



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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DOC, Sioux Falls Area Humane Society working together to make dogs more adoptable

Pierre, S.D.- The Sioux Falls Area Humane Society is working in conjunction with penitentiary inmates on a new community service project.

Eight minimum custody inmates from Sioux Falls have been selected to participate in a program to teach shelter dogs at the Sioux Falls Area Humane Society basic obedience commands. The training will increase the adoptability of the dogs while teaching inmates to train, groom, care for and socialize shelter dogs.

"The inmates learn to train dogs through a steady routine, showing consistency and compassion," said Gary Taylor, Unit Manager at Unit C. "The dogs receive much needed attention and socialization skills, which in turn will make them better pets."

Positive reinforcement commands will initially be taught by Humane Society staff. Inmates will use consistent verbal and non-verbal cues for better comprehension by the animal. Ronnie Fish and Darci Willemsen from the Sioux Falls Area Humane Society worked in conjunction with Taylor to get the project started.

Tuesday, September 21, 2004 will be the day that the first two dogs arrive. Staff and inmates will welcome Arnold, a four year old Cocker Spaniel mix and Buddy, a three and a half year old Labrador Retriever mix.

"Interim DOC Secretary Doug Weber's idea was to help make the dogs more adoptable," said Interim Warden Daryl Slykhuis. "When I contacted Ronnie Fish the idea was met with great enthusiasm. The Humane Society has been a pleasure to work with."

When the dogs finish their training at the prison, the paroled pups will be placed back into the community through adoption at the Sioux Falls Area Humane Society. "I see nothing but success for both the Humane Society, the DOC, the inmates and the Sioux Falls community," Taylor concluded.