



A Hearts - N - paws... Program



A KEY  
To SUCCESS  
After PRISON

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**Volume 1, Issue 1**  
**September 2007**

## paws4prisons™ Brings Their SlammerDogZ™ to USP Hazelton



by Kyria Henry  
Program Manager  
paws4prisons™

After many months of planning, much collaboration, and a great deal of anticipation, **paws4prisons™** has begun operations at the Secure Female Facility at the United States Penitentiary Hazelton, in West Virginia. Sixteen inmates were carefully selected and screened during April, 2007 to participate in the program. The dogs began working with these inmates on May 7, 2007. For the next two weeks the inmates and dogs were put through an exhaustive two-week "Boot Camp," where the inmates and dogs were introduced to each other. At the end of this Camp, four two-inmate teams were selected as Primary Training Teams, and four dogs were selected and placed with those teams. The other inmates were designated as Alternate Trainers or Program Support Specialists.

Thus the first four **SlammerDogZ™** were created. They are; BODIE, ELLIE, GENESIS [aka: GENNY] and NIKKITA [aka:

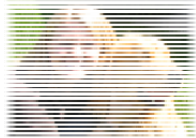
NIKKI]. All **paws4prisons™** dogs trained at USP Hazelton will be affectionately called **SlammerDogZ™**.

Each of these dogs was donated to the program by various breeders in December 2006. They spent their first six months learning basic obedience through a course at West Virginia University, Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry and Consumer Sciences, Department of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, entitled: "The Principles, Theory, and Application of Service Dog Training." This course teaches WVU students the principles of dog behavior and psychology, and dog training techniques to train a dog how to become a Service Dog. This is the same academic course that all of the inmates receive during their **paws4prisons™** training at USP Hazelton.

The most unique opportunity presented to us by the prison setting, is the ability to help not only our clients, but also the inmates themselves. The inmates have been learning very important life lessons on a daily basis, as they are surrogate mothers to these dogs 24 hours per day,

Continued on page 2

## AMANDA'S SlammerDogZ™



by Candace Reel  
Executive Director  
paws4people™  
North Carolina

For most of us, three years seems like a short amount of time in today's fast-paced society. However, for one very special little girl, the last three years have been filled with various seizures, surgeries, and setbacks. Upon meeting Amanda, one would never imagine the long road she has traveled. She has a smile that could light up any room and a soft giggle that is contagious. In order to understand how much Amanda deserves a Service Dog you must first know of her tremendous journey and how she has impacted so many at such a young age.

Amanda suffered a stroke before she was born. Her survival remains a mystery and miracle in the eyes of the doctors who treat her. In December 2004 she was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and began many rounds of physical and occupational therapy. Soon after this, she began having sei-

zures and was diagnosed with Infantile Spasms, a very severe form of Epilepsy. By October 2005, Amanda was having over 100 seizures per day and doctors at UCLA felt that major brain surgery was the only option. Amanda underwent an 8-hour surgery and once again came through better than anyone expected. Despite having severe right side weakness as a result of the surgery, she is now walking with minimal assistance. Amanda continues to gain language skills and has already mastered 7-8 words. Her parents, doctors, therapists, family, and friends could not be more pleased with Amanda's progress. She is truly amazing!



Amanda I.  
SlammerDogZ™  
First Designated Recipient

Continued on page 3

# paws4prisons™ Brings Their **SlammerDogZ™** to USP Hazelton

Continued from page 1

seven days a week. Responsibility, a very demanding work-ethic, unconditional love, patience, and selflessness are some of the most powerful lessons that the ladies are learning each and every day. Our hope is that these lessons will prevent our program participants from making the same mistakes that brought them to prison in the first place.

The **paws4prisons™** Program trains four types of Assistance Dogs: Service Dogs, Educational or Rehabilitative Assistance Dogs, and Social-Therapy Dogs. These dogs provide services to individuals with physical, neurological, psychiatric and/or emotional disabilities.

Those dogs who prove capable of learning upwards of 90+ commands, possess the necessary temperament, disposition and trainability required to work with individuals who are mobility-challenged [use wheelchairs], and who may have other physical, neurological, psychiatric and/or emotional disabilities will be placed as Service Dogs. Those dogs who do not attain the level of Service Dog will be re-evaluated and matched with the Assistance Career that best suits them, such as:

Educational Assistance Dogs (EAD) are specially trained to work inside the special and regular education classroom where they provide teachers with a new educational tool, the Dog. The dog acts as motivation for the students to learn, and dramatically increases the teacher's productivity and effectiveness. These dogs must be able to handle the school and special education environments, as well as work with students with all types of physical, neurological, psychiatric and/or emotional disabilities.

Rehabilitative Assistance Dogs (RAD) are specially trained to assist patients in their recovery from severe injury and/or psychological trauma such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD]. These dogs assist Occupational Thera-

pists [OT], Physical Therapists [PT], and/or Mental Health Therapists in their treatment of patients, aiding in, and in some cases, speeding up their recovery.

In August 2008, these **SlammerDogZ™** will graduate as Assistance Dogs. We will hold a graduation ceremony to watch these dogs be passed on from their inmate trainers to their private placement clients [see Amanda's article]. Although there is much work to be done between now and then, it promises to be an exciting adventure every step of the way!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have made these initial accomplishments possible. First and foremost, Warden Driver and Mrs. Folk, without whose support and faith we **NEVER** could have implemented a project such as **SlammerDogZ™**. Also, the entire staff of USP Hazelton for their acceptance of this program and their assistance with our efforts.

Throughout this newsletter, you will learn of our activities and successes to date, with many more to come in the future. If you would like to guarantee you stay up-to-date with all of our future activities, please go to our web site: [www.paws4prisons.org](http://www.paws4prisons.org) and register for your free monthly newsletter which will be sent to you via email.

As Program Manager, I look forward to continuing to work with all those involved to reach our goal of changing lives, one day at a time.



**NIKKI**  
Awaiting  
Her Next  
Command



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Amanda is a blessing to everyone she meets. Her positive attitude leaves those she meets with a renewed outlook on life. The possibility of Amanda having a Service Dog will give back to her what she has given to others—unconditional love. Due to various medications and risk of infections, Amanda has not had many social encounters outside of the home. This Service Dog will help ease the upcoming transitions that she will face in the next 2-3 years. This dog will be her best friend and confidant. The dog will also assist Amanda with carrying items, picking up things, and opening doors, which are all things that will set Amanda apart from her peers. Above all, the dog will be her social guide into a world which is daunting to those who are different.

There is an amazing paradigm of love and judgment in the partnership with **SlammerDogZ™** and the community. Two vastly different lives are being brought together through love. Amanda will live the rest of her life imprisoned by her disability; she is an

innocent child who did nothing to deserve this prison. Her body is her prison; it will not allow her to lead a “normal” life and will hold her back in ways most cannot imagine. Inmate Trainers participating in the **SlammerDogZ™** program are living just like Amanda. They are living apart from

*“...if we remember to live with the same smile, contagious soft giggle, and positive attitude as Amanda, the world will be a better place.”*

the ones they love, missing out on the freedoms most take for granted, and are often misunderstood by our society. Unlike Amanda, their imprisonment came as a result of the choices they made. However, both lives are equally deserving of the opportunity to love, care for, and serve others. Amanda is bringing great joy and an opportunity to serve to these Inmate Trainers. Likewise, the Inmate Trainers are providing Amanda with the

promise of a brighter future through training her dog to meet her specific needs. This opportunity will benefit those involved more than we could ever know. Amanda and the Trainers will never be able to adequately express their gratitude, yet they will forever hold the value of this experience deep within their hearts.

Life doesn't always play out like we think it will. There are sure to be bumps along the way—some larger than others, but if we remember to live with the same smile, contagious soft giggle, and positive attitude as Amanda, the world will be a better place.

For more information about Amanda you can visit the following sites:

[www.Amanda.Story.paws4people.org](http://www.Amanda.Story.paws4people.org)  
[www.Amandaiupdate.blogspot.com](http://www.Amandaiupdate.blogspot.com)

To contribute to help train Amanda's **SlammerDogZ™** go to:

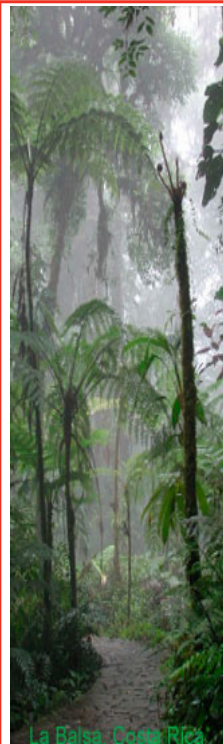
[www.Amanda.paws4people.org](http://www.Amanda.paws4people.org)  
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# TARA's Story

A Mother's Prospective - by Trish Salgado



**TARA &  
HUNTER**

toddler, she was drawn to any kind of animal; be it a dog, a cat, a horse, or even an exotic reptile.

For me, animals had never been a priority, although I have always liked them. In fact, I had always been very conservative in my interaction with animals. Tara, on the other hand, spent her childhood reading to, and having conversations with, pets of family friends. Eventually, Tara and her sister, Kathryn, became "mothers" of two gerbils and a cat. Tara took to and raised these pets just as a grown woman would her own children; it was simply amazing to me. Where this extreme connection with the animal kingdom came from, I do not know, however, as Tara grew older there was no denying her need for a companion of her own—one that could give back just as much love and teach Tara the responsibility of a young adult.

When I heard about **paws4people™**, I realized this provided just the opportunity that Tara needed. I explained to her that the puppies grew up to be Social-Therapy Dogs for challenged people like herself, as well as other people who needed such love and friendship. I meant by this to explain to Tara that she would be receiving a Therapy Dog of her very own. However, to my surprise, Tara did not look at it this way at all. On the other hand, she was awed by the fact that if she got a puppy she would have a dog with which she could "provide" therapy to others. I could hardly disagree with this innocent and selfless perspective; nor could the **paws4people™** staff, who ac-

My daughter, Tara, is a special young woman in so many ways. She is as sweet and caring as any mother could wish their daughter to be. Tara is also a special citizen in that she is a mentally challenged young lady. But perhaps the most exceptional thing about Tara is her love of animals. From the time she was a

cepted our application for a Social-Therapy Dog. Even though Tara had graduated high school, (she was 20--as special education students can stay in school until they are 22) she looked like a little girl again when she giggled and played with the puppies. Although she loved the whole litter, Tara took a special fondness for the darkest colored of the Golden pups--she called him the "little brown boy." Luckily enough, or perhaps not by chance at all, this was the puppy Tara received—HUNTER.

Tara and HUNTER took to each other instantly. He has also become a vital part of our entire family. HUNTER has proven to be therapeutic to all of us, both as a family and individually. He has certainly taught me just why people love animals so much, for when a person loves all of God's creatures, then we have true love. I have even found myself kissing and cuddling him since we were blessed with his addition to our family. Tara talks to HUNTER just like

a friend and loves him as such. She was maturing with delayed reaction in her own life compared to the regular population of her age group, but with HUNTER, she took on a more responsible adult voice and sense of being. She talked and acted like a mother and an adult.

HUNTER has completed Puppy Kindergarten and Basic Obedience and attends the Doggie-Do-Right School for day care and social interaction. We hope to get HUNTER into Advanced Training so that Tara can take him to schools, retirement homes, hospitals and long term care and rehab facilities.

In my eyes, HUNTER embodies the **paws4people™** mission of enhancing lives through his canine love each day of his life. Just as the **paws4people™** logo shows the dog extending its paw towards the person, HUNTER has extended himself to open our hearts and minds each day. The love between HUNTER and Tara is as golden as his fur; and it is priceless to this mother.

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## DESIRE to MAKE a DIFFERENCE

Staff & Advisor's Reactions to Visiting the Program - by Luci Loeffler

There are countless inspiring stories of people who make a difference. Movie stars, sports celebrities and politicians promote their causes. Everyday people around the world are heroes in their homes and hometowns. Opportunities to assist abound. And through the **paws4prisons™ / SlammerDogZ™** Program, we have found a group of very special women determined to make the program and their lives a success.

When I learned about the **paws4prisons™ / SlammerDogZ™** Program, I wanted to see the prison and meet the inmates. What are the people like who have asked to participate in the program? Why do they want to be in the program? Where do the dogs and inmates live and train?

A visit to USP Hazelton was planned. Once we received clearance to visit the prison, my fellow **paws4people™ foundation** volunteer Diana Keese, Jenny Brown of Bowser Beer (a corporate sponsor of **paws4people™ foundation**, and the **paws4prisons™ / SlammerDogZ™** Program), and I set out to meet inmates who applied for positions in the Program.

We met the inmates in a recreation building at the prison and toured a

cell where one of the trainers and her dog would live during the training process. The ladies were truly remarkable. Each woman was grateful for our visit and wanted to make a good impression – to show us that prisoners are not a lost cause. They demonstrated the dogs' progress during Boot Camp, which is the initial training phase, in a large gymnasium. The dogs were energetic, bright and eager to please.

The ladies took turns reading from a written assignment, "What the **paws4prisons™** Program Means to Me." It was evident they were nervous about having an audience of outsiders and their peers - sharing profoundly personal and poignant accounts about themselves. My friends and I were deeply moved.

There were very few dry eyes in the recreation room at USP Hazelton while the ladies spoke of what they hope to achieve. Tissues were quietly passed from person to person during the presentations.

Before coming to the federal prison in West Virginia, these ladies lived across the United States: Texas, Maryland, Nebraska, Virginia, California, Missouri, Louisiana, Florida, Idaho, South Dakota, and the District

of Columbia. The ladies are loving moms and grandmothers of infants and small children. They were employed – some had retired. They represent all ages, educational and economic backgrounds. They committed crimes and were convicted. Now, they are serving sentences for 15 years, 18 years, 20 years - a long time.

Faced with these harsh realities and precious few choices, their strong desire to have a purpose while in prison led these ladies to apply for positions in the **paws4prisons™ / SlammerDogZ™** Program. Each woman has personal reasons for doing so. They hope to make a difference in the lives of the disabled, so they won't feel forgotten or abandoned and to give them a better life by training dogs. They want to give back to the community and show the outside world that prisoners are not a lost cause, and also so their children will be proud of them.

Meeting the inmates was an incredible experience. As dynamic and inspiring as the **paws4prisons™** volunteers are, the real stars behind the scenes are the ladies at USP Hazelton, striving to make a positive change and difference in their lives and those whom the dogs will help.



**The many "faces" of ELLIE**

# AMANDA'S Story

Amanda is currently scheduled to receive her Service / Educational Assistance Dog in Aug 2008, from the class of dogs currently undergoing training at USP - Hazelton

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Amanda suffered a stroke while still in the womb, which damaged both sides of her brain.

During her first six months of life, Amanda showed some developmental delays. In December 2004, she was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and began physical and occupational therapy.

A short time later, Amanda began having seizures and was diagnosed with a severe form of infant Epilepsy, known as Infantile Spasms. This diagnosis came with a grim prognosis with regard to Amanda's intellectual ability but Amanda fought hard to progress developmentally despite the prognosis. Over the next 6-8 months, Amanda's seizures would come under control, only to start again. She tried many different medications, diets, and other treatments but she could not keep the seizures at bay.

By September of 2005, Amanda was having over 100 seizures per day despite taking seven different medicines to prevent them. Amanda was taken to UCLA Hospital where doctors recommended she have major brain surgery, which was performed in October of 2005.

The eight-hour surgery resulted in one-half of one side of Amanda's brain being partially removed, and the other half of that side being disconnected from the other hemisphere. The surgery also resulted in the removal of her speech center and the loss of about 25% of her eye sight.

In November 2005, Amanda had a shunt inserted into her brain to reduce the pressure that was building up. While the surgery initially left Amanda with severe right sided weakness, she now walks using a gait trainer and with assistance in a regular walker.

Amanda is now able to sit without assistance, roll both ways, and is able to kneel. She is still working at transitions into many of these positions but has mastered them if you place her in a position. The fine motor skills in Amanda's right hand are very slow to develop. While Amanda's future health status is not fully known, she remains virtually seizure free since her surgery.

Amanda's current therapies include occupational, physical, speech, vision, and special education, and all of her therapists are thrilled with her progress since surgery, as she has made great strides in all areas.

Amanda's Assistance Dog will aid her with walking because the surgery resulted in her having to use a gait trainer and regular walker. The dog will also assist Amanda by picking up objects she may drop, opening doors for her, and carrying items for Amanda. Amanda's parents also believe the dog will help Amanda during her school career, as it facilitates her acceptance, inclusion and integration into her school environment.

For more information on Amanda, you can check out her Blog at:

<http://www.amandaiupdate.blogspot.com>, or go to: <http://www.amanda.story.paws4people.org>

To help Amanda and others get their Assistance Dogs, please go to:

<http://www.amanda.paws4people.org>

Amanda's parents have established a foundation to advance the understanding and treatment of conditions associated with Infantile Spasms and to foster support to those impacted by the condition. For more information go to: [www.infantilespasmsfoundation.org](http://www.infantilespasmsfoundation.org)





The **2007 Assistance Dog Fundraising Campaign [ADFC]** is being conducted to raise funds for the acquisition, training, placement, and follow-up case management of high quality, specifically trained Assistance Dogs which are, or will be, privately placed or provide direct services to individuals with physical, neurological, psychiatric and/or emotional disabilities.

This fundraising campaign is being conducted under the auspices and direct management of the **paws4people™ foundation**, which is classified by the IRS as a public charity with 501(c)(3) tax exempt status under Code Section 170(b)(1)(A)(vi). The organization's EIN is: 54-1948479; its most current IRS DLN is: 17053274781095. Therefore, your Donation is tax-deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

For more information please go to: [www.2007ADFC.paws4people.org](http://www.2007ADFC.paws4people.org)

**The following individuals have been selected and approved to receive a private placement Assistance Dog or already have one and are trying to help others to obtain one as well!**

PLEASE HELP  
**Amanda**



For more information about Amanda's story, please go to:  
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To Contribute to the 2007 Assistance Dog Campaign on Amanda's behalf, please go to:

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PLEASE HELP  
**Grace**



For more information about Grace's story, please go to:  
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To Contribute to the 2007 Assistance Dog Campaign on Grace's behalf, please go to:

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PLEASE HELP  
**Tara**



For more information about Tara's story, please go to:  
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# paws4prisons™ CHIEF TRAINER'S CORNER



By Heidi Livengood  
Chief Trainer  
paws4prisons™  
w/ SD GAVIN

The past few months have been filled with the female inmates learning new concepts relating to Assistance Dog training. They first learned about behavior; what leads up to a behavior,

the action of the behavior and the consequences that result because of the behavior. They then started to learn concepts about bonding, training and being a "Dog Whisperer" in the "BASICS & ABC'S of the SMARTEST DOG TRAINING" acronyms. These theories and acronyms were created by the founder of the service dog concept, Dr. Bonita Bergin.

Most recently, I have been teaching the inmates about personality styles. Determining both dog and client personality styles plays a huge part in the matching process. The inmates had the opportunity to determine their

dog's personality style along with their own. Also important to this field, they are learning about wheelchair and communication etiquette in relation to people with disabilities. So often people in society look down upon people in wheelchairs and are deemed "different." Many people say phrases in reference to these people such as "disabled person" or "crippled person." However, we must not forget that they indeed are still people and want to be treated as such. The phrase "A person with a disability" gives much more respect and puts the person first not the disability. These are all important things for the inmates to understand, as they will participate in the matching process and interacting with our clients.

Since day one of training, the inmates have been taught to use only positive training methods with the dogs. They use love, praise, and treats as motivation to help the dogs learn all 90+ commands. They have learned that to be a dog trainer, you have to have a "bag of tricks" and be flexible and willing to try various ways

of training. Body language has also been a key part in training. One thing that they have all learned first-hand is that communication with dogs is 90% body language.

I can see both the dogs and the inmates making progress each week. They are working hard on basic obedience and getting the dogs to differentiate between work time and play time. Currently, we are practicing retrieving with wooden dumbbells and will eventually progress to items of paper, plastic, metal and cloth. In the near future we will be training the dogs to tug open doors and push them shut, and to turn on and off lights. There has been a lot of progress made, but there is still so much more to learn!



## GENNY

Seriously considering her next action!

**Many Hats Institute**

Founded in 1999, The Many Hats Institute (MHI) is a non-profit dedicated to improving the conditions for children and youth worldwide. MHI takes advantage of the many hats that people wear or have the potential to wear. The strategy of the institute is to leverage time, talent, and resources from the "Many Hatters" from around the world. The ultimate objective is empowerment - empowerment of youth and empowerment of the people who want to help youth, as quickly as possible in as many places as possible.

For more information please go to: [www.themanyhats.org](http://www.themanyhats.org)

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**A Key to SUCCESS After Prison**

paws4prisons™ is a Training Program at USP Hazelton providing inmates the opportunity to learn and experience the K-9 / Human bond, based on unconditional love and acceptance, and, to gain valuable post-prison marketable job skills, obtain professional certifications such as dog trainer, kennel master, etc., self-discipline, a work-ethic and on-the-job experience. This is all aimed at increasing the inmates chances for succeeding upon their release from prison. Other similar programs have realized remarkable reductions in recidivism rates.

This Program produces very highly and specifically trained Service and Educational Assistance dogs to support the needs

**paws4people, Inc.**  
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 Candace Reel, Heidi Livengood

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