|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **ACJ Adds New Therapy Dog to Work with Incarcerated Juveniles** |

 |

 |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **PITTSBURGH –**Allegheny County Jail Acting Warden Shane Dady announced today that the jail has welcomed a new therapy dog into the facility. Fergus, a 5-year-old black Labrador retriever, is joined by handler Cece Peterson, and will initially work with the male and female juvenile populations during bi-weekly visits to the facility. “We have found the therapy dog program to be effective and positive, while contributing to both academic and psychological growth as well as promoting self-esteem and increased social skills in our juvenile population,” Dady said. “The therapy dogs put a smile on everyone’s face, whether they are interacting with staff or the incarcerated population.”Fergus will join the complex trauma therapy groups conducted by the Academic Institute, the jail’s high school that is run through its partnership with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Goals for the therapy program include increasing empathy and compassion in students, decreasing student anxiety and oppositional behaviors that interfere with academic growth, increasing positive attitudes about learning and school, improving self-esteem, providing a sense of connection, and lessening emotional trauma.Fergus is the second therapy dog to work with the juvenile population after the program initially began last year. Link, an Australian shepherd, was the first therapy dog to work with the jail’s juvenile population and was unable to return this academic year due to other obligations. “We were pleased with the success of animal-assisted therapy with Link, and we are thrilled to continue with Fergus,” said Mariah Hartman, an Academic Institute counselor at the jail. “The students enjoy the comfort and non-judgment that therapy dogs bring to group sessions, and I appreciate how the dogs facilitate communication and interaction within our groups. It is our hope that for however long our students are with us, the therapy dog program supports their rehabilitation.”The male juvenile student population is divided into four different therapy groups that last for 30 minutes. Female juveniles will receive dog therapy in one-on-one sessions. “With Link, we saw an increase in focusing skills, classroom participation and a reduction of mental health symptoms in the juvenile population,” said Renee Madden, a Deputy Health Services Administrator at the jail. “We’re excited to be able to continue offering this program with the addition of Fergus.”Fergus has been certified by Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD) for two years and by HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response for one year. He also earned the Canine Good Citizen title from the [American Kennel Club](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Falleghenycounty25048.lt.acemlnb.com%2FProd%2Flink-tracker%3FredirectUrl%3DaHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cuYWtjLm9yZyUyRnByb2R1Y3RzLXNlcnZpY2VzJTJGdHJhaW5pbmctcHJvZ3JhbXMlMkZjYW5pbmUtZ29vZC1jaXRpemVuJTJG%26sig%3D4UdzpobMDHr918RKPxLUw6KdgH4JnrygAughsCfDmSN4%26iat%3D1706730531%26a%3D%257C%257C610260786%257C%257C%26account%3Dalleghenycounty25048.activehosted.com%26email%3DfoxszhIfm%252Fh8PoUPxa%252BmtlAuvJ9027SRlhoP0PfdZkCs8dh0%253Abqh4ghAJ3BlviNvdakHHBhaMhbCdk836%26s%3D8a629ccc034c8af6ed5fb37991366af4%26i%3D1037A1134A35A17013&data=05%7C02%7Cdaniel.rinkus%40aiu3.net%7Cfb6213879b684b32df8c08dc229b2cf1%7C2588d1e37ead4e50b518c7ad84eca17b%7C1%7C0%7C638423297065831875%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=DyHHzN0InChDYG5YH%2FP8k6BJ%2BN97pBeCrG7Sb%2ByXuxI%3D&reserved=0). Fergus regularly goes to local schools, attends Beaver County Court as a victim’s advocate and goes to Pittsburgh International Airport to greet passengers and help travelers cope with the stress of flying. ATD is a [volunteer organization](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Falleghenycounty25048.lt.acemlnb.com%2FProd%2Flink-tracker%3FredirectUrl%3DaHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cudGhlcmFweWRvZ3MuY29tJTJGYWxsaWFuY2UtdGhlcmFweS1kb2dzJTJG%26sig%3D33Sk4dXsdUHdEdVKfuWqvX9DSt81EkTmUN6sVJRkrAHA%26iat%3D1706730531%26a%3D%257C%257C610260786%257C%257C%26account%3Dalleghenycounty25048.activehosted.com%26email%3DfoxszhIfm%252Fh8PoUPxa%252BmtlAuvJ9027SRlhoP0PfdZkCs8dh0%253Abqh4ghAJ3BlviNvdakHHBhaMhbCdk836%26s%3D8a629ccc034c8af6ed5fb37991366af4%26i%3D1037A1134A35A17014&data=05%7C02%7Cdaniel.rinkus%40aiu3.net%7Cfb6213879b684b32df8c08dc229b2cf1%7C2588d1e37ead4e50b518c7ad84eca17b%7C1%7C0%7C638423297065841937%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Q8gNRGfUhTseKpGvj%2FjQdh0Iq2kX0Oo2V52HULfh7Z8%3D&reserved=0) of therapy dog handlers and dogs that visit, among other areas, schools, hospitals, special need centers, nursing homes and airports. ATD provides testing, certification, registration, support and insurance for members who are involved in volunteer animal-assisted activities. HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response is a [volunteer organization](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Falleghenycounty25048.lt.acemlnb.com%2FProd%2Flink-tracker%3FredirectUrl%3DaHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cuaG9wZWFhY3Iub3JnJTJG%26sig%3DCLMq9Cew1PbE6AuBn3qdaMrDMHQTvegLScEKGgBYFukY%26iat%3D1706730531%26a%3D%257C%257C610260786%257C%257C%26account%3Dalleghenycounty25048.activehosted.com%26email%3DfoxszhIfm%252Fh8PoUPxa%252BmtlAuvJ9027SRlhoP0PfdZkCs8dh0%253Abqh4ghAJ3BlviNvdakHHBhaMhbCdk836%26s%3D8a629ccc034c8af6ed5fb37991366af4%26i%3D1037A1134A35A17015&data=05%7C02%7Cdaniel.rinkus%40aiu3.net%7Cfb6213879b684b32df8c08dc229b2cf1%7C2588d1e37ead4e50b518c7ad84eca17b%7C1%7C0%7C638423297065849349%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Ma3jss3ldieqbTN9Jo9Fr9TPh4SYLrIRcx%2BvqhNht2o%3D&reserved=0) of dog handlers and dogs that provides comfort and encouragement through animal-assisted support to individuals affected by crises and disasters.*Media inquiries may be directed to Jesse Geleynse, Public Information Officer for the jail, at**jesse.geleynse@alleghenycounty.us**or by phone at 412.350.1267 or 412.760.4760 (cell).* |

 |

 |