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2017

# Unintended Rehabilitation: A Comparative Analysis of Prison Animal Programs

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# Unintended Rehabilitation: A Comparative Analysis of Prison Animal Programs

By

Melissa Beseres B.S.

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Social Work  
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas  
Twin Cities, Minnesota  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of  
Master of Social Work

Committee Members  
Jessica Toft, MSW, Ph.D. (Chair)  
Miriam Itzkowitz, MSW, LICSW  
Lori Peper-Rucks

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

## **Abstract**

Prison Animal Programs (PAPs) are built on the foundation of the human-animal bond. Integrating animals into correctional settings through a therapeutic approach could potentially influence many individuals as prisons continue to increase their capacity. In this comparative analysis, the United States was divided into three regional sectors and quota sampling was used to select two prison-animal programs from each sector. Purposeful sampling was used to navigate characteristics of each program's website information, including comprehensive mission and program description. Prison-animal programs are rarely used through a therapeutic lens, resulting in little to no collected or comparative data. However, information available indicates that working with an animal can teach patience, trust, communication, and may normalize life as many inmates may have had an animal before their sentencing. Available research was favorable regarding the respective programs, which is not surprising, as most of the information was generated by the prison-animal programs themselves. Although PAP have been demonstrated to provide significant benefits to prisons and prisoners, the researcher notes there are considerable road blocks to expansion of programming including: a lengthy application process, crimes that disqualify individuals, number of dogs available for programming, and private prison closures. For the social work profession, it would be helpful to gain more research knowledge on how to best assist in rehabilitating inmates while they are in a correctional setting. Results from this study indicate prison-animal programs are one tool for assisting prisoners to do well and thrive once out of prison.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my three committee members, Dr. Jessica Toft, Miriam Itzkowitz, and Lori Peper-Rucks, who helped support, provide guidance and encouraged me to research a topic that has been of interest of mine since entering social work, all the while developing a research method that preserved my interest in the human animal connection and prison animal programs.

First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Toft, for developing the piloted 682 research project. This project was a bear, but your unwavering commitment and enthusiasm to each one of us encouraged us to continue pushing forward. The time you spent each week editing, brainstorming, and reassuring added to the growth and depth of the topic we were researching. Especially when you had other classes that you teach and your own research. The time you put into our class was truly remarkable. Thank you!

Next, I would like to thank Miriam Itzkowitz. You are a brilliant social worker and supervisor. Over the past two years you have inspired me to breathe a little deeper and to be filled with a sense of responsibility to fight for justice, rooted in love. Thank you for taking the time and energy help with this research project, and also for believing in the topic.

Lastly, I want to thank Lori Peper-Rucks who believed in prison animal programming before other programs existed. Lori runs her own PAP here in Minnesota, and the time she has spent training the inmates alongside the service and/or narcotics dogs is commendable. Lori has influenced so many inmates, but also the larger community from the dogs entering the community. You have influenced and improved so many inmate's lives, their lives will never be the same. Thank you for sharing that passion. I too, believe in Prison Animal Programs.

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## Introduction

*“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one’s soul remains unawakened.”*  
-Anatole France

Americans have a love for animals, as evidenced by the 70-80 million families who own a dog and another 74-96 million who own a cat in the United States (ASPCA, 2016). The relationship between animal and caregiver is referred to as the human-animal bond. Through this bond, animals have been shown to provide health benefits to those with whom they interact. Smith (2012) categorizes benefits from the human-animal bond into three categories: physical health, psychological health, and social health. Similarly, Bowlby (1969) asserted that loving relationships serve as a source of comfort and security with the ability to reduce stress. Loving relationships also improve self-regulation and maintain emotional equilibrium – while Bowlby likely was not thinking of the human-animal bond, it is not too far to stretch the parallels of a loving relationship.

As the association between human and animal continues to be researched, the human-animal bond has been recognized across several different disciplines. One of those disciplines is Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) and it can be found in an assortment of facilities from nursing homes, physical therapy settings, mental health facilities, and correctional facilities. AAT “is an umbrella term for diverse therapeutic approaches, used with people of all ages (from children to the elderly) in which an animal is an integral part of the treatment process” (Zilcha-Mano, et. al., 2011).

Integrating AAT into correctional settings through a therapeutic approach could potentially influence many individuals as prisons continue to increase their capacity. According to the US Department of Justice an estimated 6,851,000 people were supervised in adult correctional facilities in 2014. One in 36 people in the United States were under correctional

supervision (BJS, 2016), which equates to a 43% increase in state and federal correctional facilities since 1990 (Kirchhoff, 2010). The United States has the largest prison population in the world, the second highest per capita with 2.2 million people incarcerated (Benns, 2015). The response to such an upsurge resulted in one new prison, on average, opening every 10 days in the United States (Stevenson, 2014). Additionally, the demographics within the prison system are racially skewed; “in some states, African Americans comprise 80 to 90 percent of all drug offenders sent to prison” (Alexander, 2010).

This increase is partially explained by the fact that three out of four former inmates in 30 states were arrested within five years of their release in 2005 (BJS, 2014). Providing job opportunities within a prison allows for an inmate to learn a trade while fulfilling their prison sentences. Of the many prison working programs, one brings animals behind bars. Prison Animal Programs, (PAPs) are built on the foundation of the human-animal bond, where animals are trained by inmates behind bars.

PAPs encourage socialization, communication, and additional life skills that may decrease recidivism after release. The Federal Prison Industry, known as UNICOR or FPI, creates jobs within the prison system. Business ranging from textiles, electrical assembly, fleet re-manufacturing, industrial products, i.e. license plates, furniture making, recycling programs, and also management and business development (UNICOR, n.d.). In addition to work, inmates may have the opportunity to earn their high school diploma or college credits. While work and school can resemble life before prison, having a dog may also normalize life, as many inmates had a household pet before their sentencing. According to Furst (2006), there are 71 different prison animal programs across 36 U.S. states. A PAP may include a dog-handler team, equine program, general livestock management or a domestic cat program. Although 71 sounds

promising for the discipline, countless prison animal programs are not advertised or are privately operated, making it difficult to discover where and how the programs are functioning.

This research paper will examine various prison animal programs across the United States. Using a comparative analysis lens, six different programs will be considered in the ways they are structured, as well as their goals for program outcomes.

## **Literature Review**

### **History of Work in Prisons**

Although Prison Animal Programs may span the areas of paid work and therapeutic interaction, it is important to understand the context of labor in prisons as one lens through which to understand the position of these programs. Prison labor has been occurring in public and private sectors as a way to generate prison revenue for decades in the United States. Prison labor was initially intended to counterbalance the cost of incarceration, with hopes of operating as self-sustaining enterprises, without taxpayer aid. Cheap prison labor quickly disrupted the local labor sales, agricultural market, and commerce in the community. During the nineteenth century, community members argued that prison labor impacted their own free labor. This resulted in unions arguing for a reduction and rigidity of prison sales to minimize the stress on the local labor market (Derrick, Scott & Hutson, 2004). Unions became governmentally stronger during the latter half of the nineteenth century and opposition to prison labor continued to flourish.

By 1924, prison labor laws were altered numerous times through legislative actions, starting with the Hawes Cooper Act of 1929. This was the first federal legislation authorizing individual states to bar the entry of prison-made goods (Kang, 2009). Individual states could now ban the sale of prisoner made goods from one state to another. Another set of limitations was set



in 1935 with the Ashurts-Summers Act. The Ashurts-Summers Act allowed Congress to place additional constraints on sales and distribution of products made by convicts. Then in 1936, The Walsh-Healy Act prohibited sales to federal government agencies, and in 1940 more restrictions were added to the Summers-Ashurts Act (Federal Register, 1999). The snowballing effect of these new laws created a closed market for convict-made goods. Some reasoned that “the inevitable result of these actions was an increase in inmate idleness in state prisons” (Misrahi, 1996, p.419).

Congress lessened its restrictions on prison labor with the Percy Amendment to the Justice Improvement Act (1979) which crafted the Private Sector/Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP) (Derrick, Scott & Hutson, 2004). “PIECP relaxed the restrictions imposed under the Ashurst-Summers and Walsh-Healey Acts, and allowed for the manufacture, sale and distribution of prisoner-made products across state lines” (Sloan, 2010).

### **Prison Industry Enhancement**

Currently, PIECP offers opportunities for inmates that mimic private-sector employment jobs (BJA, 2004). Prisoners have the opportunity to apply to working programs that they may be interested in, interview for the specific position, and if selected have the responsibility of a full-time job whilst incarcerated. Work opportunities, ranging from mechanical to agricultural, and everything in-between are accessible to prisoners; many private agencies offer work space on campus in turn replicating a stable work environment. While a job may pass the hours of the day, or present an opportunity to learn a new trade, prisoners are not treated like the rest of the working world. Wages for inmates range from \$0.23 to \$1.15 for maximum earnings. (Prison Policy Initiative, 2003)

Regardless of this gross pay difference, inmates still apply for these employment options. Some prison programs require applications to work in specific industries. In fact, much of the process of being hired mimics steps outside of prison. Applying for work, and interviewing for a specific position, replicates what a job interview may be like after discharge, in turn preparing inmates for the release back into society. Mann (1999) articulates the experience through the prison industry enhancement programs is moot if no employment opportunities exist upon release. While this point is quite valid, the rehabilitative aspect of an engaging activity, which is rarely discussed, may be a gain and have value in and of itself.

### **Racial Disparity**

In 1971, President Nixon declared the “War on Drugs,” which accentuated racial profiling by police. Racial profiling permitted law enforcement agencies to target minorities and lower income neighborhoods by pursuing individuals based on their race, as a replacement for criminal conduct or a definite crime. Nixon set a paradigm of forceful policies targeting drug-related crimes (Sirin, 2011). Fifteen years later, racial discrimination was further manifested during the Reagan Administration when legislative policies enforced the maximum minimum sentencing laws. Maximum minimum policy required judges to impose the maximum minimum prison sentences on drug related crimes, with no exceptions. Schwarzer noted in 1992:

Mandatory minimums have a disproportionate racial impact because of the higher penalties for the sale and distribution of crack compared with those for powder cocaine. The penalties for crack are 100 times as severe as those for cocaine: For example, five grams of so-called cocaine base, known commonly as crack, is treated the same as 500 grams of cocaine; crack is treated twenty times more severely than heroin. (p. 408)

While crack is essentially the same drug as cocaine, punishment was vastly different based on who was selling the drug. “Of those charged with crack possession, ninety-seven percent were black; of those charged with cocaine possession, eighty percent were white” (Schwarzer, 1992). The War on Drugs targeted minorities more than it targeted clean streets. Therefore, since declaring the War on Drugs, American incarceration rates increased 700% over the past 40 years (Henrichson & Delaney, 2012). There is no denying the racial disparities for individuals who are incarcerated.

As the disenfranchised are out of sight and out of mind, stripped of their social and political rights, while earning wages comparable to third world countries, how can this be rehabilitation? “Those who argue in favor of prison labor claim it is a useful tool for rehabilitation and preparation for post-jail employment. But this has only been shown to be true in cases where prisoners are exposed to meaningful employment, where they learn new skills, not the labor-intensive, menial and often dangerous work they are being tasked with” (Khalek 2011). Given the positive aspects of animals in prisons, PAP may fit into this category.

### **Prison Animal Programs (PAPs)**

It is possible for meaningful work where relationships are created and those relationships nurture rehabilitation, versus hard and coerced labor. Innovative methods of employment with the use of dogs, cats, horses, and other animals may increase prison morale, prisoner self-worth and the chance to contribute to society from behind prison walls (Furst, 2006). Prison-animal programs provide transformational working experiences portrayed above. In addition to increasing the inmate’s sense of self, prison-animal programs afford inmates to be viewed as positive contributors to society (Furst, 2006). Unfortunately, prison-animal programs are rarely used through a therapeutic lens, resulting in little to no collected or comparative data.

Working with an animal has the ability to teach patience, as it may take patience to teach a training command or new skill to the animal. With the prevalence of pets in American households, prison-animal programs may normalize life as many inmates might have had an animal before their sentencing. Turner (2007) states that training a dog, or horse, for the larger community, shelter or person with a disability increases an inmate's self-esteem, as they feel they are influencing someone's life in a positive manner. In addition to patience, communication is a social skill that may be learned as an animal handler. Communication is used across several disciplines; handler team, dog and handler, and inmate to handler, creating an opportunity for transparency and open dialogue.

Curricula for prison-animal programs range from training shelter dogs, who otherwise would be euthanized, and providing them with skills to be readopted into the community. Other PAPs train future service dogs, search and rescue, or narcotic working dogs. Uniquely, in Colorado, the Wild Horse Inmate Program (WHIP) of Canon City, uses a transformative process for both inmates and wild mustangs (Dalke, 2008). Ingenious foresight and collaboration with WHIP, along with the United States Bureau of Land Management, the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 protect, manage, and control wild free horses and burros on public land with the help from inmates (Public Law, 92-195).

Deaton (2005) advocates for transformative change within correctional facilities because the bond between companion animal and handler might help with rehabilitative transformations. The entire person needs to be considered when they enter the prison, and not only be seen as the crime that was committed. "It is necessary to consider the whole person inside the uniform, who always comes with human needs, emotions and attitudes" (Deaton, 2005). Zollman (1993) went further to incorporate learned transformations by stating that "education that remains merely on

the surface of human life, that fails to go to the heart of being, will inevitably fail in being correctional or, in other words, formative, reformatory, and transformative” (p.93). Working with animals in a correctional setting is not only vocational, but connects to the heart. Animal programs provide significant, meaningful interactions and life lessons.

### **Inmate Improvement**

Although there are little concrete data studying the relationship of prison animal programs, there is considerable research supporting the human-animal connection. Scientific data supports that the human-animal bond “has positive effects on psychological and physical well-being, helping shape how people regulate their emotions, deal with stress or trauma, and relate to others” (Sable, 2012, para 1). Deaton (2005) emphasized that companion animals bring out the best in people; there is an ability to share compassion, affection, and empathy that might be overlooked in human to human relationships.

In addition to companionship, the human-animal bond has been shown to improve health concerns. A companion animal inspires an individual to exercise, particularly going for walks, in-turn increasing cardiovascular and physical health. Psychological health also improves due to the interaction with an animal. Sable (2012) speaks to psychological health via ethological-evolutionary framework. “Attachment theory is based on the premise that humans, like many animals, are biologically predisposed to seek out and sustain physical contact and emotional connection to selective figures with whom they become familiar and come to rely on for psychological and physical protection” (p. 94).

Participants in animal therapy programs have reported noteworthy reductions in isolation and frustration and a substantial modification in their outlook towards other inmates and their sense of self-worth improved (Furst, 2006). Britton and Button (2005) reference that

participants credit their dog to helping them deal with anger, help teach patience, and show what unconditional love looks like. Allowing for inmates to build upon trust and be given responsibility can be transformational, as many inmates have lost that power once they are incarcerated. Inmates display ownership and an emotional connection to their therapy dog that encourages growth as a handler and human being.

Although subjective prison administration indicates that inmates had improved their self-esteem and confidence while decreasing stress, and aggressive and disruptive behavior due to the animal therapy program (Furst, 2006). Training dogs is a marketable skill and in some cases, training the therapy dog earns college credits. Extracurricular prison programs rarely encourage self-growth, however, the goal of working with therapy dogs are to learn new skills that are applicable to the outside world. As a trainer, the experience replicates a structured job with a structured schedule, very much like a full time job.

### **The Prison Milieu**

A successful prison-animal program has the ability to reduce costs by reducing recidivism, as nearly two-thirds of state and federal inmates recidivate (Strimple, 2003). A draw for prison facilities to cater to animal therapy programs is that they keep inmates active, which reduces tedium and potential inmate conflict. Another constructive aspect of PAPs, is that dog curricula promote breaking down barriers of fear and mistrust between staff and inmates (Britton & Button, 2005).

Through emotional connections that develop between handler and therapy dog, trust may be built between team members, correctional workers, inmates, and animals. Prison-animal programs present several positive outcomes within the prison. Bridging relationships with the correctional staff, community, and handler teams may influence prison morale. Prison-animal

programs could potentially rehabilitate inmates while generating income and presenting unique working opportunities.

Currently, the literature supports benefits to the prisoner and prison facilities that operate prison animal programs. However, this information is sparse and often geared toward the prison rather than the prisoners themselves or social workers. Systematically understanding more fully the benefits and drawbacks of PAPs for prisoners would be helpful for social workers who are assisting prisoners to do well in and thrive once out of prison. Therefore, what do the literature, the prisons, and the prison programs present regarding the common elements, benefits and drawbacks to PAPs for prisoner-trainers and the prison culture?

### **Method**

Prison-animal programs across the United States were examined to discover their impact on prisoners and the prison facilities. In this comparative analysis, six prison-animal programs were explored for inclusion: two from the West Coast, two from the Midwest, and two from the East Coast. Dividing the US into three distinct sectors allowed for each region to have program representation. Quota sampling was then used, selecting two programs from each sector. Purposeful sampling was used to navigate characteristics of each website's information, comprehensive mission and program description. Countless program websites were excluded due to the featured benefit to the animals being trained and adopted, rather than the inmates who are training and benefitting from the human animal connection.

The programs selected for the comparative analysis were the Prison Pet Partnership Program in Washington, Wild Horse Inmate Program in Arizona, Paws with a Cause in Michigan, Patriot Paws in Texas, Healing Species in South Carolina, and Prison Pet Partnership in Massachusetts. Each will be explored further targeting specific outcomes relating to prisoners

and prison facilities. Outside of website scans, local media outlets will be examined to determine the local impact and perspectives on Prison Animal Programs within the community.

### **Data Collection**

**Program data collection.** This research methodology followed a systematic approach to finding relevant published information about animal programs that addressed the research question. First, program websites were considered and media coverage about specific programming was included, which also included video footage. Second, peer-reviewed journals were considered. Third, Google Scholar was searched for any independent research by research organizations. The data collection for the comparative analysis was expanded to include local newspapers from the closest urban city, government websites and educational sites. These were searched to ensure a purposeful and representative evaluation of prison-animal programs across the United States through regional sector programs.

Program websites were scanned primarily on regional location, based on the three sectors of the country. Prison-animals program were considered for the comparative analysis if they shared their mission as PAP-related or agency-specific, mentioned rehabilitative benefits to prisoners, offered inmate testimonials, influenced the larger community, or were rooted in the ecological model.

**Program selection.** Titles of the six working prison animal programs were searched using several academic databases: Criminal Justice Abstract, LexisNexis, SocINDEX, and Social Work Abstract. Google searches terms included the prison animal program titles from each of the six sectors.

Newspaper articles were searched based on the name of the prison, the prison animal program name, and “in the news.” The researcher also utilized Google Maps to determine the



largest urban city located near the prison-animal program and searched the local newspaper by entering the corresponding program. A governmental search was also conducted through usa.gov and each program was entered in the search bar. Lastly, through a Google search, any educational sites that covered a prison animal program were also used.

### **Data Analysis**

The compiled information was explored through a content analysis framework. Padgett (2008) explains content analysis as a method that was originally constructed to quantify several incidents of some phenomenon, but can be more broadly applied to analyze individual texts and to find common themes across texts. By using a content analysis framework, the researcher examined the material collected regarding prison-animal programs and sought to characterize their influence on prisoners and prisons. Themes were developed across the programs for each discipline and program snapshots were included. In addition to program snapshots, media representation of the prison-animal programs was included, which incorporated inmate quotes about their experience while participating in a prison-animal program.

### **Findings**

#### **Arizona: Wild Horses Inmate Program**

Across the six different programs that were assessed, the Arizona program was unique because of its multiple partnerships as well as the type of animal used in programming. The Wild Horse Inmate Program (WHIP) collaborates with Arizona Correctional Industries (ACI), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC). The BLM is responsible for safeguarding wild mustang and burro habitats on BLM land. This responsibility of protecting the health of the land is important so the species who roam it, specifically wild horses, can thrive (ACI, 2016).

Arizona's WHIP program was also unique in that they do not have a mission statement on their website. They provided a very brief excerpt on the programming, however WHIP is widely covered nationally and through several media outlets. Due to the fact that the inmates work with horses, this program is distinct from the others that were examined.

**Mission and program recognition.** What the researcher inferred to be the mission statement from the Wild Horse Inmate Program, listed on the main program page, (see Table 1) was that the "BLM's top priority is ensuring the health of the public lands so that the species depending on them – including the nation's wild horses – can thrive. To achieve that end, the BLM's wild horse program must be put on a sustainable course that benefits the animals, the land, and taxpayers" (ACI, 2016). Also on the website were links advertising sales of the trained horses and adoption information for the general public. Overall, the mission of the program tended to focus on the benefits to society, environment, and even the animals. It is interesting to note that benefits to the prisoners are not mentioned.

**Prisoner significance.** The Wild Horse Inmate Program briefly touched on inmate impacts on their website, highlighting only a few key benefits they believed inmates participating in the program would gain from the experience. The inmates who participate in the WHIP receive hands-on training in the equestrian field, which may be the first interaction with a horse for many individuals. This interaction includes the responsibility for care and treatment of the animals, resulting in increased self-confidence (ACI, 2016). Arizona Correctional Industries (2016) believes inmates can learn the skill of patience while acquiring employable skills that may be applied upon release.

Table 1: Program missions for six selected prison-animal programs evaluated in comparative analysis

TABLE 1	Arizona: Wild Horse Inmate Program	Washington: Prison Pet Partnership	Texas: Patriot Paws	Michigan: Paws with a Cause	South Carolina: Healing Species Prison	Massachusetts: Don't Throw Us Away
<b>Mission</b>	BLM's top priority is ensuring the health of the public lands so that the species depending on them – including the nation's wild horses – can thrive. To achieve that end, the BLM's wild horse program must be put on a sustainable course that benefits the animals, the land, and taxpayers.	Prison Pet Partnership enriches the lives of inmates, homeless animals and the community through the human-animal bond. Our mission allows us to grow in many directions, using our foundation of rescuing and training homeless animals and providing job skills training to women inmates. We continue to rescue, train and place service, therapy and companion animals, and also provide animal-assisted therapeutic visits to local convalescent centers, and help students improve reading skills by having dogs listen while children read aloud. We have boarding and grooming facilities to teach women inmates job skills, and we also help inmates write resumes, and practice interviewing skills. Prison Pet Partnership scouts for job opportunities in the community in which an inmate will be released, and provide support through job placement as she transitions back into the community.	The mission of Patriot Paws is to train and provide service dogs of the highest quality at no cost to disabled American veterans and others with mobile disabilities and PTS in order to help restore their physical and emotional independence. Patriot PAWS intends to build partnerships with state and community organizations to help develop and support this goal.	Paws With A Cause® enhances the independence and quality of life for people with disabilities nationally through custom-trained Assistance Dogs. PAWS® increases awareness of the rights and roles of Assistance	Teaching compassion, preventing violence, and changing lives through rescued dogs. Our vision: We see a world of compassion where every living creature is valued and protected, especially the most voiceless, children and animals.	Don't Throw Us Away is a nonprofit prison dog program which saves the lives of inmates and rescue dogs through training and education. Don't Throw Us Away pairs abandoned dogs rescued from high kill shelters with inmates who are looking to improve their lives. Through this unlikely partnership, homeless dogs gain the love, training and rehabilitation that will make them adoptable and inmates become empathetic and gain a sense of responsibility and purpose, allowing them to re-enter society as productive citizens. Don't Throw Us Away seeks to reduce the high rate of recidivism by providing inmates with valuable job skills which increases their chances of gainful employment after release. Don't Throw Us Away seeks to reduce the high rate of euthanasia in shelters and increase the amount of adoptions by providing dogs with the training they'll need to be good family members, resulting in permanent placements.
	retrieved from: <a href="https://www.aci.az.gov/wild-horse-program/">https://www.aci.az.gov/wild-horse-program/</a>	retrieved from: <a href="http://www.prisonpetpartnership.org/html/mis-sion.html">http://www.prisonpetpartnership.org/html/mis-sion.html</a>	retrieved from: <a href="http://www.patriotpaws.org/">http://www.patriotpaws.org/</a>	retrieved from: <a href="https://www.pawswithacause.org/who-we-are/mission-values">https://www.pawswithacause.org/who-we-are/mission-values</a>	retrieved from: <a href="http://www.healingspecies.com/about-us/our-mission">http://www.healingspecies.com/about-us/our-mission</a>	retrieved from: <a href="https://dtua.org/mission/">https://dtua.org/mission/</a>

**Influence on prison environment.** The Wild Horse Inmate Program failed to mention any specific improvements to the prison environment due prison-animal programming. The prison is located in the small town of Florence, Arizona, and in addition to the prison, a training facility and an adoption center for the general public to view the horses is also on the property (ACI, 2016). Little information was provided on the program's main website regarding influential impacts on the prison environment. However, there was substantial media coverage of the Wild Horse Inmate Program.

**Media portrayal.** Of the six programs, the Wild Horse Inmate Program was most widely recognized locally and nationally by several media outlets. Program success was attributed to the program's originator, and backbone behind of the Wild Horse Inmate Program, Randy Helm. Helm is a retired narcotics officer, horse trainer, and pastor, who now teaches inmates how to break wild mustangs on prison grounds (Adler, 2016). An experienced rancher, Helm started the WHIP in 2013 and the media portrayal was most often told from his point of view and in a positive light.

Helm was interviewed by Adler (2016) in *Mashable*, a multi-platform media and entertainment company, stating that while the program makes no monetary profit, the societal results are tremendous—the program does not claim rehabilitative facets, but those involved in the WHIP show a considerably lower recidivism rate. Helm speaks to the inmates' learning curve by stating, “with a wild horse, you can't cut shortcuts because there's no place to go. Life is that way: You have to go through the process, one step at a time. It [WHIP] really does change their people skills” (Adler, 2016). The WHIP website promotes that program involvement increases self-confidence, patience, and responsibility—Helm adds to those

benefits. *The Coolidge Examiner*, a news agency out of central Arizona, spoke with Helm as well; he spoke to the unintentional-intentional rehabilitative traits of the program. “You have to learn, but rehabilitation isn’t something intentional that we try to force. Rehabilitation happens naturally” (Chenoweth, 2014). The power and size of the horse is so transformational, and Helm recognizes the rehabilitative qualities through program participation as well as trusting the process and relationship building for the inmates.

The *Arizona Republic*—part of *USA Today Network* covered the Wild Horse Inmate Program in Florence. The researcher was able to hear testimonials of participants in WHIP who expressed what they learned from working with the wild stallions. “What I learn from my horse is patience, love and caring, and trust. When these horses first come in their problem is trust. When I first come into prison, that was my problem” (VanDenburgh & Shannahan, 2016). *The Coolidge Examiner* also interviewed an inmate participating in the WHIP. “You know, on the outside I’ve never had accomplishments. I’ve never worked long enough to see something through to success” (Chenoweth 2014). Program testimonials share an inmate’s perspective of accomplishment and trust, while providing benefits to those who will adopt a wild stallion. A major highlight, although the program is still young, is that the article echoes the 0% recidivism rate, which speaks to the influential characteristics of the program on the inmate.

**Research on the impacts** of the Wild Horse Inmate Program (as well as the other five programs), followed a systematic process. Peer-reviewed journals and government, university, and research organizations were searched for program evaluation information. There were no search returns on the WHIP operating out of Arizona. The only return was on a similar horse program operating out of Colorado.

When the researcher utilized Google for educational material on the topic, the search returned the program's website, a few news articles, and governmental agency information for Colorado, Arizona, Nevada and Wyoming. In particular, the return was horse programs and their affiliation and partnership with the Bureau of Land Management. Each state covered the task of managing the wild mustang population and potential adoption opportunities. The search did not recognize the WHIP operating out of Florence, Arizona, outside of Arizona's BLM agreement mentioned earlier. Moving up the west coast, the next program to be evaluated was out of Washington State.

### **Washington: Prison Pet Partnership**

**Mission and program recognition.** The Prison Pet Partnership is the oldest program of the six programs within this comparative analysis. Pairing with the Washington State Criminal Justice System, since 1981 the Prison Pet Partnership has been a trailblazer for many prison animal programs throughout the United States (Prison Pet Partnership, 2016). The basic program components allow dogs to be trained, boarded, and/or groomed from women within the Washington Corrections Center for Women. The program's mission (see Table 1) states:

Our mission allows us to grow in many directions, using our foundation of rescuing and training homeless animals and providing job skills training to women inmates. We continue to rescue, train and place service, therapy and companion animals, and also provide animal-assisted therapeutic visits to local convalescent centers, and help students improve reading skills by having dogs listen while children read aloud. We have boarding and grooming facilities to teach women inmates job skills, and we also help inmates write resumes, and practice interviewing skills. Prison Pet Partnership scouts for job opportunities in the community in which an inmate will be released, and provide support through job placement as she transitions back into the community. (Prison Pet Partnership, 2016)

The mission statement speaks to benefits to community residents and the prisoner. Learning vocational skills enables the inmate to look for meaningful employment upon

release. Vocational skills include clerical work in the office, boarding and grooming skills, in addition to training the dogs. A requirement of the Prison Pet Partnership, is that the inmate has two years left on their sentence to maximize the experience within the pet care industry (Prison Pet Partnership, 2016). Although the program mission does not specifically speak to intentional benefits to the prisoner, there clearly are psychological and societal skills that inmates gain from their program involvement.

**Prisoner significance.** What the Prison Pet Partnership has claimed to provide over the years to those inmates participating in their program is that “humans benefit from the unqualified love and acceptance that only animals can provide—animals need to be loved in return” (Prison Pet Partnership, 2016). The Prison Pet Program maintains that prisoners gain emotional benefits through their work with the animals, experiencing both mental and physical benefits (Prison Pet Partnership, 2016). Pride is a characteristic Prison Pet Partnership (2016) supports inmates obtain through program involvement. Pride is developed from giving independence to those with a disability, who may gain a service dog through the Prison Pet Partnership.

**Prison influence.** On the program website, there was no information how the prison animal program, Prison Pet Partnership, influenced the prison community, prison environment, or administration. There was however, a large program representation and testimonials through the Washington media networks.

**Media portrayal.** Tacoma’s local newspaper, *The News Tribune*, wrote about the Prison Pet Partnership in April of 2016. The program director of the prison animal program spoke to the benefits of the partnership between animal and inmate. “There’s something about people in animal care fields that are pretty darn forgiving—most people in the field are all about

rescuing animals and giving them a second chance, and most feel the same way about offenders” (Haffley, 2015). It can be true that some believe inmates should not receive a second chance. Conversely, this program allows for an individual to accept their mistake and work toward forgiveness.

In the local *Kitsap Sun* newspaper, the Prison Pet Partnership was explored. For the first time in this analysis, the researcher learns of inmate behavior influencing program participation. One of the participants said,

...this program is important to me. It enriches my life—lets me know I can succeed at something. If we want to stay in the program, we really have to be on our best behavior at all times. If we get one major infraction, which is really easy to do in here, we get kicked out. (Glock-Jackson, 2009)

This speaks to the inmate’s excitement about program participation, and how it might influence this mindset and behaviors of inmates behind prison walls. The virtue of patience and calmness may quickly be learned, because of the potential consequences of losing their dog and removal from the program.

The local media was able show program impacts on the prisoner and prison environment through their broadcast lens. Prisoners gained a second chance in their wrongdoings and have the opportunity for forgiveness. Equally important, and unique, were the implications of poor behavior and the significance to inmates. Inmates recognized the importance of conducting themselves appropriately behind prison walls, as any infractions would result in program expulsion.

**Government and educational websites.** A rarity to this comparative analysis was that the educational resources did indeed cover the Prison Pet Partnership. The Prison Pet Partnership was researched through a forum for innovation in the public sector on the government innovators network at Harvard University. In 1986, the Prison Pet Partnership won



the innovations in government award (Government Innovators Network, 1986) for targeting much of what the women inmates were experiencing; “Low self-esteem, lack of a sense of responsibility, difficulty in relating to others, feelings of being unloved and unaccepted, lack of marketable job skills, and insufficient motivation and opportunity to develop acceptable behavior patterns are among the many obstacles to a successful return to society for these women” (Government Innovators Network, 1986, para 2.) The Government Innovators Network (1986) also recognized the need for felons to become law-abiding, self-sufficient, community driven contributors. To meet that goal, women would train the dogs who would later meet the needs of the elderly, disadvantaged or individuals with a disability in producing well-trained companion or service dogs (Government Innovators Network, 1986). While this was the only piece of research found, and although it was highly supportive, nothing has been published in 30 years since this honor.

### **Michigan: Paws with a Cause**

Paws with a Cause recognized the need for PAWS assistance dogs, as 200 plus individuals with a disability, are in need of a service dog (Paws with a Cause, 2013). PAWS, in partnership with the local prisons, made providing service dogs to those in need more of a reality through their prison animal program.

**Mission and program recognition.** A larger service provider, Paws with a Cause, has supported individuals with disabilities by offering more than 2,600 dogs in 36 states (Paws with a Cause, 2013). Providing individuals with autonomy, “Paws with a Cause enhances the independence and quality of life for people with disabilities nationally through custom-trained Assistance Dogs. Paws with a Cause increases awareness of the rights and roles of Assistance Dog Teams through education and advocacy” (Paws with a Cause, 2013). This mission

recognizes quality of life and independence for those with disabilities, although does not speak directly to the benefits of the prisoner. Outside of the program's mission, a further description on the program's impact on the inmates involved was under the tab, "what we do"—Paws Prison Partners.

Requirements for participation were that inmates have a minimum of four years left on their sentence to partake in the PAWS program. Each inmate was carefully screened and those with any history of violence, sexual conduct or abuse were disqualified from program participation; any violations in the past year also deemed the inmate ineligible for program participation (Paws with a Cause, 2013).

Paws with a Cause presents four beneficiaries through program involvement. First, their own organization is able to meet their mission of providing service dogs to those in need from their collaboration with Michigan correctional facilities. Inmates are able to gain psychological and sociological benefits, prisons experience an uptick in positive relationships, and the community views the inmates as contributors to society. Looking through an ecological model, Paws with a Cause influences many different components (agency, prisoner, prison, and community) and each influences each other.

**Prisoner significance.** Paws with a Cause highlighted four benefits to inmates. This was the first time the researcher has seen mention about social skills of communication, teamwork, and leadership specifically targeting the inmate. Training a therapy dog "has the ability to give an inmate a purpose while they are serving their time behind bars" (Paws with a Cause, 2013, para. 2). Although not specifically mentioned as rehabilitative, inmates are gaining a sense of purpose behind bars. This is impactful as inmates are not solely targeting skills for life after prison, but are gaining a sense of purpose in the here and now. This opportunity

teaches interpersonal and employment competencies. “Such skills include self-discipline, commitment, communication, teamwork, leadership, and empathy” (Paws with a Cause, 2013, para. 2)

Through program involvement, the inmate can increase their self-worth and self-esteem. Through interaction with the dogs, participants can see the good inside of themselves and the love they can provide for another living creature (Paws with a Cause, 2013). Paws with a Cause (2013) states that under medical supervision, some inmates were able to stop taking mental health medication that was prescribed by their psychologist as a result of the participation in the program.

**Prison influence.** A unique characteristic, only seen on Michigan’s Paws with a Cause website, was a headline listing benefits pertaining solely to the prison entity. Paws with a Cause listed four ways in which the prison animal program was able to improve the prison environment. Paws with a Cause was able to break down barriers between inmates and officers, resulting in improved relationships while providing a common focus and interest among staff and inmates. In an officer’s opinion, the prison animal program has improved the institution’s environment. Inmates were more compliant, and infractions were decreased because inmates wanted to participate in the Paws with a Cause program (Paws with a Cause, 2013).

A second unique trait of Paws with a Cause was the belief that the prison-animal program also benefited the larger community and publicized once again four different benefits. PAWS Prison Partners influence the mindset of former “criminals” by shifting their attention to helping others. Due to the positive relationship with a dog, PAWS Prison Program (2013) believes that an inmate can foster other successful relationships after release, which instills hope in the inmate. A common theme across all programs, mentioned in the community benefits

section, was the skill set that is learned from participating in a prison-animal program, and how invaluable those skills are. Being able to learn social and vocation skills allows for an individual to break the cycle of unemployment and poverty in turn reducing recidivism. According to Paws with a Cause (2013), research shows 70-86% of inmates involved in a prison animal program remain out of prison, compared to 50% of those who did not partake in such programming.

**Media portrayal.** Kalamazoo, Michigan is the closest urban city to Waylan, Michigan where the Paws Prison Partners – Paws with a Cause operates. Unfortunately, without a subscription, searching the *Kalamazoo Gazette* newspaper was not possible. When exploring the program website, the only media coverage provided pertains to starting conversations about service dogs in the workplace. There was no mention of prison or prisoner improvement or involvement. Using Google for other resources fell short with only opportunities to adopt an animal through PetFinder.

Paws with a Cause was similar to the previous programs covered with their passion to provide services for those with a disability who may need service dogs, while utilizing prisons for program implementation. However, this program seems to go further in envisioning benefits to the agency, prison, prisoners, and community as a whole.

**Government and educational websites.** Entering the program title, Paws Prison Partnership – Paws with a Cause into the USA.gov site, a few websites returned from the general search, however most were program mentioning of other prison animal programs across the U.S.: i.e. Arkansas, Texas, Montana and Florida. There was no government connection or university research returned on the Google search when the researcher entered the title of the prison animal program into the search bar, Paws Prison Partnership – Paws with a Cause. The novelty of program effectiveness, listed above, lacks a narrative in peer-reviewed or other literature which

questions whether the outcomes mentioned by Paws with Cause are empirical evidence, or are simply their observations.

### **Texas: Patriot Paws**

Patriot Paws, out of Rockwell, Texas, expanded their programming when they paired with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) in 2008. Texas Department of Criminal Justice allowed two of their women's facilities and one men's correctional unit to work with the Patriot Paws organization. As of December 2014, through the Patriot Paws collaboration, 86 dogs have been placed with a veteran (Smith, 2012). Such placement saves each veteran upwards of \$33,000 as each dog is donated to the serviceman or woman (Patriot Paws, 2016).

**Mission & program recognition.** Patriot PAWS trains service dogs for those who may not be able to afford the out-of-pocket expense, and offers independence and self-confidence to veterans and others living with a disability. (See Table 1)

The mission of Patriot PAWS is to train and provide service dogs of the highest quality at no cost to disabled American veterans and others with mobile disabilities and PTS in order to help restore their physical and emotional independence. Patriot PAWS intends to build partnerships with state and community organizations to help develop and support this goal. (Patriot Paws, 2016)

Although the mission targets the recipients of the Patriot PAWS program, the website does advertise extensive benefits to prisoners through their prison animal program tab. Patriot Paws' program objective is to provide support for veterans with disabilities, but they also provide animal training to inmates which are skills that can be utilized upon release.

**Prisoner significance.** A unique characteristic of the Patriot PAWS program, found on their website, was the duration of their training programs which can run for 18 to 24 months. This was unique from other PAP examined; Patriot PAWS appeared to run the longest training program in duration. As a result of the extensive training regimen, since the program began in

2008, recidivism rates have dropped below 3% (Patriot Paws, 2016). The direct correlation to reduced re-offender rates was a positive influence of the Patriot PAW program. Being able to enter the community, once released, with a training skill set of 55 behaviors they have taught the dog may be used to gain employment on the outside. Patriot PAWS commits that their program improves the life of inmates while in prison as they work toward a common goal, resulting in a positive influence in the community (Patriot Paws, 2016).

In Texas' Patriot Paws Program, there is a wait list of approximately 60 offenders waiting to participate. The program states that "those who are interested in program involvement need to have an honest interest in working with animals, have a clean disciplinary background, and no prior animal abuse" (Criminal Justice Connections, 2011).

**Prison influence.** The program website had no mention of Patriot PAWS influencing, improving, or altering the prison environment. However, there was a brief mention about the positive correlation between the program and the wardens. One warden mentioned how she has seen the program change inmates' behavior with an increase in accomplishment and pride. The Warden believed the Patriot PAWS gave the inmates a "purpose in life" and "now they learn that they are worth something, that they're good for something (Criminal Justice Corrections, 2011, p.3).

**Media portrayal.** The local newspaper, *Dallas News*—powered by *The Dallas Morning News*, recognized Patriot PAWS on their search bar. The first three results covered program fundraising, volunteer opportunities for families, and the benefits that a dog provides to a veteran. There was no highlight to prisons or the prisoners in the Dallas newspaper.

Patriot PAWS provides media stories on their own website, ranging from coverage of what the program looks like via video, a news story of the program making a difference in

veterans lives and how the dogs assist in daily living. The main themes from the inmate testimonials were that working with the dogs normalized life, even the smell of the dog is a sense of the outside world, and what life was before their crime (Patriot Paws, 2016). The video states that working in the Patriot PAWS program provides a sense of accomplishment, an opportunity for a second chance, and an increase in confidence and self-esteem (Texas Country Reporter, 2015).

**Government and educational websites.** Texas Department of Criminal Justice featured the Patriot PAWS program on their website in 2011, highlighting the program's ability to inspire inmates while supporting veterans with a disability. The inmates' pride and sense of accomplishment was shared through quotes from program participants. The sense of self-worth and forgiveness for the inmate were expressed by a program participant stating "I love this more than anything I've done in my life" and "it helps me right all of the wrongs of my past" (Criminal Justice Connections, 2011).

While searching USA.gov and the Patriot PAWS organizational name, a couple of results returned: a mainstream media story about veterans and the influence of the dogs in their life, and that Patriot Paws was recognized by Texas Department of Criminal Justice as a charitable organization. (USA.gov, 2016). Similarly, there was no university-sponsored research found when Patriot Paws was searched in Google.

Patriot PAWS demonstrates the high demand and excitement surrounding their prison animal program, validated by the program wait list for offenders. Although there was no mention of prison environment enhancement, Patriot PAWS recognized the relationship between prisoners and wardens transformed over the course of programming. The Texas Department of

Criminal Justice recognized how inspiring program participation can be, while also influencing an inmate's pride and sense of accomplishment.

### **South Carolina: Healing Species Prison Program**

South Carolina's Healing Species Prison Program gives dogs in jeopardy of euthanasia a second chance at life through their prison animal program. Pairing rescued dogs with prison inmates provides an opportunity for a second chance, for both dog and inmate. Rescued dogs, from shelters and humane societies, have a history of neglect and/or abuse. This history of neglect and abuse is similar to many inmates who have their own stories of a painful past. Healing Species (2013) reports that 90% of inmates will eventually be released from their correctional facility. Program participation is something that inmates can do with their time while in prison, simultaneously contributing back to their community.

**Mission & program recognition.** The mission of Healing Species is "teaching compassion, preventing violence, and changing lives through rescued dogs." Although short, the mission targets characteristics that prisoners can benefit from through their participation in the prison animal program. In addition to the brief mission, the program advertised a longer inclusive belief statement embracing five emboldening program values: compassion, violence intervention, healing, empowerment, and advocacy for those involved (Healing Species, 2013). Healing Species really focuses on the prisoners through their mission, not just those who receive a dog from the program.

**Prisoner significance.** Inmates are hand selected to participate in the Healing Species Prison Program, however there was no specific explanation of the application or selection process on the program's website. A main theme listed on the program website was the transformational power of working with an animal and the resulting changes within an inmate,



encompassing empathy, compassion, a sense of responsibility, as well as a change in an individual's character (Healing Species, 2013). Healing Species (2013) believes participation in the prison program increases an individual's psychological health, emotional regulation, and offers behavior enhancements, while decreasing anxiety, violent outbursts, and stress of living in prison. As seen in previous programming, Healing Species mirror previous themes of psychological, social, vocation, and gaining a sense of purpose while behind bars.

Having a dog in the prison improves not only the handler's life, but might also improve those who can see and interact with the dog on the prison grounds. A testimonial from an inmate handler speaks to fulfilling basic attachment needs that the dog can fulfill as rapid as the first interaction. "My first day in the Character-Based Unit, "Shepp" came running up to me and licked and kissed all over me - it was the first unconditional physical touch of love I ever remember receiving" (Healing Species, 2013). In addition to attachment, an inmate understands the health benefits of working in the prison animal program. "Since being "Dingo's" handler, my blood pressure has gone down, I've gone off medications, and I've lost 12 pounds I needed to lose" (Healing Species, 2013). This is echoed by South Carolina's Department of Corrections who mention therapy dogs help inmates have a sense of reconnecting with humanity (SCDC, 2010).

**Prison influence.** On the Healing Species website, there are no specifics listed about the prison environment being influenced from the prison animal program. However, on the South Carolina Department of Corrections website, it suggests that the presence of prison animal programs improve prison unity and influences the therapeutic climate resulting in inspired staff, volunteers, inmates, and visitors (SCDC, 2010).

Table 2: Positive program attributes of six prison-animal programs evaluated in the comparative analysis: psychological, social, vocational, with mention to recidivism

Table 2	Psychological +	Social Improvements	Vocational skills	↓ Recidivism		
Arizona	Rehabilitation happens naturally, increased self-confidence	Relationship w/ a horse is transformational - inmates trust the process, builds trust, and changes a person	Acquire employable skills	Lower recidivism rates, per Helm		
Washington	love and acceptance cultivated from animals, relationship builds a sense of pride, enrichment	Forgiving and gives a second chance, abide by prison rules patience	Vocational skills include clerical work in the office, boarding and grooming skills, in addition to training the dogs.	recognized the need for felons to become law-abiding, self-sufficient, community driven contributors		
Michigan	Has the ability to give an inmate a purpose while they are serving their time behind bars, increasing their self-worth and increase their self-esteem	See the good inside of themselves and the love they can provide for another living creature, break down barriers between inmates and officers, relationship building, decrease in infractions	Inmates can foster other successful relationships after release, which instills hope in the inmate	This opportunity teaches interpersonal and employment competencies: self discipline, commitment, communication, teamwork, leadership, and empathy		
Texas	Per Warden, the program give "purpose in life" and inmates learn that they are worth something, programming normalized life, gained a sense of pride	Improves the life of inmates while in prison as they work toward a common goal, positive correlation between the program and the wardens	A learned skill set of 55 behaviors they have taught the dog - may be used to gain employment on the outside	No specific mention		
South Carolina	Increases an individual's psychological health, emotional regulation, behavior enhancements, while decreasing anxiety, violent outbursts, and stress of living in prison	PAP improve prison unity and influences the therapeutic climate resulting in inspired staff, volunteers, inmates, and visitors	Transformational power of working with an animal and the changes within an inmate, a sense of responsibility, as well as a change in an individual's character	No specific mention		
Massachusetts	Inspired to be more empathetic and responsible—gaining a sense of personal purpose	bridge relationships and establish working relationships	Reenter society as productive members of their community as a result of learned job skills from training animals	No specific mention		

Through the media search, a prison animal program in Sacramento, California, although not local, provided a theme important to the prison environment. The Warden of Mule Creek Prison was curious if a prison-animal program would provide a change in the prison atmosphere (Ashton, 2016). Ashton (2016) reports that in the most violent yard, the program has done a tremendous job calming the yard.

**Media portrayal.** Columbia, South Carolina is the closest urban city and *The State Newspaper* was utilized for searching for articles representing Healing Species Prison Program. The program title “Healing Species” returned two articles, one local to the Columbia, South Carolina area and the other related to a prison-animal program in California. Both media outlets recognized the sense of responsibility as a handler and growth pertaining to empathy. South Carolina plans to expand their prison program that helps teach inmates boundaries and the feelings of others. So and so stated, “If they can have a rehabilitative experience, how could you be against it?” (The State, 2014).

**Government and educational websites.** Healing Species paired with South Carolina’s Department of Corrections and the Character Based Rehabilitation Program. The dog’s influence was portrayed as giving more than they receive, therefore, influencing those in prison in a positive manner. Dogs are believed to offer compassion, education, and a meaningful way to for inmates to serve their time behind bars, all the while giving back to the community (SCDC, 2010).

Specifically mentioned on the program website, programming involves dogs to stay with their handler for 24 hours a day. This may be true for other programming; however, the researcher cannot confirm based on the other program websites scanned. “Studies have shown that the presence of therapy dogs reduce anxiety, aggression, depression, while foster empathy”

(SCDC, 2010). When Healing Species was searched on the usa.gov website, there were zero results relating to the prison animal program, the same is true when searching Healing Species on Google. The results were pertinent to adopting a dog, the programs social medial page, or other “healing species” topics.

### **Massachusetts: Don’t Throw Us Away**

**Mission & program recognition.** Don’t Throw Us Away recognizes the overpopulation problem in shelters and prison facilities. Don’t Throw Us Away (2013) estimates that four million household pets, dogs and cats are euthanized annually. Instead of losing so much life, Don’t Throw Us Away partnership gives both shelter animals and inmates a second chance at life. Don’t Throw Us Away believes in their mission as follows, (see Table 1):

Don’t Throw Us Away is a nonprofit prison dog program which saves the lives of inmates and rescue dogs through training and education. Don’t Throw Us Away pairs abandoned dogs rescued from high kill shelters with inmates who are looking to improve their lives. Through this unlikely partnership, homeless dogs gain the love, training and rehabilitation that will make them adoptable and inmates become empathetic and gain a sense of responsibility and purpose, allowing them to re-enter society as productive citizens. Don’t Throw Us Away seeks to reduce the high rate of recidivism by providing inmates with valuable job skills which increases their chances of gainful employment after release. Don’t Throw Us Away seeks to reduce the high rate of euthanasia in shelters and increase the amount of adoptions by providing dogs with the training they’ll need to be good family members, resulting in permanent placements. (DTUA, 2013)

The prison-animal program, operating out of Massachusetts, recently gained attention due to the Netflix release of *Dogs on the Inside*, a documentary showcasing the actual prison animal program, Don’t Throw Us Away.

**Prisoner significance.** Don’t Throw Us Away spotlights the partnership between shelter animals and inmates, through program participation, are inspired to be more empathetic and responsible—gaining a sense of personal purpose. Following program completion, inmates

reenter society as productive members of their community as a result of learned job skills from training animals (DTUA, 2013).

**Prison influence.** At this time there was no prison improvement or significance listed on their website linked to their prison animal program. They did mention that Don't Throw Us Away was looking to expand to other prisons and that they are currently accepting inquiries.

**Media portrayal.** Unique to Don't Throw Us Away, a documentary was made about the program, and what the prison animal program looks like from the inside. The documentary follows inmates who train and care for abandoned shelter dogs and the relationship that is developed between the human and the animal. Each inmate has their own undertaking in training dogs who were subject to neglect, abandonment, and potential euthanasia (DTUA, 2013). The release of the documentary on Netflix was in 2014.

Searching Boston's newspapers, there was no information relating directly to the Don't Throw Us Away; any searches dating back 14 days or more required a subscription. On a Google search, Don't Throw Us Away was recognized as the documentary, *Dogs on the Inside*.

Although not from Boston, there was a story on *Dogs on the Inside* from Minnesota Public Radio (MPR). The ultimate goal, according to MPR's coverage, was for the dogs to be rehabilitated, the secondary—unintentional goal, was that the inmates are also rehabilitated at the same time (McElhatton, 2015). McElhatton (2015) reports that rival gang members start cooperating and working together to train the dogs, even become friends. The dogs are able to help bridge relationships and establish working relationships. While some may consider inmates as the worst of the worst, and are not qualified or able to care for an animal—quite the opposite has been found true. The inmates and abandoned dogs have much of the same life experiences. One inmate speaks to this belief, "some of these dogs have been in the street, they've been

abused, found in dumpsters, ditches... hurt, beat up, starved... I can relate to a lot of the dogs—especially Sam... because he was left behind, you know? And I went through that as a kid myself, so I know" (McElhatton, 2015). Outside of the documentary, there was little to no information relating to the working prison animal program Don't Throw Us Away through media avenues.

**Government and educational websites.** Using the USA.gov website, Don't Throw Us Away returned no meaningful results in relation to the prison animal program. The results pertained to recycling management and similar "don't throw away" resources dealing with trash.

The researcher utilized a Google search with the prison animal program title, Don't Throw Us Away—resulting in no university institutional websites, and no governmental links as well. What was found was social media sites, and more links to the documentary *Dogs On the Inside*. This program was widely advertised due to the documentary, however, outside of that there was little information surrounding the prison animal program.

Don't Throw Us Away—Dogs on the Inside, with the help from main stream media, Netflix, gave viewers a chance to see what a working prison animal program looks like from the inside. On the program website, it was significant to see the advertisement of program expansion, as Don't Throw Us Away believes their program can influence more prisons in a positive manner and should be expanded. Media portrayal was specific to the documentary.

**Prison-Animal Program Commonalities.** Although the word 'rehabilitation' was not specifically used, it could be because so many of the components of what traditionally signifies rehabilitation – character change, responsibility, commitment, social respect – are present.

Much of what the researcher found across the six prison animal programs mostly influenced the prisoner, with little mention to prison environment improvements or community

enrichment. Much of what was discovered as commonalities revolved around psychological improvements, social influences among other inmates, vocational enhancement reducing recidivism, and gaining a sense of purpose while incarcerated.

**Psychological and social improvements.** Inmates who participated in the prison animal programming had an increase to their health benefits. Whether it be mental health, or physical wellness, inmates were changing physiologically from their working experience. Working with the animals helped normalize life and reduce some of the stress accrued from living behind bars.

Inmates were motivated to think twice about their actions or quick tempers, because the fear of losing their dog due to an infraction or bad behavior would be so detrimental to the privilege they had accepted and earned. This resulted in many of the inmates behaving and working together with others in a caring manner. The fear of program expulsion motivated inmates to abide by the institution's rules if they wanted to continue to be a program participant, therefore, likely improving the prison environment.

**Vocational learnings and recidivism.** Learning vocational skills while an inmate fulfilled their prison sentence resulted in a theme of hireability, resulting in decreased recidivism rates. Learning to work in partnership with others and striving toward a common goal presented itself across programming. Reducing recidivism was seen across the majority of the prison animal programs evaluated. As participants finished their programs - and prison sentences—prisoners were thought to gain life skills that would prevent them from returning to prison.

**Purpose in prison.** A common theme presented across the prison animal programs was that they helped inmates find meaning in life once again. Being able to train an animal for someone in the community increased the inmates' sense of self-esteem. The human-animal

interaction increased patience, sense of love and attachment, forgiveness, self-worth, and self-esteem. From the missions, to program descriptions, to inmate testimonials, it was clear that the inmates' lives were often significantly enriched from the program experience.

The most common theme presented across the six prison animal programs is that they all have positive benefits to the inmates, see Table 2. There was not one disadvantage to working the program, or difficulty that was shared from the working experience. Knowing the positive influence the animals have on the inmates, it would be appropriate to discuss further program partnerships and recommendations for other prisons throughout the U.S.

### **Discussion**

This research paper systematically examined the benefits and drawbacks of PAPs for prisoners and prison environment. Examining program websites, media portrayals, government and educational websites, the researcher observed positive themes supporting further research on the topic of prison animal programs. Reflecting on the literature review, Deaton (2005) argued that animal-prisoner programs generated transformative changes within correctional facilities, which echoed much of the findings that companion animals can positively influence rehabilitative changes in the inmate.

### **Psychological Improvements**

Psychological improvements were found in each of the six programs (Table 2) mirroring what Sable (2012) identified as scientific data supporting the human-animal connection. “[Human-animal connection] has positive effects on psychological and physical well-being, helping shape how people regulate their emotions, deal with stress or trauma, and relate to others” (Sable, 2012). Correspondingly, Furst (2006) reported seeing an improved sense of self-worth within prisoners.



Findings of improved mental and physical wellness, due to program participation, reinforce the need for further data and research to be collected on the topic. For instance, Paws with a Cause provided evidence of inmates who were able to stop their prescribed mental health medication due to the influence of dogs in their prison. Given the 700% increase in incarceration rates over the past 40 years (Henrichson & Delaney, 2012) and as reported by the Bureau of Statisticians James and Glaze (2006) “halfway through 2005, more than half of all prison and jail inmates had a mental health problem, including 705,600 inmates in State prisons, 78,800 in Federal prisons, and 479,900 in local jails. These estimates represented 56% of State prisoners, 45% of Federal prisoners, and 64% of jail inmates” of having some kind of mental illness. It would be significant to consider prison animal programming as a method to connect and treat those with a mental health diagnoses, which appears to be more than half of those incarcerated.

Similar to Smith’s (2012) categorization, this research found that three health categories of psychological, social and physical impacts were also found within the prison animal programs that were evaluated. While only one testimonial spoke to physical health, all six programs demonstrated psychological and social improvements (Table 2).

### **Social Improvements**

Deaton (2005) explains how a companion animal can bring out the best in people, that there is an ability to share compassion, affection, and empathy that can sometimes be overlooked in human-to-human relationships. The six prison animal programs recognized the same social benefits that were found in the research across several avenues. Inmates recognized their behavior influenced their program participation, in return testimonials from prison warden’s acclaimed behavior differences among inmates in the prison, improving the prison environment.

Research showed improvement in those participating in the program, and was recognized through interviews of prison wardens. Comparable to what Britton and Button (2005) shared in the literature, prison-animal programs break down barriers of fear and mistrust between staff and inmates. Furst (2006) found similar results, stating that participants in animal therapy programs reported noteworthy reductions in isolation and frustration and a substantial modification in their outlook towards other inmates. These benefits may spill over to the prison environment in general. It would be interesting to research how a prison animal program influences those not participating in the program.

### **Vocational Gains and Recidivism**

Vocational skills were specifically listed in four of the six programs, however all six of the programs talked about learning a new skill-set that would be benefit upon release. Skills included teamwork, communication, and clerical work. What separated the prison-animal program from other working prison programs, was the ability to bond with a horse or a dog. The Bureau of Justice support Prison Industry Enhancement Certificate Programs as they offer opportunities for inmates to mimic private sector employment responsibilities (BJA, 2004).

### **Purposeful Life**

Innovative methods of employment with the use of dogs, cats, horses, and other animals may increase prison morale, prisoner self-worth and the chance to contribute to society from behind prison walls (Furst, 2006). In addition to increasing the inmate's sense of self, Furst (2006) notes how prison-animal programs afford inmates to be viewed as positive contributors to society. Similar to Furst's discoveries in the literature, the researcher observed testimonials from inmates who have been influenced by their involvement in prison animal programs. A participant in Washington's Prison Partnership expresses full gratitude from program

involvement. "...this program is important to me. It enriches my life—lets me know I can succeed at something. If we want to stay in the program, we really have to be on our best behavior at all times. If we get one major infraction, which is really easy to do in here, we get kicked out" (Glock-Jackson, 2009). A different participant who was working with the wild mustangs expressed "What I learn from my horse is patience, love and caring, and trust. When these horses first come in their problem is trust. When I first come into prison, that was my problem" (VanDenburgh & Shannahan, 2016). An interview in the *Coolidge Examiner*, divulged an inmate's reflection on their life before prison and their value or sense of accomplishment prior to their work in the PAP. Being able to complete the program for the prisoners was a successful achievement that they may never have experienced before. (Chenoweth 2014). All three inmates had different experiences, but all three mention their sense of worth and purpose. Leading into future research, it would be beneficial to track inmate involvement from baseline to where they are at the end of program participation, and how much it influences one's sense of self.

### **Future Research**

Most of the research found was quite favorable regarding their respective programs, which is not surprising, as most of the information available was generated by the prison animal program. It would be important at this point to conduct empirical research studies to determine objective impacts. Research that produces both quantitative and qualitative findings would be beneficial in determining actual results. The qualitative studies could help determine what aspects of the prison-animal programs inmates, other prisoners, and wardens find helpful, to build theory about how these programs work. Quantitative studies could demonstrate what program components are effective at addressing particular aspects of the prison experience.

For the social work profession, it would be helpful to gain more research knowledge on how to best assist in rehabilitating inmates while they are in a correctional setting. This included assisting prisoners to do well and thrive once out of prison. There was little mention on program participants, other than a clean record, who could apply to be a dog or horse trainer. As mentioned in the MPR story “while some may consider inmates as the worst of the worst, and are not qualified or able to care for an animal—quite the opposite has been found true” (McElhatton, 2015). The fact that inmates with troubled pasts and risky backgrounds are discounted, it might be worth considering these participants, as they may be more in tune with their animals than others.

There are justifiable concerns about paying cents to the dollar for prison labor. Prison labor has focused on profitable goods, with little to no curiosity of inmate involvement. Perhaps prison-animal programming provides therapy and job skills training to those who are incarcerated, and the production of goods—in this case a therapy dogs or rescued horses focused more on the rehabilitative powers from the relationship of the human animal connection, not solely on production of goods. As a result, prison-animal programs may be a model for a dual purpose of prisoner benefit and prison benefit.

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