



QUEST

Bergin College of Canine Studies

10201 Old Redwood Hwy
Penngrove, CA 94951
707-545-DOGS (3647)
www.BerginU.edu

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BERGIN COLLEGE OF CANINE STUDIES

NEW BEGINNINGS

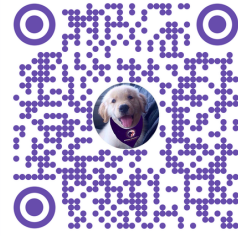
Happy 2024! While the first quarter of this year comes to a close, our newest chapter is just getting started.

On March 2, 2024, we watched our degree students walk the graduation stage and ceremoniously transform into "Alumni!" That day was a turning point for both our graduates and staff members. From that point on, all Bergin staff would shift their focus to preparing for the campus' move in June of this year. Despite a lot of wheels in motion, there is much excitement as we look forward to welcoming our Summer Seminar Class of 2024.



Gymnasium in Canyonville, OR

Students from across the nation are getting ready to join us for our annual 7-week certificate program in just a couple months. This will be the very first class to break in our new campus! We are ecstatic to offer on-campus housing, acreage to roam, an on-site gym facility, and nature abound! Our campus is centrally located in the heart of Canyonville. Sitting just



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INSIDE:

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- CANINE THERAPY JAIL PROGRAM
- WELCOMING PPH NORTH BAY
- OUR NEWEST DOG TEAMS!

two hours east from the beautiful coastline and two hours west from Crater Lake National Park, we can't wait to provide an abundance of adventure to our students and service dogs-in-training.

Canyonville is a quaint town with a connected community. We have already been feeling the support from afar; residents have been inquiring about volunteer opportunities and fostering our dogs. While we aim to keep in close conversation with our Sonoma County community, there is no doubt that we will have a positive impact on our Pacific Northwest community in Oregon.

With students exploring an expansion of possibilities and volunteers fostering our service dogs-in-training, in both Sonoma County and Douglas County, we look to the future with open arms. Our community of devoted volunteers, donors, and fosters have helped us create a solid foundation here in California over the last 33 years. We're looking forward to keeping our current base of supporters engaged with fostering opportunities and events as we simultaneously grow our community up north. We thank you all for your support throughout the years!

Our Newest Graduates!

Master of Science • Human-Canine Life Sciences



Jon Alvarado



Kate Baer



Michelle Dillon



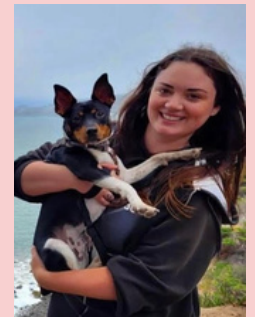
Carrie Faber-Johnston



Lily Mills



Bryana Peters



Tianna Raphael

Bachelor of Science • Cynology



Jack Balster



Hyunjung Choi



Christina Fella



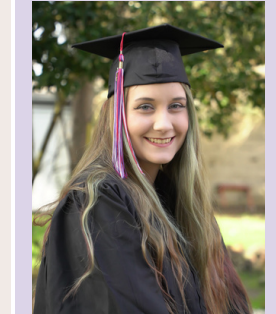
Daniela Gomez



Lyric Salmeri-Hurtado



Rae Smiljanic



Azaria Arndt-Manning

AS • ADE

Associate of Science • Assistance Dog Education



Jennifer Carter



Jee Hye Chung



Kellsey Gumbs



Olya Ford



Michelle Jacobs



Steven Koh



Marjorie Le Reste



Alan Womble

A WORD FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Over the many years that I have been involved with Bergin University, I have watched the Bergin University campus move four times.

When we approved the move to the Old Green Mill we thought it would be the University's forever home. Even though it needed a lot of work, we did not find that daunting and had plans for saving some of the historical structure as well as building new structures. However, we didn't anticipate the bureaucratic hurdles that would be encountered, nor the lack of affordable student housing.

After several years of hard effort, we made the difficult decision to start a search for a new location, out of Sonoma County, that would allow the University to realize its potential. We feel that we have found that site at a former boarding school in Canyonville, Oregon.

Although we are deeply disappointed that things did not work out as anticipated and the campus is moving, it is not the end of BUCS and its affiliates at the Penngrove site. Plans are underway to utilize the facility in furthering the human-canine experience.

I want to thank everyone who has assisted us here and hope that you will continue to do so, as we move into the next phase.

Dave Phillips, CPA
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

IN QUEST OF: A FRESH START

The ten acre 10201 Old Redwood Hwy. property was bought with the intention of being, as Dave alluded to above, our forever home. With two years into its development, having spoken to every adjacent neighbor, with the zoning approved by the county, and permits in place for each step of the work we were doing, we were unexpectedly told by the State that, other than 60 days a year, we could only have 24 people on site on any given day. This, after we had applied for and gained accreditation for a full-scale University in Canine Studies, the first in the history of the world.



The river on our property in Canyonville, OR

Additionally, we enthusiastically had a new well drilled with a 50' seal sufficient to serve the full University staff, faculty and a large student population, had the ground and plumbing engineered for the six temporary modular buildings we had leased to serve as classrooms and a training room, hard-packed a parking lot, fenced the entire perimeter to ensure the dogs, (students and neighbors) would be safe, put up picnic tables for outside eating during the pandemic and, in general, set the education standard for canine studies throughout the world.

The last step, virtually the very last step, in this process, even after the county had been alerted that this permit would be issued, the State Water Board pulled the plug. This, despite the fact that the Water Board staff had up-till-then approved each increment of the process. Our appeal, submitted with thorough documentation, was denied by the State's attorneys to not even be heard by the State Water Board. The drought had hit.



Auditorium in Canyonville, OR

So we hunted for an alternative solution, and found, to our delight, an alternate site. One with nine classrooms, three dormitories, a full-sized gymnasium and work-out center, a student café, faculty lounge, cafeteria

and commercial kitchen, eleven apartments and an auditorium, not to mention a nice park, tree-covered grounds and a beautiful albeit small river running through it. And, to add to its attractiveness, two tennis courts.



Kerry and Abdul's Garden

Admittedly this is an older property needing significant upgrades, but the bones are good, and it would have taken years for us to raise the money to replicate these buildings on our California campus. Attached are some pictures of the campus, and in particular, please note the garden which we are thrilled to name the Kerry and Abdul Sensory Garden in honor of Kerry Knaus (who loved flowers) and Abdul, the world's first service dog team, born from a vision I had as a Master's student at Sonoma State University and created together with Kerry and Abdul here in Sonoma County. [Does anyone have a picture of the mural of Kerry and Abdul that was painted on the north wall of a Hwy. 101 underpass, possibly 3rd Street or College Avenue, in Santa Rosa? Regretfully, I never stopped to take a picture of it.]

Bonnie Bergin
President/CEO

CANINE THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS AT SONOMA COUNTY JAIL: BERGIN DOG TEAMS LEAD THE WAY

"Up" is one of the 112 service dog commands taught at Bergin College of Canine Studies that instructs the dog to place their two front paws up on a reachable surface. It is commonly used when asking the dog to give or retrieve an item from a store clerk. Recently, I witnessed this command inside a jail and it brought tears to my eyes. I heard "up" and turned my head to see the wriggly Labrador enthusiastically jump onto the ledge of a small, rectangular portal positioned in the center of a locked door. On the other side of the opening was a man who looked like he had been reunited with an old friend, reaching out to the paw to hold it, grinning ear to ear. I had no doubt this was a profound interaction; potentially life changing.



Danielle McCants & Ken



Incarcerated Person & Doris

This was the dog's first encounter with an incarcerated person, and my first time watching live what I had only visualized from the stories I heard. I had no doubt this was a profound interaction that had the potential to be life changing.

This heartwarming interaction between dog and incarcerated person was made possible through the K9 Intervention Therapy (KIT) program, developed in 2017 by the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department, created to operate out of their Main Adult Detention Facility (MADF). The purpose of the program was to improve the behavioral health of incarcerated persons by providing them with the opportunity to interact with dogs. The original KIT teams were composed of volunteer dog handlers from both Bergin College and 4-Paws Learning and Wellness Center; 110 hours of visiting time were recorded in 2019 alone. MADF Staff witnessed huge improvements in morale and an increase in positive relationships within the population of persons experiencing mental health disorders. Unfortunately, COVID-19 lockdowns abruptly halted the program.

In early 2021, we were able to launch a revised version of the program via Zoom. While the incarcerated persons weren't able to foster a service dog-in-training like before, they were still able to learn the same quality dog training knowledge remotely. On a weekly basis, one of our staff members would drive the incarcerated persons' homework to them at the facility; this COVID-19 version of this program proved effective.



Tom, Lizzie, & Doris

The strong relationship that developed between Bergin College and the Sheriff's Department was important for us to maintain. Lieutenant Liana Whisler and Bonnie Bergin got together in Spring 2023 to begin talk of restarting the program. I worked with my fellow Bergin staff members to recruit from our pool of dedicated volunteers those that would handle Bergin dogs suitable for the task. Sharilyn Marshall-Fox and Bergin Facility Dog, Gilmore, expressed interest immediately. When asked what prompted her to become involved, she stated, "My value and belief system that all human beings, even those who are incarcerated, deserve support... also, to continue expanding awareness and value of the human-canine connection."

Other volunteers who signed up include Danielle McCants with Ken, Tom Monaghan with Lizzie, Kathleen McSharry with Nestle, Melanie McCall-Parker with Valerie, Lynn Badger with Rosie, and Bob Farmer who was open to handling any Bergin dog; I chaperoned the group with demonstration dog, Doris. Together, we collaborated over the course of five months to complete background checks, safety briefings, training, and scheduling. On February 9, 2024, we were finally able to have our first complete, in-person, visit in five years.

Nobody in our group had prior experience working inside a jail or introducing their dogs to this community. In preparation of his first visit, Tom stated, "I followed in through the lens of a Bergin dog, trained to be open, approachable, non-judgemental, and non-reactive." When I asked Kathleen what surprised her most about the jail environment, she exclaimed, "I was surprised by the really nice state of the facility - it's clean, well-lit, and not intimidating." Danielle added that she was taken aback by the positive reception of our dogs.



Sharilyn & Gilmore

Each week, we are escorted and supervised throughout the entire facility. It is interesting to see how Contact Visiting Correctional Deputy Brita Sanders approaches each module with its own unique protocol. Her confidence makes us feel safe and able to concentrate. When asked how our visits have impacted their community, she exclaimed, "I have received wonderful feedback from each module who has had the chance to engage with the K9s in the KIT program. A lot of the feedback I have received are requests to see the dogs again... they bring a sense of calm and normalcy to their day... elevated moods are reported (by coworkers) throughout the rest of their shifts."

All the dogs facilitate many moments of joy from those inside the facility. When asked to describe a specific behavior their dog displays when in the facility, Kathleen says, "Nestle has no difficulty approaching everybody and inviting interaction... she just laps up the love!" Sharilyn mentions, "Gilmore makes good eye contact, has a calm demeanor, and likes to give kisses... if they let him."

One of the modules we visit houses people in the Jail Based Competency Treatment program (JBCT) which provides additional education to help individuals restore competency so they may stand trial. JBCT Correctional Deputy Doug Devore speaks about the positive effects they're seeing, explaining, "The biggest thing is them talking about the dogs when they're not there... it makes them appear more confident that they are thinking for themselves when they remember the KIT visits."

We also visit modules of other mental health classifications and it's interesting to observe how the incarcerated persons react - some will approach us to pet the dogs while others watch from a distance. "The dogs brought sunlight and fresh air. There were instant smiles, there was humor and warm conversations... about the dogs in their lives, which, in their telling, transported them to times and places beyond (the) walls," Tom noted about the impact of our presence.

Everyone involved in these visits feel gratitude that they can bring a sense of joy back into these individuals' lives. Danielle mentions, "Having something familiar and reminiscent of their pre-incarceration life can positively impact their mental health and reduce stress..." Sharilyn adds that "The program can and does ease interpersonal stress and tension on the units..." The group agrees that the program helps to humanize incarcerated individuals.



Incarcerated Person & Nestle

A heartfelt thanks to all those involved in the execution of this special program. Tom, Sharilyn, Danielle, and Kathleen: thank you for your thoughtful responses that helped contribute to this story.

Nicole Roberts
Associate Dog Program Manager

WELCOME PPH NORTH BAY!

As you know, Bergin College of Canine Studies is relocating to the new campus in Canyonville, Oregon. That means that our current 10-acre location in Penngrove will be vacant... until Paws for Purple Hearts' new location moves in!



PPH members during a 2023 conference

Paws for Purple Hearts (PPH), our sister organization that provides Canine Assisted Warrior Therapy® and places service dogs with Veterans, will be developing their eighth site right here in the North Bay Area. PPH has seven other locations across the nation: Ruther Glen (VA), San Antonio (TX), Anchorage (AK), San Diego (CA), Menlo Park (CA), Canyonville (OR), and Lakewood (WA).

There will still be plenty of puppy raising and dog fostering opportunities available! The way their foster program works is exactly like ours; we anticipate this being a smooth transition for our Sonoma County community and encourage you to continue fostering service dogs-in-training for PPH.

We wouldn't rather any other organization move into our previous home than PPH. Please help us in welcoming them to the area!

Our Newest Dog Teams!



Fiona and Donald were matched during our Fall 2023 Client Training and have been a wonderful Facility Dog team ever since! Donald helps Fiona's elementary school students thrive while simultaneously providing joy for the faculty members.



Mindy and Dudley were matched during our Spring 2024 Client Training just this March! We have no doubt that Dudley will allow Mindy's high schoolers to engage in deeper learning practices while putting smiles on each face he greets.



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Elizabeth

Interested in an Assistance Dog?

Email ServiceDogRequest@BerginU.edu, download the Facility Dog or Service Dog Application on our website (www.BerginU.edu), or give us a call today at (707)545-3647!



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