Puppies
Behind
Bars

Photos: Peggy Vance

Fall – Winter 2015

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS trains prison inmates to raise service dogs for wounded war veterans and explosive-detection canines for law enforcement. The puppies live in prison with their "puppy-raisers" from the age of 8 weeks to 24 months. As the puppies mature into well-loved, well-behaved dogs, their raisers learn what it means to contribute to society rather than take from it.

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The Lady AND THE Labs

Four million people visit the Statue of Liberty National Monument each year.

Encompassing both the landmark statue and Ellis Island, it's a busy place, invested with enormous symbolic power, and security is a constant concern for the U.S. Park Police. So it was with great pride that Puppies Behind Bars learned last year that two of its canine graduates, Sam and John, had started work as explosive-detection canines (E.D.C.'s) there.

The job isn't easy: extensive daily sweeps; constant work at vehicle checkpoints, at visitor screening sites, and on ferries; investigations of any unattended property or suspicious packages. During special events, or when high-profile guests visit the monument, the canine teams put in extra effort to ensure everyone is safe. "No other K9 unit in the Park Police completes the number of bomb searches we do on a daily basis," says Sam's handler, Sergeant Jose Rodriguez.

"Working at the Statue of Liberty is challenging," affirms his boss, Captain Raymond Closs. "People are constantly in close proximity, so it's important to have an obedient and non-aggressive dog. Some locations inside the monument are difficult to access—narrow, winding staircases, tight spaces, and very crowded spaces, to name a few. Also, our teams work in

— continued on next page

Photo: U.S. Park Police

Officer Edwin Jimenez and John

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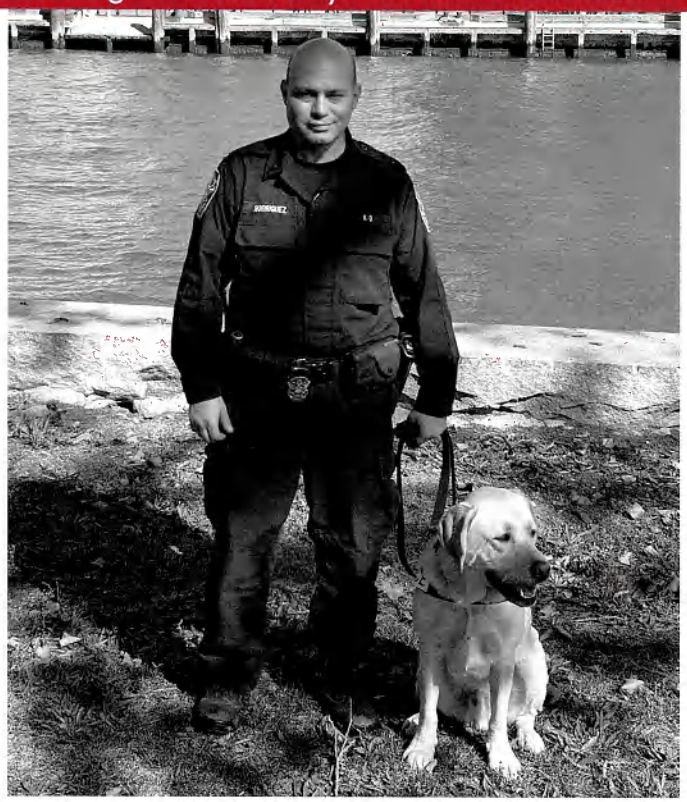

Photos: U.S. Park Police

Sergeant Jose Rodriquez and Sam

all weather conditions, and here in New York that can be anything from blistering heat to a deep freeze with heavy snow."

When the Park Police first asked to attend a P.B.B. class at the Edna Mahan women's prison in New Jersey, "We had no idea if they were looking for anything out of the ordinary," recalls instructor Jan Brady. "But our E.D.C.'s have been successful in many organizations, from the F.B.I. to the C.I.A., so we were hopeful."

Captain Closs wasn't sure what to expect either. "At first, not knowing much about the program, I was apprehensive," he recalls. "But after personally visiting the prison and observing a class in action I was convinced. Not only are the dogs wonderful, but the Puppies Behind Bars staff—especially Jan—was outstanding and obviously dedicated to and passionate about the mission of the organization. I could also see the positive effect this had on the inmate puppy-raisers."

As for the two Labradors in the spotlight today, they weren't always engaged in such important work. The inmates who raised them remember Sam as being "goofy," and say John could be "silly." But both dogs were clearly smart and strong, with the energy and confidence that P.B.B. looks for in pups being trained as E.D.C.'s. "Sam took to everything I introduced him to," remembers his raiser, Nikki. "He approached each new thing with bold fearlessness."

P.B.B.'s program at Edna Mahan has produced more than 103 working E.D.C.'s over the last 14 years. Brady, who has been instructing inmates for the entire time, says the biggest challenge for her and fellow instructor Joan Neumann is training the women to train the dogs. "People are much more complicated than canines," she points out. If the puppy-raisers get discouraged, Brady tells them: "This is what you signed up for!" And some do drop out of the program.

For the inmates who persevere, there is both joy and sadness ahead. Nikki was excited when the Park Police's Sergeant Rodriguez came to get Sam: "I was able to meet Sam's handler and I was happy to hear he had a great place to go. But when I left the visit trailer to go back up to the housing unit, I suddenly felt lost—like someone had cut off one of my arms. Sam was the first puppy I'd raised, so that made it particularly hard."

But ultimately, she says, there's "the satisfaction that comes from giving back. I'm left with a sense of pride in what Sam is doing for our country. Every time I hear anything about the Statue of Liberty on the news I smile, thinking about what Sam is doing to protect people."

Sgt. Rodriguez sees both dogs' P.B.B. background as a plus. "John and Sam received more time with their trainers than other canines coming from a more traditional kennel," he notes. "This created a strong bond between the dogs and their handlers." He and Sam bonded quickly, and when they aren't working Sam mixes happily into a household that includes Rodriguez's daughters, aged four and eleven, and two other (non-professional) dogs. "He does try to hog up the attention when I

play with the other two," the sergeant admits.

John's handler, Officer Edwin Jimenez, sounds equally pleased with his canine partner, praising the dog's stamina and "play drive"—the instinct that is key to a successful E.D.C. "John picks up real easy on routines and commands," he reports. "Whenever we enter a new environment he is eager to explore it and awaits my next command."

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"The environmental training that P.B.B. incorporates in the early training is very beneficial and we carry that through into our own training programs," Captain Closs says. "It's been a pleasure working with everyone at P.B.B. I look forward to partnering again in the future."

All of which is why, when Jan Brady and Joan Neumann visited the Statue of Liberty last July, to watch the pair of handsome P.B.B. graduates at work, Brady couldn't have been more pleased with what she saw. "I was happy and flattered that Sam remembered me (he came right up to me with an excited wiggle), and I was proud on so many levels—proud of P.B.B. for providing Sam and John to the Park Police to protect our nation's most visible and visited symbol of freedom, proud of their two raisers for their hard work and for the love they gave Sam and John, proud of the dogs for realizing their potential, and of course proud for the parts all of us played in setting them up for their extraordinary success."

Office Elves

2015 Holiday Cards and 2016 Calendar

Right now, P.B.B.'s office is as busy as Santa's workshop as the staff fills orders for holiday cards and 2016 calendars. This seasonal support means a lot, thanks to the growing number of people who choose to spread the word about P.B.B. by sending out the organization's witty and moving cards. But a gentle reminder: If you are planning to make a purchase, please order soon. Just visit puppiesbehindbars.com and click on "Holiday Cards and Calendar" to print an order form.

DONATION FORM

Please accept my donation for:

- ❍ Routine veterinary care for one puppy for a year ($850)
- ❍ One service dog vest with patches ($100)
- ❍ A new sleeping crate ($85)
- ❍ Food for a puppy for one month ($70)
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Fall-Winter 2015

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PAWS FOR APPLAUSE

December Diplomas

Six wounded veterans, from New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Alabama, and California, will arrive in December for 16 days of "team training" with their Dog Tags service dogs. Upon their graduation, 16 veterans will have been paired with dogs in 2015, a record for the program. Everyone involved is grateful for the service these men and women have given our country, and for their brave decision to seek help and make their disabilities public.

Beyond the Bars

P.B.B. welcomed its newest staff member, Kevin Rowland, in September. Rowland was a puppy raiser in the Fishkill Correctional Facility for three years and eight months, until his parole this past August. "It gave me a sense of fulfillment and purpose during a difficult time in my life," he says. "I learned a great deal, not only about dog training, but other skills which can be applied to the real world. I believe in this organization and have personally seen the numerous lives it changes for the better. I look forward to continuing my journey as a part of P.B.B. as well as starting a new chapter in my life."

Photo P.B.B.

Kevin Rowland and Albee

Joining the One Percent

This just in! P.B.B. has been chosen as one of Charity Navigator's *10 Charities Worth Watching,* and gotten its ninth consecutive four-star rating from the premier evaluator of non-profits. "Receiving four out of a possible four stars indicates that your organization adheres to good governance and other best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities and consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way. Only 1% of the charities we rate have received at least 9 consecutive 4-star evaluations," wrote Charity Navigator's C.E.O. Michael Thatcher, in his letter of commendation. "Our favorable review of Puppies Behind Bars' fiscal health and commitment to accountability and transparency is now visible on our website."

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