



Main campus: 6607 N. Havana St., Spokane, WA 99217

Contact: Executive Director Sheila Geraghty (509) 362-0110

[Sheila@spokanehumanesociety.org](mailto:Sheila@spokanehumanesociety.org)

### **The Spokane Humane Society and the Airway Heights Corrections Center announce a new partnership for AHCC Dog Program.**

For the last six years, the Airway Heights Corrections Center has been home to a dog training program staffed by inmate handlers, and beginning on the morning of July 18 the dogs for this program will come from the Spokane Humane Society.

"We are very excited for the opportunity to work with Airway Heights Corrections Center," said Sheila Geraghty, executive director of the Spokane Humane Society. "This is an excellent program for some of our more demanding dogs and it hugely increases their chances of a successful adoption."

The Pawsitive Dog Prison Training Program (@PawsitiveDogPrisonProgram on Facebook) will match a shelter dog with an offender with whom the dog will spend every minute of its life for 10 weeks. The program's motto is: A Second Chance for Both Ends of the Leash.

The Department of Correction's Benjamin Frier, who's one of the managers of the program, said the Pawsitive Dog program teaches inmates personal responsibility and provides an opportunity for inmates to give back to the community.

"Dog handlers learn about responsibility because they have to meet certain training criteria both for the dog and for themselves," Frier said.

More than 140 dogs have gone through the program and graduated to be adopted into their forever homes. There are eight dogs in this first group from the Spokane Humane Society.

Shelter dogs often need extra socialization and many lack manners which sometimes makes them difficult to adopt, Geraghty said.

"This program allows our dogs to gain basic manners like learning how to walk on a leash. And they learn what it's like to live with humans," Geraghty said. "This is a level of one-on-one training we don't have the funding for at the shelter. We are very lucky to be DOC's new partner."

Carol Byrnes of Diamonds in the Ruff Dog Training Center helps pick out good dog candidates from the Spokane Humane Society's kennels and then match them with offenders. Byrnes has been involved since before the program started, helping AHCC set up the initial program.

“We were there for the first day with the first dogs, and with everyone ever since,” Byrnes said. “It’s an incredibly rewarding program – probably the most rewarding I’ve ever done.”

Byrnes said the positive effect the program has on inmate handlers at AHCC is overwhelming.

“And it’s so good for the dogs,” Byrnes said. “We are very careful to make it the least stressful for the dogs at all times.”

The program runs for 10 weeks, during which the dogs remain up for adoption, but they can’t be united with their new families until the program has run its course.

Spokane Humane Society dogs are spayed or neutered and vaccinated before they get to AHCC. Dogs with severe behavioral issues or aggressive dogs can’t be in the program.

Inmate Jorge Sosa said that it means a lot to be in the program.

"You learn how to interact and communicate with others, and to think positively," Sosa said. "It has helped me think before I act. Now I think of the consequences of my actions."

The dog and the offender develop a strong positive bond during the 10-week training period, Byrnes said.

“Graduation is no doubt going to be hard,” Geraghty said, “but this program will make a huge difference for our dogs.”

Diamonds in the Ruff’s Carol Byrnes CPDT-KA, the training coordinator for the Pawsitive Prison Dog Program, can be reached at: [dirt\\_training@hotmail.com](mailto:dirt_training@hotmail.com)

Media: for access to Airway Heights Corrections Center please directly contact DOC’s Janet Nelson at (509) 244-6732 or [janelson2@DOC1.WA.GOV](mailto:janelson2@DOC1.WA.GOV)