

Pax the Dog

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Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=3721>

Gloria Gilbert Stoga (*Instructing*) Today we're going to the store. Jamie and her dog, Devon, are going to buy breakfast, so they approach...

Narrator The women inmates at Bedford Hills Maximum Security Prison have an unusual reward for good behavior. They receive puppies, which they train to be service dogs for the handicapped. The program, called Puppies Behind Bars, provides these dogs, free of charge, to people with physical or psychological disabilities.

Female Inmate YES! Good boy! (*Clapping*)

Gloria Gilbert Stoga Puppies Behind Bars' purpose is to get more working dogs to the hands of people who need them. We use prison inmates to do that because... people always say they've got time on their hands; yes, they have time on their hands but more importantly they, I feel, have the obligation to repay society.

Laurie Kellog Look. Yes! Good, look. Good girl.

Narrator The puppies, mostly golden and labrador retrievers learn dozens of commands and complex tasks, such as loading groceries...

Female Inmate with Boxes That's it. Yes. Good look, good boy.

Narrator Sitting under tables, and switching on lights.

Female Inmate YES! Good light! (*Clapping*)

Female Inmate with Light Turn on my light? Light? YES! Good boy, good light.

Narrator For the participants, it's a change to do a good deed and receive unconditional love in return. Laurie Kellog, is now training her third dog in the program. She's serving 25 years to life in connection with the murder of her husband, who she says abused her for years.

Laurie Kellog You'd be amazed how happy some of the women are just to see one of these puppies do a command or two. They may catch a sight of one of these pups once a week or something and it makes their entire week for them.

(*Women laughing*)

Narrator The puppies have typically gone to serve autistic children and the blind; but increasingly now, they're being sought out by soldiers suffering the psychological wounds of war.

Laurie Kellog This is Pax, the first puppy I raised for Puppies Behind Bars. He's also the first puppy to be given to a vet who's come back from Iraq with post-traumatic stress disorder. He's the first of our Dog-Tags program puppies. His name means peace in Latin.

Bill Campbell Pax, come on! Load.

Narrator In February, Pax was sent to live with Bill Campbell, an Iraq war veteran who struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. He was injured in 2004 when a car bomb exploded near his post in Baghdad.

Bill Campbell Pax helps me to get outside and helps me get over the... fear of being outside because when you take Pax out into public you end up focusing on Pax; you can't worry about what's going on around you when... you're focusing on Pax. Pax is a magnet for people so it's... a good thing that I talk to people, even though I don't want to talk to people.

Bill to Man Yeah it's a psychological service dog, yeah.

Man Psychological service dog...

Narrator Where Bill goes, Pax follows. He guards Bill's back in public. Doesn't bark unless told. And comforts Bill when he's stressed.

Bill Campbell I... have nightmares, and things like that so when I wake up from nightmares and stuff like that, you know... I can look over and look at him, right off the bat, and if he's not reacting to anything then I know that whatever I experienced is not real. This is a purple heart that I received November 9th, 2004.

Laurie Kellog I've never met Bill Campbell, but I feel a connection to him. I have post-traumatic stress disorder myself because of domestic violence, so it's a very small comparison to what Bill's been through, but I can identify with some of the things he has to deal with on a daily basis.

What I've done is pour a years worth of love into this puppy who in turn is going to give a lifetime of love to Bill and his wife. Pax gave me some opportunities to grow and get stronger and deal with some of my PTSD issues and in turn he's learned how to help Bill deal with some of his on a daily basis.

Gloria Gilbert Stoga The inmates are emotionally wounded. The people the dogs go to, in the case of the soldiers with PTSD, are emotionally wounded. And I'm seeing a different level of healing and relationship than I had ever seen before between man and dog. Probably 90% of our dogs will end up with soldiers, is my guess, as the years go on and on.

Laurie Kellog Everybody wanted to have their picture taken with Pax. Pax gave me freedom. He made me feel... normal, and alive again. He gave me freedom inside these... Prison isn't the fences, it isn't the bars or the walls. It's what you build up around yourself in here (*points to chest*) and in here (*points to head*). So Bill's still in a type of prison, and Pax gave me freedom with more than one kind of prison. I'm hoping he can give Bill freedom within his prison. Maybe help him find a way out of that prison.