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Upstate prison inmates train dogs for adoption

Sarah Danik

Some Upstate dogs are in need of loving care and some training, and they are heading behind bars to get it. And the inmates-turned-trainers are getting their own kind of therapy, from helping the pups in need.

It's a brand new program between the Humane Society of Greenwood and Leath Correctional Institution in Greenwood.

The "Pawsitive Prison Program" started in November, and already, one of the dogs, Chance, is set to graduate as a therapy dog in a just a few weeks. The other two are being trained by female inmate dog trainers.

The head trainer, Connie, said the program has impacted her and the other women.

“A dog doesn't judge you, and you can see the change in that dog and we don't judge the dog. He’s had some bruises, but we didn't judge him, we kept moving forward looking for that change, and in changing him, it's changed us.”

Karen Peattay is the Executive Director for the Humane Society of Greenwood. She's helped get the program off the ground, and said it’s amazing to see how far Chance has come.

“He's an amazing dog. I think he was the perfect pilot pooch for this program because he epitomizes all the things we'd find challenging and difficult, and in such a short time he's become a completely differently behaved dog.”

Those in charge at the prison are happy with the results as well. Associate Warden Patricia Yeldell said it’s really impacted the entire prison.

“I see how the inmates are interacting with the dogs and they are very happy, so as long as they're calm on the yard, I’m calm.”

Connie said she is hoping to use the skills she’s learned as a trainer outside the prison once she is released.

“It's something you don't want to keep to yourself. It’s something you learn and you just can't keep to yourself,

sharing it makes it worth having.”

[The Humane Society of Greenwood](#) said they are accepting donations to keep things running for the "Pawsitive Prison Program." Both monetary and donations of dog-related items are welcome.

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