



ORANGE COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT
PRESS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A New Leash on Life

Santa Ana, Calif. (January 12, 2024) - Tuesday, January 9, 2024 was an example of a “*New Leash on Life*” at the Cell Dogs Incorporated’s fourth training cycle graduation at the Orange County Probation Juvenile Hall Facility. For the last 15 years, Cell Dogs - a non-profit organization, has selected dogs from various shelters and rescues to be trained by youth housed at Orange County Probation facilities. Cell Dogs, Inc. is operated by **Executive Director Janette Thomas** and **Concept Dog Trainer Lynn Middleton**.

The program is unique: youth are selected, instructed for four weeks on how to teach a dog discipline and obedience, and then train the dogs for eight weeks. Community members or organizations then apply to adopt one of the dogs in the program.

The graduation allowed youth to demonstrate the skills their dogs have mastered and concluded with the emotional leash exchange ceremony as the youth saw their hard work and dedication to the dogs come to a successful end.

Several studies in recent years have shown that such programs have significant impact on youth development, emotional regulation, and reducing recidivism. One of the youths commented that the program is a “game changer” which “has given us stability, a new foundation, and a sense of reliability with staff and the trainers.”

Chief Probation Officer Daniel Hernandez expressed, “The Cell Dogs program is a great addition to the menu of programs youth and young adults can participate in at Juvenile Hall. It was very touching to see how the youth learn empathy, maturity, and responsibility as well as dog training skills. The dogs get a new home, the new owners get great dogs, and the department,

staff, and eventually the public will benefit from the changes seen in these youth.”

Orange County Superior Court Judge Anthony Ufland was in attendance and witnessed the palpable connections between Cell Dogs trainers, Juvenile Correctional Officers, youth, and the adoptive families.

Judge Ufland was thrilled when he learned of the Cell Dogs program. He continues to advocate for expanding the training and knowledge of caring for dogs and believes this training can lead to job opportunities for the youth upon release, providing a “new lease on life” for them!

About the Orange County Probation Department

As a public safety agency, the Orange County Probation Department serves the community using effective, research supported rehabilitation practices and collaborative partnerships to successfully resocialize justice involved individuals.

The Probation Department is proud to serve the Orange County community. It is dedicated to continuous improvement, searching out and applying “effective and research supported practices” to assist justice involved youth, their families, and adults to successfully navigate and successfully complete probation. Further, the Probation Department assists the criminal court system through investigations, probation reports and community supervision of thousands of adult and juvenile clients on court-ordered probation or in diversion programs. The Department operates the Orange County Juvenile Hall, and two camps for youth. In addition, the Department operates two Youth Reporting Centers serving North and Central Orange County.

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