



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

May 4, 2015

The Beaumont JCC residents who visited the American K-9 Interdiction (AK9I) facility in Carrsville, VA, last week can thank their four-legged students for possibly giving them their first positive experience with law enforcement in their young lives.

The AK9I Service Dog Handler course was begun last month at Beaumont. As the course neared its conclusion, it was decided to take the residents on a field trip to the AK9I facility to see it for themselves and participate in a training session. The canine training course involves canine safety, health and care, kennels and equipment, principles of conditioning (shaping, marking and rewarding) and canine obedience.

While there, they met a law enforcement officer from Wisconsin who also was there to train his dog. The officer demonstrated to the residents what he already had learned in the course. The residents ate lunch with him and were able to share a common interest.

“Communication is difficult for our residents under normal circumstances, but their interaction with law enforcement has generally not been



positive,” Beaumont Superintendent Peggy Parrish says. “This allowed them to see law enforcement in a different circumstance and come away with a positive experience.”

When the residents first started the course, they were a little apprehensive. The notion of trust had been in short supply in many of their lives, and the large dogs with sharp teeth who greeted them at first gave them pause.

But it wasn't long before these specially selected canines—followed by AK9I's professional trainers—were able to melt away the residents' guardedness. They were soon fully involved in the task of preparing the dogs to serve in a variety of roles for law enforcement, the military, or as service dogs for the visually impaired.

“The AK9I instructors seemed to have a unique understanding of the residents and were comfortable and patient with them from the start,” says Deputy Director of Education Dr. Lisa Floyd, who along with Career Technical Education Manager Reginald Branch and AK9I President Paul Roushia helped to arrange the field trip. “There were no behavioral issues among the residents.”

Students completing the class receive a certified dog trainer diploma. The next class, to take place in the second week of June, will be the advanced class where the students who completed this course will get advanced training as well as help to train the new students in the basic course.