. To start the program, major renovations were needed to make the unit animal friendly. This included providing the dogs and inmates with a fenced in yard to exercise in. These renovations were paid for by the inmate funds, which may be used to enhance inmate life with beneficial programs or activities.

The unit can accommodate over fifteen dogs at a time and incorporate many inmates into the program. The dogs are given a behavioral test before entering the program. The dogs are screened for behavioral issues in the shelter and tested in different situations, such as with kids. This provides the jail with information on how to treat the dog. They do not turn away sick dogs or dogs with behavioral issues. Instead, the inmates work with the dog's issues, just as they are working on their own issues. Each dog is assigned a primary inmate handler to live with in his/her cell. The dog is also assigned a secondary handler that partners with the primary handler to train and care for the dog. This is done to incorporate more inmates into the program, and to also ensure the dog is always familiar with an inmate, if one is released. Volunteer trainers come into the facility three times a week to teach the inmates how to train their dogs. The inmates have the opportunity to work on different skill sets with their dog, such as obedience, nose work, or agility. The program also incorporates groomers, vet techs, and other animal welfare volunteers to educate the inmates on different dog- issues including care and ways to reduce pet overpopulation.

The program has been very successful by adopting out over eighty dogs since its inception. Those dogs were saved from euthanasia and also provided space for another needy dog in their absence. The program has benefited the community not only by saving animals, but by providing inmates with new skills in dog training and handling, as well as teaching inmates responsibility so they can learn to become productive citizens once they are released from jail. The staff of the program is also very proud of the positive response the program has received from the public, reversing the negative law enforcement stereotype. The shelter and staff also enforce a rule that if an inmate wants to take home a dog, they must have all other animals fixed before they can adopt a dog. This helps to solve the pet over-population crisis for the future (5).

### Safe Harbor

The Safe Harbor program began in 2004 in the Lansing Correctional Facility in Kansas. This program's mission is to save as many dogs as possible through inmate foster care. The dogs are taken from high-kill shelters across the Midwest and placed with inmates in the correctional facility. The program has incorporated about 100 inmates into the program to care for the dogs. The inmates are trained to be dog handlers before being placed with a dog. They first focus on socializing the dogs to alleviate any behavioral issues to make them more adoptable. Then, they work with the dogs on obedience such as house and leash training. All the dogs that enter the program are spayed/neutered to prevent further pet overpopulation and educate the inmates on proper pet-ownership. The program relies upon donations given to the rescue group for its funding (6,7).

### Prison Pet Partnership

The Prison Pet Partnership Program operates within the Washington State criminal justice system. The program began in 1981 with the belief that inmate rehabilitation could be facilitated by the human-animal bond. The program now places dogs with inmates in Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW). The inmates learn how to train, groom and board dogs while serving in the jail. The program is aimed at giving the inmate the opportunities to learn skills to use in finding employment once released from the program. All inmate employees have the opportunity to work toward Pet Care Technician Certification, levels One and Two, through the American Boarding Kennels Association. The program only incorporates inmates who will spend a minimum of two years in the correctional facility to guarantee they receive ample experience with the animals.

The dogs in the program are taken from animal rescue organizations to help reduce shelter over-crowdedness. The dogs are trained to be service dogs by the inmates to respond to a variety of needs of individuals who experience seizures, live with various illnesses such as Multiple Sclerosis, or who have multiple disabilities. The dogs are able to assist their owners with daily activities to increase their independence. According to Assistance Dogs International, "the cost of providing high quality training for Service/Seizure Response/Therapy Dogs is approximately \$10,000 per animal. It takes approximately eight months to train these dogs, and only one out of every 15 to 20 dogs selected for our program has the intelligence and temperament necessary to become a Service or Therapy Dog". Dogs that do are not accepted as service dogs are retrained in basic obedience and adopted out as paroled pets into the community.

The funding for the program comes from a variety of sources. Part of the funding is provided by the Department of Corrections, while the program also relies upon foundations, animal welfare organizations, and individual donations. The correctional facility also offers a boarding and grooming service for the community that also provides the program with funding support. The program has been very successful and "since its inception, the program has placed over 700 dogs as Service, Seizure, Therapy Dogs and in families as Paroled Pets in the Pacific Northwest". The program has also helped provide "a feeling of satisfaction that directly

contributes to the mental and physical wellness of all who are involved” by helping the dogs succeed (8).

#### New Leash on Life

New Leash on Life USA is focused in providing Philadelphia, PA prisons with jail dog programs. Their goal is to train and socialize shelter dogs by teaching inmates to train and care for the dogs. The dogs live in the cells with their inmate trainers, which has provided important benefits for both the inmate and the dog. The organization says they help:

- Inmates learn how to train and care for dogs thus building skills, confidence, and future employability
- Inmates learn a sense of responsibility and unconditional love by caring for their canine charges
- Inmates give back to society
- Improve communications between correctional officers and inmates to foster a positive correctional facility environment

The program helps in these ways by providing a number of services to the inmates and dogs. The inmates are given weekly visits by professional trainers, animal behaviorists and veterinary technicians to further the care of their foster dog. The program also provides “job readiness and life skill courses to improve successful reentry and employability for inmates upon parole; Internship opportunities for paroled inmates for additional training and education in the animal care field; and post-parole support with worksite transition services.” Through the implication of this program, the inmates greatly benefit while helping the dogs escape euthanasia in an over-crowded Philadelphia shelter (6).

#### Prison Trained K-9 Companion Program (PTKCP)

The Prison Trained K-9 Companion Program (PTKCP) is a part of the Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI). This program saves both pure bred and mixed dogs from humane shelters and other animal rescues around Colorado and the surrounding states. The program also accepts privately donated dogs, providing a last chance for many canines and alleviates shelter over-crowdedness. The program focuses on providing the dogs with veterinary care and training to make the dogs more adoptable. The training is done by the inmates and first includes an intensive socialization program. To accomplish this goal, dogs are taught to be around a variety of people and may live with other dogs. The dog is also taught basic obedience, tricks, and agility by the inmates.

This program is unique because it pays its inmates who are training the dog to be a more adoptable animal. The program is not tax supported though. This has caused the adoption fee for a dog from this facility to be higher than most animal rescue groups. The fee is \$500.00, which includes the fees the program must pay to incorporate the dog initially into the program, veterinary care, daily maintenance and inmate salary. The facility also offers boarding-in training to private dog owners. Boarding-in training lasts a minimum of one month and the dogs will be trained by the inmates over that time period (9).

## DAWGS in Prison

The St. Joseph Bay Humane Society is partnered with the Gulf Correctional Institution in Florida to train adoptable dogs. The dogs enrolled in this program go through an intense 8-week training session done by the inmates. These inmates were trained by a professional dog trainer, in the hopes that they may find employment in animal services when released from prison. The dogs are fostered by the program and live with the inmates in a dormitory style work camp. All of the dogs in the program have gone through temperament testing to make sure they do not have behavioral issues with humans or dogs. Once the dogs have completed the inmate, 8-week training session, they are placed for adoption. The dogs can also be taken into a private foster home to allow the jail program to train other dogs in their place. After completion of the program, dogs are expected to know basic obedience, and be crate and house trained. The program is run off of public monetary and in-kind donations and receives no tax-funding (10).

## Dogs are Beneficial to Inmates and Others (MK)

It seems a person's faith in animals is universal. People are more likely to show affection to animals than other people. Many people trust their animals with the daily events of their lives no matter how secretive the events, while trusting other people with the same information is rather unlikely. Similarly, inmates open to their animals, and due to association with the animals, security officers lose the defensive boundary of guard versus inmate and start to view the inmates as fellow human beings (4).

The influence of dogs has caused a decrease of violence and rowdy behavior in inmates that raise dogs. In one study, a particularly violent inmate was asked what could be done to amend his behavior. He said he wanted a dog; interesting enough, his violent behavior completely changed when he was given a dog. Having to care for another life causes inmates to change their focus; it gives them meaning and purpose. Being preoccupied with the care and maintenance of their animal causes them to forget about fighting and self defense and forces them to think about raising good dogs. However, not all inmates approve of the idea of other inmates raising dogs (11).

Some inmates feel jealousy towards inmates that have dogs. This causes some inmates to attempt violent act towards the dogs and the inmates that raise dogs. However, having a dog means that many peoples' eyes are constantly watching what a person may be doing. This means that security guards and inmates are paying special attention to what an inmate raising a dog is doing. Many inmates feel it is their duty to protect the dogs, even if they are not raising a dog themselves (11).

From studies done on the therapeutic effect of therapy dogs, it has been noted that dogs have caused inmates and patients in rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, hospitals, etc to have experienced social and health benefits (12). Inmates have been noted to be more verbal and communicative (in a positive manner) to other inmates, guards, officers and other staff. In the case of patients in psychiatric and rehabilitation centers, the presence of dogs has been noted to have similar effects in patients. While in nursing homes and hospitals, patients have shared these

effects as well as lower blood pressure and increased activity, which is ideal for the sick, injured and/or elderly (4).

In a survey ranging from inmates to the sick and elderly that were exposed to therapy dogs, a majority of those surveyed said they would like to have contact with animals as often as once a week. Interesting enough, most of the people surveyed also reported positive effects from exposure to animals. Several of the reported impacts included a more positive impact on life and a general increase in happiness. Some reported that if they did not feel happy, they did feel less negative. Many of these patients also reported a desire to want to socialize and communicate with other people (4).

Patients reported that dogs sparked pleasant memories. Many reminisced about having childhood pets, or remembered a child-like desire to want a pet. In the case of the elderly or injured, patients reported that dogs switched their focus from pain to the dogs. Therefore, they eased the pains of recovery and treatment. Patients and inmates both rejoiced from the fact that dogs give unconditional love to all. For both patients and inmates, being able to interact with the animals gave them something to look forward to; it helped to deal with loneliness and added a new experience to the daily mix of a usually mundane life. All that were able to interact with the dogs felt that it was a source of visual and tactile stimulation. It served as a reduction of anxiety and confusion. For inmates, there was a reduction of aggressive and/or hostile behavior. Dogs proved to be a source of overall comfort for whichever patients and inmates came in contact with them (4).

The staff in prisons, hospitals, psychiatric wards and other areas visited by therapy dogs found there to be a benefit from being in contact with the dogs. Staff found that the dogs lifted their mood; this led to better morale and cheer. The break from daily routine reduced the stress of the job. This also served as a break time for the staff, since inmates and patients were preoccupied by time spent with the therapy dogs. This led to unperceived therapeutic effects for the staff as well as patients. Staff was able to observe and gauge communication between patients (4).

Due to the unperceived benefits the staff experienced, there was an added bonus to the effect of the therapy dogs. A less stressed staff functions as a better team. This means that the inmates and patients gain an added advantage. If the staff doesn't view working with the incarcerated, sick or elderly as a burden, they will be kinder to the inmates and patients; kindness goes a long way on the road to recovery. The fact that an animal can be a source of positive thinking plays a huge beneficial role in the mindset of the patient, inmate and staff.

There have been few noted problems associated with therapy and service dogs. In the case of inmate programs, some inmates complained about being afraid of dogs. These inmates were moved to further side of prisons from dogs. A few people that come in contact with dogs complain of allergies (11). Although there is no such thing as a hypoallergenic dog, short haired breeds and dogs with hair as opposed to thick coats release less dander and allergens than would other breeds. Having a wide variety of therapy and service animals could allow handlers, trainers and raisers to introduce shorter haired dogs into environments where people complain of allergies.

All those involved with therapy and service animals appear to gain from the natural therapeutic benefit that comes with dealing with animals. Even in the case of people afraid of dogs or in the case of allergies, there are ways to deal with the issues. There doesn't seem to be a reason why the millions of euthanized animals need to be euthanized. They could easily be trained and used in a plethora of programs.

### **Community Action: Our Proposal to Introduce Shelter Dogs to Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Centers (KS and MK)**

To address shelter over-crowdedness, the solution needs to both educate people on spaying/neutering animals so in the future we will not have this problem, and help address the current animals in shelters by foster-care programs. The jail programs have successfully been used to implement change in the animal-rescue system and have helped both educate and address current needs. To further solve the problem, more unique programs need to be created to reach more of the population and incorporate more animals to alleviate lack of space in shelters presently. Long-term substance abuse rehabilitation centers can be utilized to foster dogs and educate its patients on responsible pet-ownership. The solution is based upon the successful jail programs by incorporating the appropriate parts of different jail programs into a positive solution for a rehab center.

Rehabilitation centers have many similarities to correctional facilities, allowing for the conclusion that a similar program can be successful in this setting. Many of the patients in long-term rehabilitation centers are sent there from jail or are on parole for separate charges. The patients are required to be there for a certain amount of time, similar to a jail. Since the patients have time on their hands and are away from their families, they are in an optimal time to foster a dog. Rehabilitation centers also focus on self-healing and giving patients the skills they need to succeed and break their addiction post-rehab. The program will also benefit the patients by providing them with skills to overcome their addiction and the dog as a therapeutic tool. The therapeutic and educational benefits of handling dogs will both aid in the recovery of the patient but also provide a temporary home for dogs that were at-risk of euthanization due to the overcrowding of shelters. The benefits between the patients and the dogs will be mutual based upon previous programs in jails.

We are proposing to institute a dog fostering program at long-term substance abuse rehabilitation centers. Patients in these group home programs are usually in treatment for drug use, and many have history of burglary, prostitution, or other crimes. The Paws for Promise program will help facilitate the rehabilitation of the patients and give them the confidence they need to break their addiction and focus on creating a healthy life. The patients will gain self-esteem by helping the community and saving a dog's life. They will learn to make healthy relationships by learning to socialize when working with the dogs, staff, and other patients. They will also gain important experience with animal care that can help them build their resume, learn patience and other important skills to become successful once out of the rehabilitation center. The dogs will also be a therapeutic tool for the patients and help aid in their recovery. The program will also greatly benefit animals and the community by saving dogs from possible euthanasia. For your rehabilitation center, this will bring positive attention to your organization and can be used as a model for other facilities to help more animals and people.

The long-term goal of our project is to serve as a bridge between rehabilitation centers and local animal shelters. We communicated with several shelters and rehabilitation centers, and identified a particular rehabilitation center in Pennsylvania that was interested in instituting our program using dogs from the Philadelphia Animal Care and Control Team (ACCT). We hope that success in this venture will serve as a model for other substance rehabilitation centers and shelters in the future.

## Part II



### Program Proposal (KS)

**Mission:** To help people and animals alike by facilitating the rehabilitation of substance abuse patients by giving them the confidence, self-esteem, and skill sets they need to succeed by fostering and training at-risk shelter dogs.

#### Abstract

The program will introduce at-risk shelter dogs into a rehabilitation center for substance abuse. The inpatients at the center will foster and train the dogs to make them more adoptable. The program will focus on facilitating the rehabilitation of the patients through the use of structured activities with the dogs. These activities will produce many benefits including being able to build confidence in the patient, give the patient experience and skills to seek employment in the future, and give the patient the self-esteem needed to work through her addiction. The program will also help animals by saving dogs from euthanasia and help alleviate the problem of overcrowded shelters in our community.

#### Why is this program needed?

This program would be the first of its kind in a substance abuse rehabilitation center. Currently, similar programs are held in jails and have high success rates. Our program and our research have been based upon those programs and we would like to further help people and animals through the inception of this unique program. We can help patients succeed by giving them the motivation and confidence to flourish and help the community by saving at-risk animals from a local shelter.

#### For the Patients

The national average of completion rate for residential drug rehabilitation programs is 45% as reported in the NIDA-funded National Drug Abuse Treatment Outcome Study. The program strives to raise the completion rate of the residential program the dogs are placed with. We believe if the patients are enjoying their stay and have a responsibility, they are more likely to succeed. The dogs will also become a therapeutic and learning tool for the patients. Dogs

provide instant gratification for the effort put into training them. The patients will be able to see the accomplishments of their work training the dog through the animal's progress. In similar programs in jails, this provided the inmates with the self-confidence they needed to work on other problems in their lives. The inmates in jails have also gained self-esteem and feelings of self-worth knowing they saved an animal's life. The experience can be very gratifying to the patients and give them assurance that they can create a better life for themselves, as they did for the dog. The program will also be aimed at allowing the patients to learn people skills and work together. One dog will be paired between two people, who would have to work together to train and care for the dog. They will also be required to interact with the trainers and other staff members on the dog's behalf, which will improve their ability to make healthy relationships. The participants will be learning valuable social and vocational skills that will help them create healthy, substance-free lives once they leave the facility. In the programs used in correctional facilities, the staff reported that the inmates in the dog program are the most interactive with the staff voluntarily compared to other units. They reported that the inmates become much more vocal, social and easier to work with than units without dogs. The program will aid in the recovery of the patient by providing them with the confidence and skills they need to create and maintain a substance free life.

#### For the Animals

The program will also help solve a community problem by alleviating the over-crowdedness of Philadelphia's animal shelters. The Humane Society of the United States estimates that 6-8 million dogs and cats enter American shelters per year. Approximately 3-4 million of these animals get euthanized (13). In 2011, the Philadelphia Animal Care and Control Team took in over 32 thousand animals and had a euthanasia rate of about 40 percent of the animals who were taken into custody (14). This rate is due to the rate of animals coming into the shelter compared to the amount of animals leaving the shelter through adoption and foster care. This program aims at helping the Philadelphia Animal Care and Control have a better adoption rate by fostering and training dogs to make them more adoptable. By fostering a dog, the program will also free a space for another animal to enter the shelter and have a chance at finding a home. We hope to have a high adoption rate because the dogs will be trained and assessed for behavioral issues. This will allow us to help more dogs and the community by lowering the amount of dogs in the shelter, so less have to be put down for space.

#### **Project Description**

The program will be accommodated to your facility and we will work with your staff to create the best program for your patients.

#### Where will the dogs come from?

The dogs will come from the Philadelphia Animal Care and Control Team (ACCT) shelter. This shelter is the largest animal care and control facility in the region and takes in both stray and owner surrender animals. The dogs will be assessed at the facility and will be tested for behavioral issues. We will pick the dogs accepted into the program based on their assessment.

Where will the dogs stay?

One dog will be placed with two patients in an inpatient room and live with them. The patients will be responsible for the care of the dog, such as feeding, training, and taking them out to go to the bathroom. The dogs will be crate trained and crated at night or when both patients cannot be handling the dog, such as during meal times. The dogs will come with the patients to their other daily activities to provide the patient support and socialize the dog. The patients will have to work together to both take care of the dog and handle the dog during the day.

How will patients become enrolled in the program?

Each patient is different and the staff will work closely with the patient to decide if this program is a part of the right treatment plan that will help them with their recovery.

How will the dogs be trained?

A trainer will come twice a week for an hour each session to teach the patients how to train the dog. On the off days, the patients will work on what they learned with the dog. Both patients will take turns working with the dog and can teach the dog different skills. There are many options for the patients to choose to work on with the dogs. Training can include obedience, agility, nose-work, and working toward getting a Canine Good Citizen certificate. This will depend on the dog's personality, patient preference, and the trainers volunteering.

How long will the dog be at the facility?

The dog will be at the facility until they are adopted. This amount of time can vary greatly depending on a number of circumstances. Once a dog is adopted, they will be replaced as soon as possible to optimize the amount of dogs we are helping.

How will the patients be trained to take care of the animal?

At the inception of the program, an experienced animal care-taker will teach the patients how to care for the dog, including basic care, grooming, and signs the dog is sick or hurt. They will also learn how to read dog signs, so reactive situations can be avoided. Once patients are involved in the program, they will be in charge of teaching new people entering the program about these subjects. The trainers will also answer any questions and help make sure patients are taking care of the dogs properly.

How will the dogs be adopted?

The dogs will be advertised on ACCT's Petfinder and Facebook page. To adopt a dog from the program, the potential adopter will have to fill out an adoption application through ACCT and be a pre-approved adopter. Then, a meeting with the adopter and the dog will be scheduled. Depending on your facility's regulations, the meeting will either be scheduled at your facility or taken to the shelter by a volunteer for the meeting. From there, the adopter can either follow through with the adoption, or choose to stop the adoption process.

What if a dog becomes reactive?

Though the dogs will be tested and assessed in a variety of situations in the shelter, dogs behavior can change in different environments or stimulus. If a behavioral problem arises, the dog will be assessed again and upon trainer recommendation, may be placed back in the shelter.

or into another foster home if the facility isn't the correct environment for the dog.

Can patients take the dog home with them after treatment?

If the patient becomes an approved adopter or foster through ACCT, the patient will be able to take home the dog they were working with to continue the program at home. They will be allowed to come back with their dog for the training sessions once released from the inpatient program.

How will the program be assessed?

To make sure the program continues to make a positive impact in the lives of patients and animals, we will assess the program based on many factors. We will look at the rate of completion of the rehab program with patients involved with the dogs. We will also work with the doctors and staff to decide if the program is benefiting the patients' recovery process. The patient will also be asked to complete a survey at the end of their stay to help better evaluate the program. The community benefits will be assessed by how many dogs are being adopted out from the program.

Will the rehab center be liable if a patient gets bit?

No, the patients must sign a liability form before working with the dogs. An example liability form would include the following:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (VOLUNTEER NAME), age \_\_\_\_\_ YEARS OLD, agree to this contract on \_\_\_\_\_ (DATE) between MYSELF (VOLUNTEER) and Paws for Promise as it pertains to my goodwill volunteer efforts as a general volunteer for Paws for Promise.

By signing this Agreement, I certify that I have read, understood and agree to the following:

1. VOLUNTEER agrees that this Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Pennsylvania and agrees to submit to the jurisdiction of the courts of the State of Pennsylvania in the event of any dispute that is related to this Agreement.
2. VOLUNTEER acknowledges that all animals can carry diseases, some of which may be transmissible to humans, including bacterial, viral, parasitic, and fungal, and that disease may be undetectable in what appears to be a healthy animal at the time of volunteer service.
3. VOLUNTEER understands that pets may exhibit normal but potentially undesirable behaviors including, but not limited to, aggression, house soiling, biting, scratching (people, furniture, woodwork), barking, digging, mounting people's legs, urine marking (dogs), urine spraying (cats) and that these normal behavior patterns may be difficult to manage. No one representing Paws for Promise has told Volunteer that any animals will not engage in any of these behavior patterns.
4. By your signature below you acknowledge that (a) you have been provided with the time and opportunity to carefully review this volunteer agreement, and to discuss it with Paws for Promise and anyone else of your choosing; (b) you have been afforded the time and opportunity to

interact with the pet(s) that you desire to volunteer with; (c) Paws for Promise has discussed with you the pets that you have chosen to volunteer with, including its known behavioral tendencies and that of its breed and a recommendation concerning the age and experience of the people who are best suited to interact with the pet; and (d) Paws for Promise has exercised diligent and proper efforts to disclose all health and behavioral risks associated with this particular animals you may encounter; (e) you understand the behavior of all pets may change over time and Paws for Promise cannot guarantee the lifelong behavioral tendencies of any animal. As a result, you are now willing now to assume full responsibility for the animal(s) you have chosen to volunteer with and those risks. You represent that you are not aware of any reason that the pet you have chosen to volunteer or foster should not be placed by Paws for Promise to you, or become part of your household (i.e. Paws for Promise does not adopt adult dogs to families with children less than nine years of age, likewise for households with frequent visits from young children).

5. By your signature below, you hereby release Paws for Promise, its officers, directors, agents, employees, and volunteers, and any third parties from any responsibility for the behavior and conduct of the pets you are volunteering with, and for any damage or injury to any person or property which may be caused by your contact with animals in the care of Paws for Promise. You also agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Paws for Promise, its officers, directors, agents, employees, and volunteers, and any third parties from and against any and all liability, damage, suits, actions, judgments, costs, or fees (including reasonable attorneys fees and expenses) arising out of, or related to: (a) your volunteering with this animal, (b) your failure to comply with the terms of this agreement, (c) any damage or injury to any person or property which may be caused by this animal ("Volunteer")

### **Budget**

The budget will vary upon the choices made by your facility, such as how many dogs you choose to incorporate, or what size the dogs are. In jail programs, all the funding and items come from public donations. We hope to enlist the community to help start our program by asking for donations, both monetary and in-kind donations. Below is the estimated cost of the program before donations (15).

#### **Veterinary costs**

Veterinary care will be provided by the Philadelphia ACCT if taken there for care.

#### **Items needed for one 50 pound dog and cost per year**

- 1 large crate- \$69.99
- 1 collar- \$3.29
- 1 leash- \$4.89
- Food- about \$340
- Training treats- can vary from \$1-\$15 per package
- Food and water bowl- \$11.98
- Dog bed- \$16.99
- Toys- can vary from \$1-\$30+ per toy

### **Volunteers**

In order to make this program a success we will need volunteers to donate their time and skills. The program will need:

- A trainer to come twice a week for an hour each visit to work with the dogs and patients.
- An experienced animal care-taker to teach the patients how to care for the animals at the beginning of the program.
- Volunteers to drive the dogs to and from the ACCT for pick-up, possible adoption, and veterinary care if needed.

### **About Us**

Through research and experience, we have created this program to help people and animals alike. We both have done this work in our own time and want to continue working with the program through its inception and start similar programs in other rehab facilities in the future to further the program's mission.

- Katherine Schwartzer is currently attending Rutgers University, majoring in Companion Animal Science. She is the founder and president of the Vegetarian Society of Rutgers University. She works at an animal shelter as the animal care-taker and volunteers her time with a local rescue group. She visits schools, nursing homes, and hospitals with her therapy dog. She has dreams of running her own non-profit that focuses on companion animals helping those in need.
- Manohar Katara is currently a senior at Rutgers University majoring in Animal Sciences focusing on Pre-Veterinary Medicine and Research as well as Biological Sciences. He hopes to attend veterinary school. He has worked with Seeing Eye dogs, has spent time volunteering in shelters, worked in small animal day time and emergency practice and has shadowed large animal doctors. He is currently researching abnormal feeding behaviors in animals.
- Julie M. Fagan, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the Department of Animal Science at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. She started the non-profit business "Ruff Love," and developed a business plan to employ shelter dogs in the rehabilitation of public offenders and to use therapy dogs in assisting those with autism ([ruffloveus.wordpress.com](http://ruffloveus.wordpress.com)).

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## Letters to the Editor

Dear American Shelter Magazine Editor,

Overcrowding in shelters is a major problem in current society. Each year millions of animals are euthanized. These animals aren't always aggressive, make bad pets or come with behavioral issues; in fact, most of them are perfectly adoptable. However, there seem to be more animals than homes available for them. Unfortunately, shelters can't hold on to every animal forever due to overcrowding (thus leading to the millions euthanized). To top it off, even with millions of lives ending prematurely, overcrowding is still a reality.

Due to a lack of funding and space, sometimes several animals can be assigned to a particular cage. With not enough volunteers or workers, these animals can be left to wallow in their own urine and feces. This leads to a higher chance of spreading disease. Since there is a lack of funding in shelters, ailments can often go unchecked and untreated due to the cost of veterinary care. Unfortunately, the easiest solution here is to euthanize since the chance of a sick animal being adopted is rather low.

In order to ease this issue, dogs can be fostered or adopted and trained. Paws for Promise is a new organization promoting this in a unique way. Paws for Promise is an attempt to link local drug rehabilitation centers and animal shelters. The idea behind the program is to holistically treat the patient and animal; drug rehabilitation patients will foster and train an at-risk shelter dog in hopes of giving an "unadoptable" pet a new lease on life while the patient find a new drive and focus through the form of animal training and care. This program plans to not only give at-risk shelter dogs a second chance at life, but also to increase the image of misunderstood breeds-the program plans to use mainly use pitbulls, mastiffs, rottweilers and other breeds society has labeled as aggressive.

Although this program idea hasn't been done before, success appears likely. Jail-programs are a similar counterpart which have been giving inmates and dogs a second chance in life. From studies, it has been found that inmates often identify with the violent past of many dogs that were used in fighting or suffered abuse. The same has found to be true for many drug rehabilitation patients, since many patients also have violent backgrounds.

The program is currently in a pilot stage through a local shelter and clinic. We hope to learn from these early stages before spreading further. Through the help of the rehabilitation center's psychologist we hope to gain a scientific understanding of the therapeutic effects of human-animal bond on the patients which can be used for future studies. From there we want to spread our mission and give the world future success stories to read about.

Sincerely,  
Manohar Katara

Dear American Dog Editor,

The Humane Society of the United States estimates that 6-8 million dogs and cats enter American shelters per year. Approximately 3-4 million of these animals get euthanized. In 2011, the Philadelphia Animal Care and Control Team of Philadelphia took in over 32 thousand animals and had a euthanasia rate of about 40 percent of the animals who were taken into custody. This rate is due to the rate of animals coming into the shelter compared to the amount of animals leaving the shelter through adoption and foster care. Many different groups are trying to work together to alleviate crowded animal shelters around the country. No-kill animal rescue groups attempt to combat the problem by pulling dogs from high-kill shelters and fostering the dogs until they can be adopted out. These programs successfully adopt out thousands of dogs per year, but pet overpopulation outweighs the rescue groups' abilities. Slim resources and volunteers limit the amount of animals a rescue can pull. Other groups try to focus on the root of the problem, unwanted breeding resulting in pet-overpopulation. The solution to this problem is to educate people to spay/neuter their animal. However, spay/neuter programs have not been as effective as needed due to myths and expenses surrounding fixing animals. For the problem to be fixed, both possible solutions need to be utilized. More fosters are needed to combat shelter over-crowding until there are no more unwanted litters due to animals being fixed.

Unique foster programs in jails have been able to combine both aspects of fixing the problem of shelter over crowdedness. Each jail program is unique, but they all revolve around inmates fostering and training rescue dogs to make them more adoptable. By doing this, the inmates are educated on pet overpopulation and the benefits of fixing animals. Jail programs have reported that inmates released from the program have went on to spay/neuter their animals because of the education they received during the program. These programs are involving both aspects of the solution and therefore should be used as the model for new, unique approaches to fixing the pet-overpopulation crisis.

More programs like the ones found in jails need to be created to deal with the current problem of pet overpopulation. Currently, I am working with a substance abuse rehab in Philadelphia to create a dog program with the patients. This program aims at helping the Philadelphia Animal Care and Control have a better adoption rate by fostering and training dogs to make them more adoptable. By fostering a dog, the program will also free a space for another animal to enter the shelter and have a chance at finding a home. We hope to have a high adoption rate because the dogs will be trained and assessed for behavioral issues. This will allow us to help more dogs and the community by lowering the amount of dogs in the shelter, so less will have to be put down for space.

The program will be helping more than the dogs though. The national average of completion rate for residential drug rehabilitation programs is 45% as reported in the NIDA-funded National Drug Abuse Treatment Outcome Study. The program strives to raise the completion rate of the residential program the dogs are placed with. We believe if the patients are enjoying their stay and have a responsibility, they are more likely to succeed. The dogs will also become a therapeutic and learning tool for the patients. Dogs provide instant gratification for the effort put into training them. The patients will be able to see the accomplishments of their work training the dog through the animal's progress. In similar programs in jails, this

provided the inmates with the self-confidence they needed to work on other problems in their lives. The inmates in jails have also gained self-esteem and feelings of self-worth knowing they saved an animal's life. The experience can be very gratifying to the patients and give them assurance that they can create a better life for themselves, as they did for the dog.

The program will also be aimed at allowing the patients to learn people skills and work together. One dog will be paired between two people, who would have to work together to train and care for the dog. They will also be required to interact with the trainers and other staff members on the dog's behalf, which will improve their ability to make healthy relationships. The participants will be learning valuable social and vocational skills that will help them create healthy, substance-free lives once they leave the facility. In the programs used in correctional facilities, the staff reported that the inmates in the dog program are the most interactive with the staff voluntarily compared to other units. They reported that the inmates become much more vocal, social and easier to work with than units without dogs. The program will aid in the recovery of the patient by providing them with the confidence and skills they need to create and maintain a substance free life.

If more programs like this one can get started around the country, we can save more lives and educate more people to solve the problem of pet overpopulation.

Thank you,  
Katherine Schwartzer