



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Greene County using facility dog to help juvenile and treatment court clients**



*SPRINGFIELD, Mo.* – The Greene County Juvenile Office has a new employee, Duo Dog Derby! The Office acquired the three-year-old English Labrador in July to help their juvenile and treatment court clients.

Derby is a facility dog specifically trained to work in individual counseling and family therapy. Derby has three handlers in the county. His primary, Ethan Potter, works as a clinical coordinator in the Juvenile Office.

“If a youth’s behavior is escalating or they recently received bad news, we use Derby to relieve some of their anxieties,” said Potter. “Sometimes we have really heavy topics. Derby will get on

my couch and lay across their lap or sit on the floor by their feet. He keeps their mind off things.”



The other two handlers use Derby in county treatment courts and the Juvenile Detention Facility. Derby helps nervous people in the courtroom who are going before a judge or discussing difficult topics. Additionally, he provides support to youths in detention during their exercise time in the facility’s gym.

“Kids obviously don’t often think of detention as something positive, but as soon as Derby goes back there, it’s a totally different environment for them,” said Potter.

Duo Dogs is a St. Louis based nonprofit that trains both therapy and facility dogs for two years. The organization estimates it costs about \$40,000 to fully train the dogs. However, the county received Derby for free and only pays upkeep costs for food, kennels, and veterinarian bills.

The Juvenile Office got the idea for a facility dog from the Child Advocacy Center in Springfield, whose dog, Java, also helps calm youths’ uneasiness.

“The county really saw a need for this type of service,” said Potter. “Having Derby here is a total game changer. He gives families something nice and positive to focus their energy and attention on. We can have normal conversations that aren’t awkward or stiff that you sometimes see in family counseling.”

Potter says it’s okay to pet Derby if you see him, but you should always ask before touching a service dog. “Luckily, part of Derby’s training is to be pet and interact with our clients. He loves to meet new people,” said Potter.

You can even follow Derby on his social media pages at:

<https://www.facebook.com/DuoDogDerby/> and Instagram: @duodogderby.

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*Greene County is the State of Missouri's fourth most populous county, serving approximately 295,000 people. Its mission is to provide all citizens of Greene County, including those in its cities, a safe and thriving community through excellent customer service, unparalleled dedication, and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars. The Greene County Commission is the executive body of Greene County operating under guidelines established in the Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri. Within that authority the Commission enacts ordinances, resolutions and policies, supervises the activities of county departments, fixes salaries, adopts the annual budget, provides for construction and other services, and conducts hearings on planning and zoning matters.*

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