

EVEN CELEBRITIES GO TO PRISON

by

Larry E. May and K. Tauch

On Monday, April 17, 2023, we woke up to murmurs as people chattered and rumors abound, could it be true? A group of visitors might stop by and be escorted to observe our Paws for Life dog program here in Lancaster, California. Who could show up? Musicians, actors, actresses, political figures?

When the highly trained Institutional Gang Investigators (I.G.I.), recognizable by their signature “black shirts,” made an appearance in our building, we knew V.I.P.’s were on the way. We were told to gather up at 11:00 am, dressed in our “blues” with our nametags on.

It turned out that Kim Kardashian, who is a member of the Reform Alliance, wanted to show her sister Khloe, rapper Lil Baby, and friends, our dogs and trainers in a California State Prison here in Los Angeles County (CSP-LAC). A truly life-changing program offered here.

To see celebrities in prison is very humbling. Something we don’t take for granted. We have had quite a few famous people who are dog lovers visit us before. Emily Deschanel (Bones), Sophia Bush (Chicago PD), Natalie Portman (Star Wars), Common, Nick Cannon, John Legend and his wife, Kim and Kanye West, as well as various sport figures and politicians. Most recently, Justin and Hailey Bieber stopped in.

We all appreciate them for taking time out of their busy schedule. A genuine sign of kindness and friendship. We were inspired, encouraged, and deeply affect with their relaxed and easygoing demeanor.

The guests were very impressed, down to earth, and excited to be here. Kim actually sat on the floor next to me petting my husky puppy “Pepper.” She got up covered with her fur. Some were social media influencer, such as Dixie and Jack Wright, who shared their experience here with millions of their followers, mostly of the Gen-Z variety.

They asked what skills does the program build among other questions. The men had an assortment of answers. Responsibility, leadership skills, time management, critical thinking, compassion, public speaking, networking, good communication skills, and very often with teamwork and teammates of different races.

Jason Jenkins, a member of the Paws For Life family, met with guest, Hanna Jackson and expressed the following: “We trauma bonded over our experience of having a father who was incarcerated while growing up. I told her about my dad having gone in and out of prison, then being killed by police officers and saw how much it touched her. She shared her experience of how, after serving time, her father was raised by the prison system and was violated while on parole. We had similar stories, but we were two totally different people.”

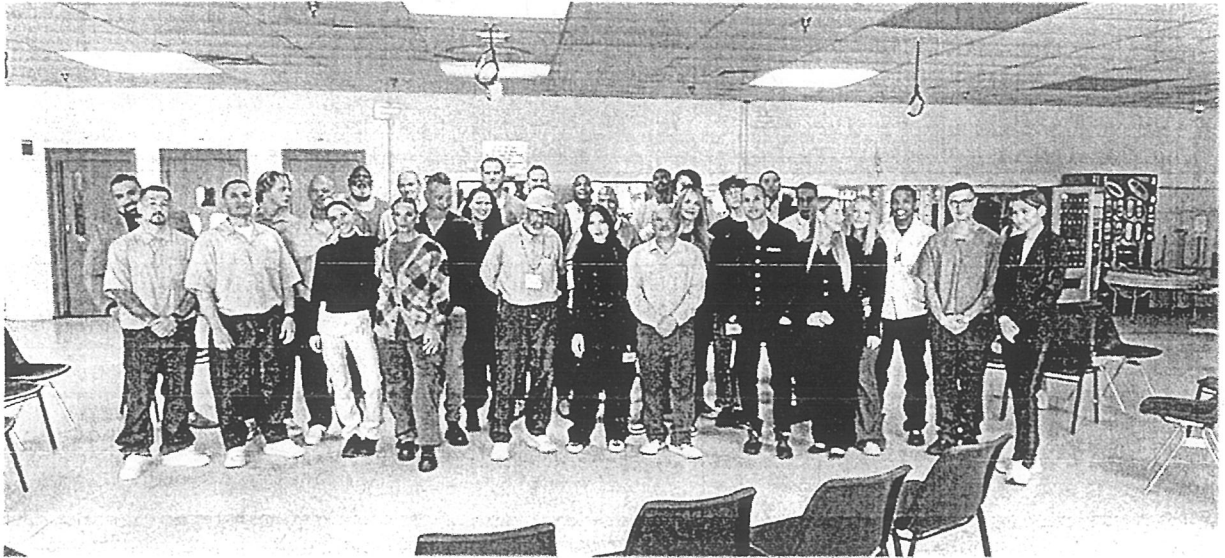
There are up to 30 dogs living in our building. From ten-pound pugs and Chihuahuas, to one-hundred pound plus St. Bernard's and Mastiffs. As I mentioned, my current dog is a twenty-five pound, six-month old Husky with bright blue eyes. "Pepper" has lots of energy. K. Tauch has a deaf dog, "Cielo," a Jack Russell terrier mix. He uses a variation of American Sign Language, and other movements, the dog can easily understand. Lester has a pitbull, Wayne has a Lapadoodle, and the list goes on.

For some, entering this state prison can be scary and intimidating. Guard towers, rolls of sharp razor wire and of course, the electric fence.

Our encounter with this group was very positive for all of us. They left with a favorable opinion of how prison can be rehabilitating and gives us a chance to give back to society rather than just continue the cycle of violence. We learned that people out there haven't forgotten about us and are working tirelessly for prison reform through many different legal channels. True dedication and devotion!

Acknowledgements:

The Reform Alliance, Paws For Life K9 Rescue, and the following individuals: Jack McFadden, Jason Jenkins, Lester Galdamez, Wayne Montanio, and others who wished to remain anonymous.



← I live in # 137



4-17-2023