Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Inmate Philip Florek watches as Zoey, an Australian shepherd-border collie mix, investigates a rocking horse during a dog training class Tuesday at the Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla. The exercise is meant to get the dog used to new objects in their environment.

DOGS: Should be able to pass the American Kennel Club Good Citizens test by the end of the training

Continued from 1A

"She goes wherever I go," Schiller-Munnemann said.

When he needs a break or has a conflict, either secondary trainer Philip Florek or sitter Geoff Hendrickson takes over.

At first, Zoey was timid. She startled when prison doors clanked open and shut. She refused to climb the metal staircase leading to his second-floor cell. Schiller-Munnemann sat down on the stairs and coaxed her up one step at a time.

During training sessions, Zoey learns basic obedience and manners. Each week, her trainers take her through a different scenario. One week, the visiting room became a farmer's market. This week, Schiller-Munnemann and Zoey visited a pretend veterinarian's office where Hill examined the dog by running her hands over her soft brindle, black and white fur. Afterwards, Schiller-Munnemann stopped by a makeshift receptionist's desk and pretended to write a $250 check. Zoey sat patiently. Schiller-Munnemann slipped her a kibble from his pocket.

By the end of the training, the six dogs should be able to pass the American Kennel Club Good Citizens test. The canines must sit politely for petting, react calmly to the approach of a friendly stranger, walk on a loose lead, come when called and behave politely around other dogs. They must react to unexpected distractions without panicking, barking or running away.

Hill distracted the dogs during this week's session by doing jumping jacks and having inmate trainers and assistant instructors whistle, clap and yell.

Hill said all the dogs have come far, but none have come out of their shell more than Zoey.

"When she came in, she wanted nothing to do with anybody," Hill said. "She cowered."

Hill, who runs 4 Paws DogWorks in Richland, said the inmate trainers benefit as much as the dogs, or more.

"I've watched the relationships between dogs and inmates grow to the point where I'm amazed," she said.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Zoey was confiscated from a house after a drug raid in Umatilla County a few weeks ago and now is in a rescue dog adoption program at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla.

The men each had to apply for their positions, like any job in the real world. Some were invited for interviews. Fewer still received invites for a round of second interviews.

The inmates say having dogs among the prison population is healing. David Keever, a sitter, said he witnessed a tattooed lifer get down on his knees and bury his face in a dog's fur.

"A lot of us haven't seen a dog for a long time," Keever said. "They do a lot for your soul. They mend a lot of holes."

Schiller-Munnemann takes Zoey when he visits a friend in the prison hospice program.

"Everyone in the infirmary lights up when Zoey comes in," he said. "One guy with tears in his eyes said he hadn't petted a dog for 20 years."

Members of the public will have a chance to interact with the six dogs during a meet and greet April 16 at 1:30 p.m., on the lawn near the TRCI administrative offices. Those who want to adopt one of the dogs may fill out adoption papers. If more than one person requests the same dog, a name will be picked from a hat. The owners will have the opportunity to go inside the prison and watch their dog interacting with its trainer. Owners will receive training logs kept by the trainers. The adoption fee is $150.

The trainers are keeping their mission in mind. Zoey's secondary trainer, Philip Florek, came up with a creative slogan for the program: "From no house to the big house to your house."

After the current batch of dogs leaves, another group will arrive. Roles among each dog team member will switch. Schiller-Munnemann said he will miss Zoey when she leaves, but he's determined to remain philosophical.

"We've all gotten attached," he said, "but the whole point of the program is to rescue the dogs and make sure they go on to a better life."

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DATA: Amazon said they could build as many as 11 data centers in Oregon if the bill passed

Continued from 1A

Local county and port officials are optimistic the legislation will make the Columbia Basin an even more attractive option for energy-hungry data centers, which are buildings that house the computer systems needed to store huge amounts of electronic records and corporate information.

Pinpointing potential growth is difficult, however, due to nondisclosure agreements signed with some of the major companies. Gary Neal, general manager at the Port of Morrow, will only say there's "some activity" going on related to data centers, and they are "very busy."

Neal would not say if he's been in any further discussions about expanding data centers at the port, but did hint there may be interest. He did not provide specific employment figures at the businesses, except to say it is "more than we originally thought."

SB611 is an important piece of legislation that will allow the industry to gain a stronger local foothold, Neal said. The port also is working with Blue Mountain Community College and the InterMountain Education Service District to build a new training center near the SAGE Center to provide a workforce for more diverse, high-tech jobs.

"It goes back to jobs and stability," Neal said. "This helps us round out our economy."

Online retail giant Amazon, which operates in Morrow County through a holding company called Vadata, has five data centers at the Port of Morrow. Data specialist Rackspace purchased another 100 acres of land there, but has yet to break ground on development.

Amazon public policy adviser Eileen Sulllivan in February testified before the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue that the company could build as many as 11 new data centers in Oregon if the bill was passed, the *Oregonian* reported.

The total value of Vadata property is more than $431.9 million, according to the Morrow County assessor, though most is tax-exempt through multi-year agreements with the Columbia River Enterprise Zone.

CREZ manager and county Planning Director Carla McLane said they are able to offer property tax breaks for businesses in exchange for certain concessions that directly benefit communities. That includes hiring employees at a minimum average salary of $59,106, and paying community service fees that are redistributed for things like housing, education and public safety.

In January, the enterprise zone handed out $1.15 million in funding from fees collected by ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston, Tillamook Cheese and Vadata. Like Neal, McLane will not acknowledge Amazon by name. But she said she could easily see Vadata adding more centers at the port.

"The more comfortable they are about doing business in Oregon, the more confident they'll feel about doing business in Morrow County," she said.

Kim B. Puzey, general manager at the Port of Umatilla, said he has three data centers either operating or near completion at the McNary Industrial Park. The port also is building a water treatment facility, part of the cooling system needed to maintain servers inside the 100,000-square-foot buildings.

Like the Port of Morrow, the Port of Umatilla is bound by nondisclosure agreements. But as far as continued development, Puzey said there is more land that has been sold to the companies than is currently being developed.

"Based on the number of data centers I see, it appears the market is very vibrant," Puzey said. "Data centers would be hard-pressed to find a more favorable location in North America."

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BMRC: One building will stay in state hands

Continued from 1A

close for good," he said. "If we are not able to keep that building open, Pendleton should be able to develop the land for economic gain as well as other opportunities the city believes would be helpful."

The Legislature's Emergency Board originally approved funding the demolition of the BMRC building and eight buildings on the former EOTC campus. It was only after the meeting that board members learned the transfer of land from the state to the city would need for the approval of the Legislature.

While many of the vacant buildings will probably see the wrecking ball, at least one building on the EOTC campus will stay in state hands.

An amendment was attached to the bill to save a building that the Oregon Health Authority intends to keep. At a Senate Committee on Rules meeting March 24, Pendleton City Councilman Chuck Wood said the authority wants to collaborate with Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. and Umatilla County to house a mental health facility in that building.

As for the rest of the property, Pendleton wants to use the land for industrial development and housing for the local workforce and students from nearby Blue Mountain Community College.

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GUNS: Two previous attempts for private sale background checks failed

Continued from 1A

gun used in the Clackamas shooting was stolen.

Keizer Republican Sen. Kim Thatcher asked how law enforcement officers would be able to police every private transaction, and Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer responded the law will be impossible to enforce.

"I don't have any idea how it's going to be enforced. I will tell this committee I have no intention to enforce it," Palmer said. "State law allows me to use discretion on misdemeanors and I plan to use it every step of the way," he added.

The state's background check requirement already goes further than federal law, requiring them at gun shows.

The seller of a gun would face a misdemeanor for a first offense, punishable by up to a year in jail and a $6,250 fine. A second offense would be a felony, with a potential sentence of up to 10 years in prison and a $250,000 fine.

Oregon law already prohibits giving a gun to minors, felons, people with recent convictions for violent behavior or those who have been found by court to have a mental illness.

Brady Campaign President Dan Gross said Oregon would be the sixth state since the Newtown school massacre to pass background checks on all gun sales.

Two previous attempts to require background checks for private sales have failed in the Oregon Legislature, but last year's election saw Democrats increase their majority by two seats to 18-12 in the Senate. The wins were in part because of a push by a leading gun control group backed by billionaire Michael Bloomberg, which contributed $75,000 to Sen. Chuck Riley of Hillsboro, who defeated the Republican incumbent who opposed universal background checks.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to vote on the measure Thursday morning. If it passes, it could get a vote in the full Senate as soon as next week.

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