

C.H.A.M.P. Assistance Dog, Inc. and the Missouri Department of Corrections Partnership Program

Veterinary Technology Students Visit The Champ Prison Program

In March 2007, eight students from the Veterinary Technology program from Sanford-Brown College in St. Peters traveled to Vandalia, Missouri, in cooperation with C.H.A.M.P. The purpose of the visit was to meet the women offenders at Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center who are training dogs to assist the disabled.



Ricky wants to learn too!

Sanford-Brown College offers a two-year Associates degree program in Veterinary Technology. The students attending the field trip will be the first graduating class. The Sanford-Brown students had completed half their two-year program which included their laboratory skills class before the trip to the facility. Participation was voluntary.

The idea to mix the offender trainers and the vet tech students was an idea that was shared by the Veterinary Technology Program Department Chair, Dr. Amy Wolff, and C.H.A.M.P. Executive Director, Janet Cole. Dr. Wolff had been making periodic visits to the prison to teach veterinary topics to the offender trainers. When she took the job at Sanford-Brown, the idea of mixing the two groups was discussed. The opportunity for both groups to share their knowledge was exciting and both students and offenders looked forward to their day together.

Because of their limited access to educational materials and practical technical experience, the Veterinary Technology students conducted a laboratory session in which the offender trainers were taught basic canine medicine. This gave the Vet Tech students a chance to teach the skills they had been taught by the Sanford-Brown faculty. When the students teach others, it cements the concepts and laboratory practices that will be the basis of their careers. They conducted physical exams, analyzed samples, and a video of a complete spay procedure was provided. The trainers reciprocated by doing demonstrations of training exercises and behavior modification. It was fascinating to watch the dogs practice small skills that lead up to the larger duties they will have when they go to their new homes. The students were especially impressed to watch one of the canine students remove a trainer's socks!

After the laboratory session was concluded, the Vet Tech students were allowed to visit the housing unit where the trainers live with their dogs. The trainers were hospitable hosts and explained their daily routine and how the dogs were cared for to the students. The students were impressed by what the trainers accomplished and how The Champ Prison Program provided such a positive focus for the offenders.

Both Vet Tech students and offender-trainers socialized easily. The entire day was a great success in learning and understanding. The students expressed an interest in returning to the facility. The trainers were equally as enthusiastic. It was really great to watch the two groups of women interact and enjoy a great day of learning. ♥



Dr. Wolff leads the discussion



Vet tech students become teachers



Study, observe, test...



Class is over today!