



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

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Tail-Wagging Therapists Visiting RDC Twice A Month

The visitors who recently dropped in on Reception and Diagnostic Center (RDC) residents didn't offer any advice or counseling, nor did they have any advanced training in dealing with troubled youths. But by the end of the hour, residents had visibly relaxed, were laughing, and were sometimes even hugging the guests.

Welcome to a day in the life of the Caring Canines, a volunteer organization that provides "therapy dogs" to people who are experiencing stress, depression, and anger. They visit a variety of places such as nursing homes, schools, and libraries to allow adults and children the opportunity to experience the love of dogs. Studies show that just petting a dog can have a significant positive impact on those dealing with trauma issues and anger management.

"The only criteria we set for the residents are that they could not have any animal cruelty charges or allergies in their file. Otherwise, every resident is invited," said Bon Air JCC and RDC volunteer coordinator Cindy Yadav, who arranged to bring the program to RDC after



Bon Air JCC/RDC Volunteer Coordinator Cindy Yadav welcomes Image, left, and Alex, above. Below, from left: Residents enjoy the attentions of Alex and Lola; RDC Counselor Lori Wooten and her dog, Hooch. Yadav researched ways the program might benefit residents before gaining Central Office approval.

Counselor Lori Wooten approached her with the idea. "When each group came down, they were somewhat guarded, and not sure what to expect. As time went on, the residents visibly relaxed. By the end of each set time, they were hugging

and petting the dogs, asking the handlers questions and were laughing. Each of the residents received a picture of the dog to keep as a memento."

Caring Canines is now visiting RDC twice a month.

