



Feel-Good STORY

Saluting the people that make us proud of our community

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Good dog—you are a graduate

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Of the Keizertimes

Thirty-two service dogs attended their graduation at an event on Saturday, March 19, at the Keizer Civic Center.

Joys of Living Assistance Dogs (JLAD) held its first graduation in two years, handing diplomas to the recipients of the dogs. On Saturday evening, the conference center was filled with dogs, trainers, JLAD board members and those who had received a service dog supplied by the Salem-based organization.

The dogs are trained by adults in custody at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institute (EOCI) in Pendleton. Once a dog is paired with a person, training continues to acclimate the canine to the obstacles and distractions of being in public.

The organization offers dogs free of charge to recipients. Many military veterans were represented at the graduation. Some of the dogs are specifically trained to be alert to Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome and others to medical or anxiety issues.

The keynote speaker at the event was Armando Cervantes, who served at EOICI. He spoke of his life, what led him to EOICI and how he got involved with the Prison Puppy program. The evening was live-streamed to the Pendleton institute so the puppy trainers there could be part of the graduation festivities.

Carol Clark read a letter from cousin, Pattye Larson, who received dog Boo due to medical issues. Keizer Mayor Cathy Clark spoke as well, touching on the theme of inspiration.

A silent auction was held that netted more than \$37,000. Attendees also made on-site financial donations, which were collected by Colin with a basket in his mouth.

