

## Media Release

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For Immediate Release

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### **NSP, LCC Partner with Domesti-PUPS to Provide Epileptic Response Dogs**

**Lincoln** – Monday, inmate handlers/trainers from the Nebraska State Penitentiary and Lincoln Correctional Center, in association with Domesti-PUPS, a non-profit organization, provided four young people with trained epileptic response dogs.

The dogs - Landon, Jessie, Nitro and Norman – have undergone almost two years of training provided by inmates, with help from community volunteers, to know how to react and assist their humans in the event of a seizure.

The four-legged heroes' training ended this month with a 12-day camp designed to allow the canines to bond with their humans and become comfortable navigating in public areas like malls, theaters, restaurants, and public streets. They refined their responses to commands and honed their reactions to the inevitable seizures.

The inmates, who are all volunteers, view their involvement in this program as a way to give back to the community and help those in need.

During a graduation ceremony held Monday, one inmate became a certified master dog trainer.

The Domesti-PUPS staff spoke highly of the inmate handler/trainers and NDCS staff stating their dedication to the program is what enables success.



Inmates at the Lincoln Correctional Center, in partnership with Lincoln-based non-profit Domesti-PUPS, provided four young people with epileptic response service dogs in a ceremony June 27, 2016 at LCC. (Nebraska State Photo by Drew Nystrom)

These men have value, Michelle Ashley, CEO and founder of the Domesti-PUPS program, said of the inmates. They are providing freedom and a sense of normalcy to young people even though they have forfeited their own, she said.

During their training, the service dogs learned how to do everything from open doors; retrieve dropped items; open backpacks; and even serve as “braces” to allow their humans to stand up after a seizure or fall.

Specific training was administered to each service dog to allow them to respond to the unique needs and type of seizures experienced by the person they would be paired with.

According to Ashley, seizures can vary from person to person and there are many different types of seizures.

In order to provide the best training possible for the service dogs, the recipients’ families videotaped their seizures so the inmate/trainers could replicate them in their training regimen.

With this graduation, a new class of potential service dogs will begin their training today at NSP and LCC and run for the next year.

For more information or to cover the program, contact [andrew.nystrom@nebraska.gov](mailto:andrew.nystrom@nebraska.gov).