

Inmates & Dogs...



Photo by Kathy D. Hill
THE 3rd GRADUATING CLASS — Standing for review, Greyhounds and their trainers of the between Jenkins Correctional Facility in Millen and Second Chance Greyhounds of Atlanta are ready for graduation.

Loving Every Minute of It!

By Kathy D. Hill

With all the pomp and circumstance of any graduation, the candidates walked in Thursday morning attired in caps and tassels. They didn't need the gown; they were leashed, and the 12 graduating greyhounds were led into the ceremony by their trainers, inmates at Jenkins Correctional Facility Millen.

For the last 10 weeks, former racing greyhounds have been partnered day and night with select inmates. Second Chance Greyhounds, a 501(c)(3) organization in Atlanta, accepts greyhounds who have been used for racing, and with the help of the men at the privatized prison, the dogs are completely retrained and move into adoption homes. This was the third graduating class of canines from the institution.

Gwen Colvin, Counselor and Coordinator of the program, said, "I'm one of those folks who

don't trust people who don't like dogs, and I especially don't trust people that dogs don't like. Today, we have a group of 12 happy dogs who will be leaving us today and beginning their new lives with a loving family. They're able to do that because of these inmates. I'm amazed how straggly the dogs look coming from a race track, but when they leave here, they're healthy, well adjusted dogs and they can do that because of the hard work of their trainers here at Jenkins Correctional Facility. The inmates fuss over these dogs like they were their own children, and they do it because they care."

Colvin said the program is intensive, both physically and emotionally, and she becomes irritated when anyone thinks otherwise.

"Those that think it's easy don't understand the amount of time and sacrifice it takes to make it look this effortless," she said. "These guys work their behinds off! That's one reason why

it's so hard to get participants. I tell these guys to 'Check the convict at the door,' and that's exactly what I mean. I'm not interested in these guys being successful convicts. I'm interested in them leaning skills so that when they leave here, they're happy, productive, law-abiding citizens."

The counselor told the group of inmates assembled that she notes little bits of that happening every day. "It's not all unicorns and rainbows, but it's worth it! There's more to it than playing with a dog 24 hours a day. There's a lot of work that goes along with it, but your hard work is paying off and it's because of you, these dogs are successful and happy for the rest of their lives."

Patti Peterson heads Second Chance Greyhounds and said, "I thank these inmates for the compassion they've shown these beautiful greyhounds in their care. The training they give makes a huge difference in getting a greyhound ready for a family. The combination of animal/human bond and the socialization training by these inmates will help bring joy and unconditional love into the lives of people and with these former racing greyhounds."

Mr. James, who trained Gordy "McBones," has a life



Photo by Kathy D. Hill
GOOD BOY! — Trainer Mr. Popham demonstrates Goose's obedience to commands and the dog's desire to please the man with whom he's spent the last 10 weeks.

sentence for aggravated assault and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime, said working with the program has given him something to look forward to.

"This is an honor to be part of a team that gets to do this," said Mr. James. "Not only do we get to work with the dogs, but being a part of this program has inspired some of us guys to go back and get an education and get our GEDs. In fact, having a GED is required for the program, and I'd like to thank everyone who helped me

through all of this."

According to Mr. Russell, one of the main trainers, "Some of these dogs continue life as therapy dogs, and one has even helped a military veteran overcome PTSD. Others become family pets and can spend the rest of their days lounging or clowning around and simply enjoying what life has to offer them."

During the ceremony other inmates expressed their appreciation

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Photo by Kathy D. Hill

EVEN THE DOGS HAVE TATTOOS — Inmate and trainer Mr. James shows Jill Conner that the dogs come into the facility with numbers tattooed on their ears. The special numbers identify the dog on the race track.



Photo by Kathy D. Hill

Gwen Colvin, Counselor and Coordinator of the Second Chance program at Jenkins Correctional Facility.

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of how a trainer has helped them, specifying that some of the traits and skills learned from working with the dogs will help them in other areas of their lives as they continue to be rehabilitated and return to society.

Trainer Mr. Robert delivered the graduation speech for the inmates. Mr. Robert said, "We thank God for making everything possible. ... We are here today with humility and our third graduation exercise here at Jenkins Correctional Facility and Second Chance Greyhound. We have made significant progress with this program. These greyhounds now have a new perspective on life, and perhaps we saved their lives. The only life these greyhounds and ones like them had was from their kennels to the racetrack and back to their kennels. That was all they knew. When dogs like these are

unable to race anymore, many times they are euthanized. Why? Because they can't make their owners any more money. But an intervention has taken place! Programs like Second Chance Greyhound has come into existence, and not only saved these wonderful dogs, but nursed them back to health, trained them, and enabled them to become pets and companions. They have learned unconditional love, loyalty and respect, integrity, hope, responsibility and skills. Thanks to Second Chance Greyhound, it gives us a chance to give something back to the community from which we came, and ultimately we will be going back to. What a great set of ideas and values comes from it. Long live Second Chance Greyhound and as we always say, Everyone Deserves A Second Chance!"

Helping train "Goose" was Mr. Popham. Incarcerated on a probation/parole violation, Mr. Popham said he and his wife have always

rescued animals and his being able to continue working with dogs in prison has kept him focused on not only getting his life straight behind the walls of the prison, but when he is released.

After graduating, individual photos of the trainers and their companions were taken and certificates presented. Mr. James received one himself, and because Gordy proved to excel beyond expectation, the dog received a special certificate.

"He got a Good Citizen Award," Mr. James said as he presented his certificate and Gordy's. "The Good Citizen Award that Gordy has and will go with him means this dog can go anywhere and do anything a service dog can. In fact, if an apartment says pets are not allowed, they cannot deny anyone to stay there just because they have a dog who has this certification."

Eight of the 12 dogs graduating last week have passed that special test.

Greyhound graduates were Gordy, Fergie, Gracie, Goose, Bristol, Colby, Romeo, Sissy, Cutter, Sugar, Winston and Jackson. The spayed/neutered dogs left aboard an air conditioned transport to Atlanta where they were to meet their expectant families later that day, with the exception of little Fergie, who will be fostered until a permanent home is found for her. After those graduates left, that same afternoon a new batch of rescued greyhounds were to arrive at the prison to begin their transformation and the continuance of improving the lives of those inmates that work with them.

To learn more about Second Chance Greyhounds, log onto www.secondchancegreyhounds.org or search for them on Facebook to keep up via photos of the changed lives of these once racing dogs thanks to the love, care and support of a group of inmates at Jenkins Correctional Facility.



The Scouting Report

by John Conner

May The Lights Never Dim

The cover of last week's *Sports Illustrated* highlighted the 25th anniversary of the incredible book by H.G. Bissinger, *Friday Night Lights*.

I've read it a couple of times. And while Bissinger covers the glories of the high school game in Odessa, Texas, he also covers the blemishes and warts.

Bissinger's book chronicled the 1988 Permian Panthers football season. For the record, Permian was 12-3 during that season losing to Dallas Carter in the Texas University Intercollegiate League State semifinals.

Nothing parallels our society like high school football. There is no game that brings so many types of people from so many different socioeconomic genres together with a common purpose, to win.

If you've read the book or watched the movie, you'll remember the characters named Boobie Miles, Mike Winchell, Brian Chavez, Don Billingsley, Jerrod McDougal, and Ivory Christian.

Bissinger's article chronicled a return to Odessa, where he made many friends but also many enemies for his book. Bissinger visited those main characters listed above and reported on how they're doing now.

Most are doing well, except for Boobie Miles, who's now in prison for a myriad of minor offenses, including not paying child support.

Boobie, the team's all-star running back was very heavily recruited before being injured in a preseason

scrimmage. He was viewed as a sympathetic character who's life reached a pinnacle before the injury, and spiraled out of control since.

Mike Winchell, the team's quarterback who bore the unrelenting pressure of high expectations more than anyone else involved, has settled into a sedate middle class existence as a lease operator for Devon Energy. He oversees almost 50 oil wells.

Chavez graduated from Harvard and followed in his father's footsteps as a successful lawyer and businessman. He was disbarred for 5 years after an altercation with his fiancée's ex-husband, but is getting his legal license back soon.

Billingsley, the team's rebellious renegade, has changed the most, finding Christ and corporate success as a healthcare consultant.

Ivory Christian, the talented defensive end who was the team's only Division 1 player, became a trucker, and is very satisfied with his quiet existence.

McDougal, a big offensive lineman, took over his father's equipment company and worked his way through a family tragedy involving his brother, who was paralyzed in an auto accident. He played the caretaker role for 5 years before his brother passed away.

And all of them, successes and failures alike, remember their glory days, and as Perez said, "the crowds, the cheers, and the chaos" like it was yesterday.

Since that time, the lights have dimmed a little in Odessa, Texas. Permian is nowhere close to being the powerhouse they used to be, and the Panthers will play a lot of games in front of empty seats in their massive 16,000 seat stadium.

The local high school football season gets underway with scrimmages on Friday week, August 14. Vidalia will travel over to Twin City for a return bout with Emanuel County Institute.

On August 21, the Indians will return to Emanuel County to Tiger Stadium in Swainsboro for their season opener.



Photo by Kathy D. Hill

JOB COMPLETED; NOW COMES LOVE — The Good Citizen Award recipients (dogs) of the 3rd Graduating Class of greyhounds pose for a final photo with their trainers before they leave the correctional facility to be adopted by a waiting family.

CURRENT 2015 TAX DIGEST AND 5-YEAR HISTORY OF LEVY

The Vidalia City School System does hereby announce that the millage rate will be approved at a called meeting meeting to be held at the Vidalia Board of Education Office, 301 Adams Street on August 20, 2015 at 12:00 p.m. and pursuant to the requirements of O.C.G.A. 48-5-32 does here by publish the following presentation of the current year's tax digest and levy along with the history of the tax digest and levy for the past five years.

Toombs County						
SCHOOL	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
REAL & PERSONAL	\$281,948,633.00	\$291,797,464.00	\$302,069,038.00	\$325,200,314.00	\$327,418,629.00	\$331,397,627.00
MOTOR VEHICLES	\$22,044,690.00	\$21,663,280.00	\$21,926,010.00	\$22,593,320.00	\$20,659,150.00	\$12,645,600.00
MOBILE HOMES	\$385,775.00	\$349,533.00	\$377,479.00	\$361,007.00	\$347,443.00	\$344,502.00
TIMBER - 100%	\$0.00	\$28,284.00	\$17,725.00			\$57,211.00
HEAVY DUTY EQUIPMENT						
GROSS DIGEST	\$304,379,098.00	\$313,838,561.00	\$324,390,252.00	\$348,154,641.00	\$348,425,222.00	\$344,444,940.00
LESS M&O EXEMPTIONS	\$40,303,834.00	\$45,622,012.00	\$45,732,639.00	\$46,832,242.00	\$51,289,842.00	\$51,820,064.00
NET M&O DIGEST	\$264,075,264.00	\$268,216,549.00	\$278,657,613.00	\$301,322,399.00	\$297,135,380.00	\$292,624,876.00
GROSS M&O MILLAGE	15.000	15.000	14.991	15.000	15.000	15.000
LESS ROLLBACKS						
NET M&O MILLAGE	15.000	15.000	14.991	15.000	15.000	15.000
NET TAXES LEVIED	\$3,961,128.96	\$4,023,248.24	\$4,177,356.28	\$4,519,835.99	\$4,457,030.70	\$4,389,373.14
NET TAXES \$ INCREASE	(\$64,392.12)	\$62,119.27	\$154,108.04	\$342,479.71	(\$62,805.29)	(\$67,657.56)
NET TAXES % INCREASE	-1.60%	1.57%	3.83%	8.20%	-1.39%	-1.52%

Montgomery County						
SCHOOL	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
REAL & PERSONAL	\$12,562,537.00	\$12,090,146.00	\$12,225,655.00	\$11,367,385.00	\$11,995,980.00	\$11,100,490.00
MOTOR VEHICLES	\$1,317,650.00	\$1,322,670.00	\$1,135,420.00	\$1,012,630.00	\$1,263,940.00	\$1,135,970.00
MOBILE HOMES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TIMBER - 100%						
HEAVY DUTY EQUIPMENT						
GROSS DIGEST	\$13,880,187.00	\$13,412,816.00	\$13,361,075.00	\$12,380,015.00	\$13,259,920.00	\$12,236,460.00
LESS M&O EXEMPTIONS	\$102,013.00	\$114,311.00	\$75,756.00	\$156,834.00	\$57,648.00	\$26,867.00
NET M&O DIGEST	\$13,778,174.00	\$13,298,505.00	\$13,285,319.00	\$12,223,181.00	\$13,202,272.00	\$12,209,593.00
GROSS M&O MILLAGE	15.000	15.000	15.000	15.000	13.930	14.010
LESS ROLLBACKS						
NET M&O MILLAGE	15.000	15.000	15.000	15.000	13.930	14.010
NET TAXES LEVIED	\$206,672.61	\$199,477.58	\$199,279.79	\$183,347.72	\$183,907.65	\$171,056.40
NET TAXES \$ INCREASE	(\$6,166.20)	(\$7,195.04)	(\$197.79)	(\$15,932.07)	\$559.93	(\$12,851.25)
NET TAXES % INCREASE	-2.90%	-3.48%	-0.10%	-7.99%	0.31%	-6.99%

Toombs Central Holding Fall Sports Signups

By Mike Branch
Sports Editor
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The Toombs County Recreation Department will be holding signups for fall football, soccer and cheerleading from August 17 through September 4. Registration will be from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. each day at the Toombs Central football field across from the Toombs Central school.

There will be flag football for ages 5-6, Pee Wee for ages 7-8, Farm Club for ages 9-10 and Midget for ages 11-12. For soccer the Midget will be for ages 11-14. The registration fee is \$30 per child.

For more information call Larry Moore at 912-403-9367.