



PRISON PUPPIES



by Meish Goldish

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**Consultant: Gloria Gilbert Stoga
President and Founder, Puppies Behind Bars**

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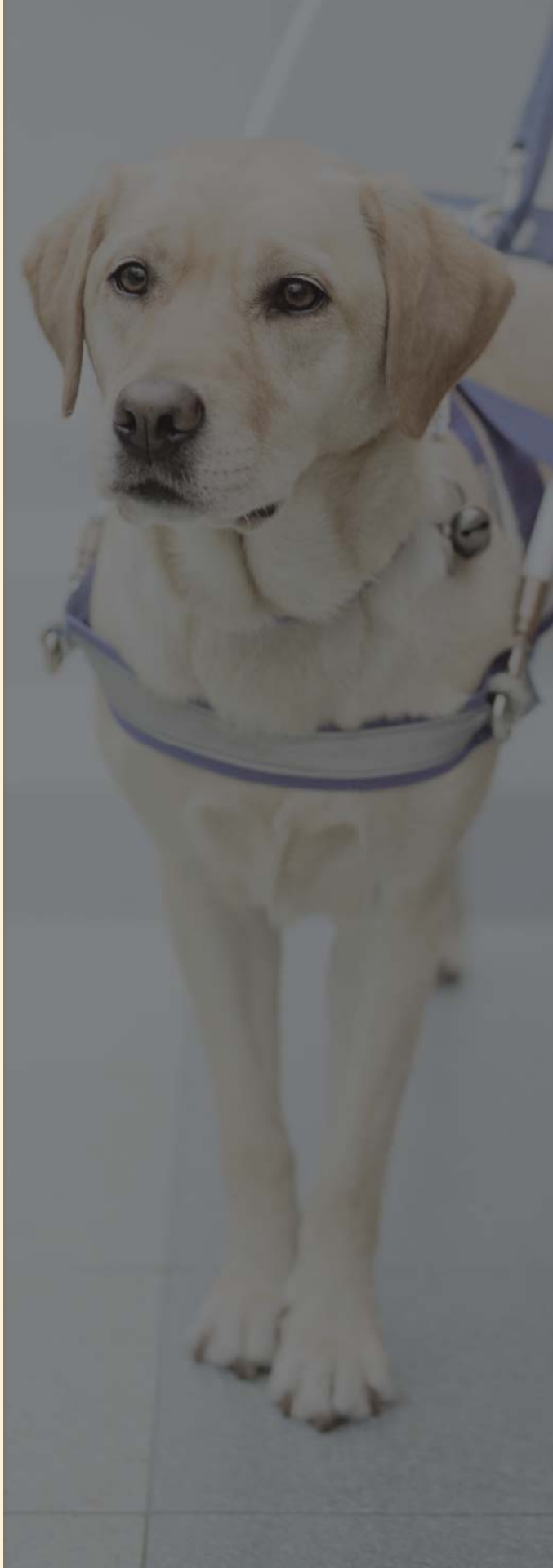
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“Watch Me!”

A yellow Labrador retriever named Mitzie sat in a large room. Her **trainer**, Sharon, shouted a **command**. “Watch me!” she ordered the dog.

Quickly, Mitzie focused on Sharon’s eyes. It was an important skill for Mitzie to learn. One day she might have a **disabled** owner who would only be able to use his or her eyes to give directions.

Sharon taught Mitzie to stare at her every time she said, “Watch me!”



Anyone watching Sharon work might think she's a **professional** dog trainer. In fact, she's an **inmate** in a New York State prison for women. She takes part in a program called Puppies Behind Bars (PBB), in which inmates raise puppies that later work as **service dogs** for people who are not in prison.



An inmate named Missy trains Portia, a yellow Labrador retriever, to close a door.

Inmates who train PBB dogs are called "puppy raisers." They get the puppies when the little dogs are about eight weeks old and raise them for about 18 months.

Starting Out

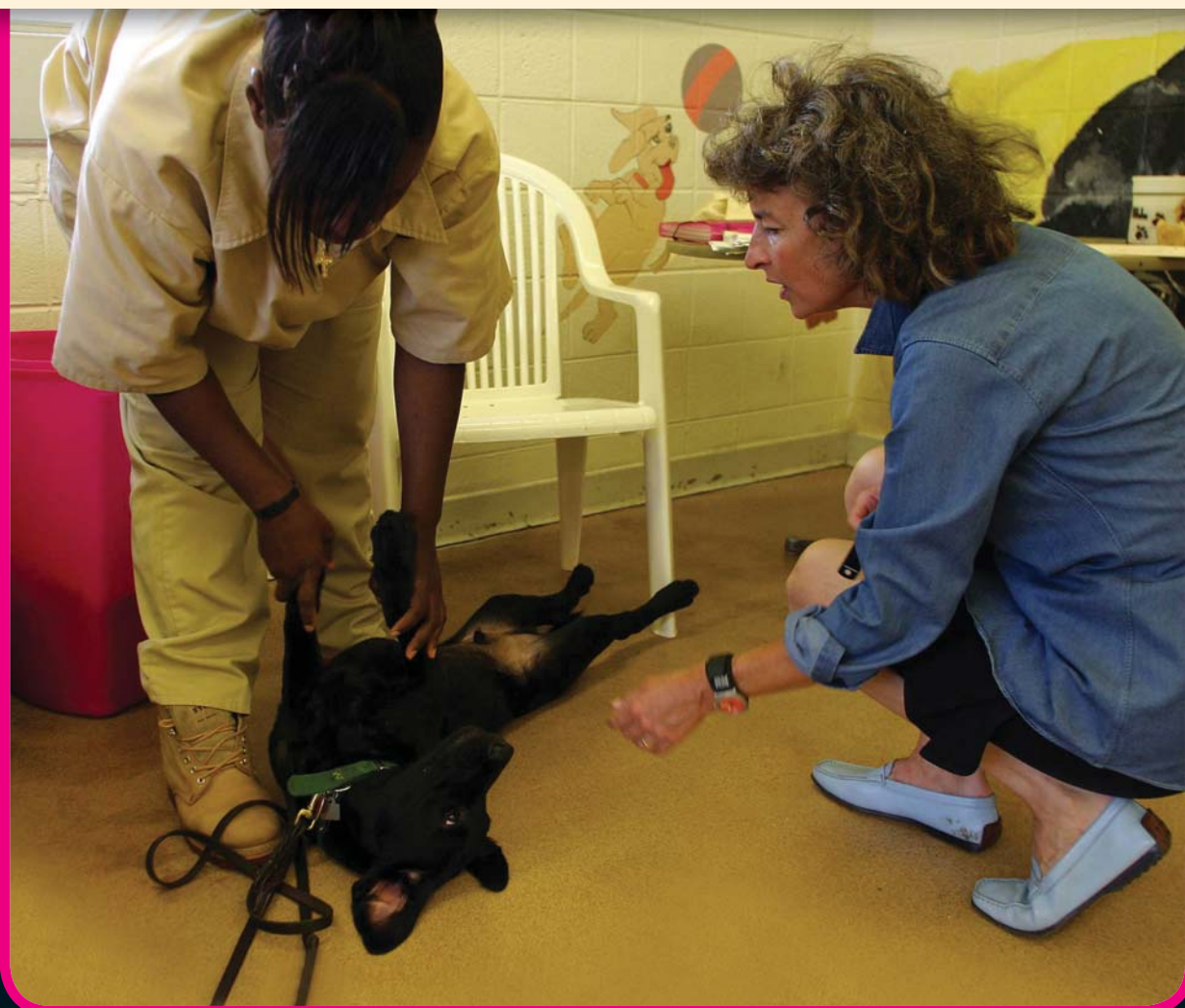
Puppies Behind Bars began in 1997. Gloria Gilbert Stoga, who worked for the mayor's office in New York City, started the program because she recognized that there were not enough people to train all the service dogs needed to help disabled people. Gloria had read about an Ohio prison where inmates raised **guide dogs** for the blind. She felt that a similar program could succeed in New York.

Gloria Gilbert Stoga
with Fairfield (left)
and Dudley (right)



Guide dogs for the blind are one type of service dog. Other kinds of service dogs are trained to help people with different disabilities, such as those who are unable to walk or hear.

Not everyone agreed with Gloria. Some prison **officials** worried that inmates might treat the dogs badly or teach them to attack prison guards. However, Gloria still managed to find a prison willing to test her idea. During the test phase, inmates raised five dogs for 18 months. Two of the **canines** became skilled enough to serve as guide dogs. Gloria proved that the PBB program could work.



Gloria Gilbert Stoga (right) started the Puppies Behind Bars program at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York State. Today, PBB operates in six prisons—three for men and three for women—in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

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About the Author

Meish Goldish has written more than 200 books for children. His books *Bug-a-licious* and *Michael Phelps: Anything Is Possible* were Children's Choices Reading List Selections in 2010. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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PRISON PUPPIES

A yellow Labrador retriever named Mitzie sat in a large room. Her trainer Sharon, an inmate in a New York State prison, gave a command. "Watch me!" It was an important skill for Mitzie to learn. One day she might be placed with a person who is unable to speak and only able to use his or her eyes to give directions.

Mitzie was being trained to assist a person with a disability. Learn about her and other dogs that are part of a program called Puppies Behind Bars. Find out how prison inmates and dogs work together, help each other, and ultimately make a big difference in the lives of people in the outside world.

Baghdad Pups

Combat-Wounded Dogs

Disaster Search Dogs

Dog Scouts of America

Eco Dogs

Fire Dogs

Guide Dogs

Hollywood Dogs

Medical Detective Dogs

Military Dogs

Police Dogs

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