

Chapter 7

Lifetime Bonds: At-Risk Youth and At-Risk Dogs Helping One Another

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Lifetime Bonds, one of Safe Humane Chicago's flagship programs, provides opportunities for at-risk youth—particularly teenage males—and at-risk dogs, particularly dogs impounded as victims of cruelty and neglect, to help one another. In this chapter, we describe the program, beginning with background information on Safe Humane Chicago. Next, we provide an overview of the issues faced by incarcerated teens and then describe research on effective interventions with at-risk youth, specifically mentoring, positive youth development, and human–animal interaction. The Lifetime Bonds conceptual framework is described, and the program's successes and challenges are discussed. The chapter concludes with comments and poems written by young men who participated in the program.

Safe Humane Chicago

Safe Humane Chicago's mission is to create safe and humane communities by inspiring positive relationships between people and animals. Its vision is a city in which people and companion animals are free from all forms of violence and live in safe, humane neighborhoods. To accomplish this vision, the organization formed an alliance of nontraditional partners that recognize the connections between animal abuse and interpersonal violence, and the benefits of the

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human–animal bond. Safe Humane Chicago engages that alliance to provide the community with a variety of innovative and collaborative programs focused on humane treatment of people and animals and an improved quality of life. Programs emphasize education, advocacy, and second chances to engage in prosocial activities focused on human–animal interaction.

The fundamental idea that led to Safe Humane Chicago is that community safety and the humane treatment of animals are closely related. Violence toward animals in a community is highly correlated with violence toward people (Vaughn et al. 2009; Luke et al. 1997; Degenhardt 2005). In particular, the Chicago Police Department recognizes that where there are gangs, guns, and drugs, there are also likely to be dog fighting and abused animals. The Safe Humane founders recognized that a campaign to reduce violence against children and companion animals could make a community safer and more humane. Moreover, they understood that positive relationships with animals could help children develop empathy as well as provide comfort in the face of stress and anxiety.

Safe Humane Chicago began as a project of D.A.W.G. (Dog Advisory Work Group), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit incorporated in 2000. D.A.W.G. focused on bringing dog owners and non-dog owners together to educate the community about sharing public spaces wisely. It began as a committee of a neighborhood association in 1998 before expanding its mission beyond neighborhood boundaries to the entire City of Chicago and elsewhere. The focus was on responsible care of companion animals, including the creation of dog-friendly public spaces, public education, and engagement of a broad coalition of stakeholders.

Over time, the organization's founders recognized the growing need to address the violence against animals and children in their city. As a result, programs were developed that focused on the benefits of the human–animal bond and the essential connection between public safety and the humane treatment of both people and animals. Youth engagement programs and advocacy programs for dogs who were victims in cruelty cases were among the first programs offered. As programs were piloted, expanded, and endorsed by a coalition of organizations and agencies, they became the focus of the nonprofit, leading the organization to change its name to Safe Humane in 2013. The first programs were Kids, Animals and Kindness; Youth Leaders; Lifetime Bonds; Court Advocacy; and training for law enforcement professionals. Later, Court Case Dogs[®] was added, a program that focuses on dogs seized as evidence in abuse investigations or abandoned by prisoners and impounded at Chicago Animal Care and Control (CACC). As part of the Court Case Dogs program, these dogs are socialized, trained, and loved by volunteers; adopted into homes through partner rescues; and offered free behavioral support for life. In 2014 VALOR—Veterans Advancing Lives Of Rescues, a program similar to Lifetime Bonds in which veterans who have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) work with shelter dogs, was piloted. With the impact and success of these programs, Safe Humane Chicago has become a leading resource for education and training about the human–animal bond and its benefits for safer, more humane communities.

Lifetime Bonds and its focus on teaming at-risk youth with at-risk dogs is one of Safe Humane Chicago's most popular programs. The program serves

male youth aged 13–18 held in secure detention at the Illinois Youth Center—Chicago (IYCC). Begun in 2009, Lifetime Bonds is a collaboration among IYCC [and the governing Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ)], CACC, and Safe Humane Chicago. In the program, incarcerated male teenagers learn how to care for, socialize, and train shelter dogs from CACC using positive, relationship-based training techniques; and along the way, they develop a sense of accomplishment and empathy for traumatized dogs and hone life skills for themselves. They learn about issues related to animal welfare and safety, including pet overpopulation and dog fighting; societal issues involving personal responsibility and stereotyping; and the many job opportunities available in the pet industry. They develop patience, confidence, and dog-related skills by working with Safe Humane Ambassador Dogs (trained dogs owned by Safe Humane Chicago volunteers who have been assessed and approved for various programs and situations in which dogs represent Safe Humane Chicago) and extend those skills by connecting with and training shelter and Court Case Dogs[®]. They also are encouraged to draw parallels from their own lives and traumas and their own coping strategies and life situations to those of the dogs and to think and talk about how they are able to build trusting relationships with the dogs because of their pasts. As the review of the literature in the following section suggests, Lifetime Bonds is one of the few programs that provides young incarcerated males with opportunities to develop life skills essential to successfully reentering the community and avoiding future violent and antisocial behavior.

Incarcerated Youth: Risk and Protective Factors

Youth who enter correctional facilities face myriad risk factors that challenge their healthy social and emotional development. Moreover, they have few opportunities while in custody to develop the skills and social competencies necessary to successfully reenter the community and grow into responsible adults. As a result, youth in custody are at greater risk of recidivism than youth who are diverted from detention (Holman and Zidenberg 2006).

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission (2011) estimates that more than 50 % of youth released from IDJJ facilities will commit new offenses and return to the juvenile or adult corrections systems. The cost of this failure is extremely high, both in terms of youths' lost potential and the cost to taxpayers. The State of Illinois Auditor General (2010) estimates that it costs almost \$87,000 per year, per youth to house juvenile offenders. The Commission's report goes on to say, "There is good news: Young people are capable of tremendous positive change and growth and—with the right support, supervision and services—youth leaving DJJ facilities can become valued assets in our communities" (p. 9). Mentoring programs that seek to minimize risk and enhance protective factors may provide the kind of support youth need to become valued community assets.

Lessons from Mentoring Programs in Community Settings

In a recent comprehensive meta-analysis of youth mentoring programs, DuBois et al. (2011) found modest effects of mentoring programs on positive outcomes for youth. Specifically, youth who are mentored appear to benefit psychologically and socially, and across a range of outcomes, from increases in self-efficacy to better grades to fewer behavioral problems. Programs that specifically address the impact of mentoring on delinquency also report small, but in many cases significant, effects on self-reported delinquency (Joliffe and Farrington 2007; Tolan et al. 2008).

In terms of best practices, programs that offer the most promise provide youth with the opportunity to engage in structured activities and build positive relationships with carefully screened and matched volunteers (Rhodes and DuBois 2008; Rhodes and Lowe 2008). Further, evidence suggests that mentoring activities that are part of a broader program, including education and employment training, are more effective in reducing recidivism (Joliffe and Farrington 2007).

Mentoring Youth in Custody: Challenges, Opportunities, and Research to Date

Mentoring youth in custody presents special challenges. Mentoring programs in juvenile correctional facilities must comply with the facilities' rules and regulations. They also include youth with special educational, mental health, and addiction needs (Bazron et al. 2006). However, mentoring incarcerated youth also presents an opportunity to guide these young people as they make the very difficult transition from the correctional institution back into their community.

In one of a handful of programs designed for youth in custody, Aftercare for the Incarcerated through Mentoring (AIM), youth are assigned a mentor while in the correctional facility and the relationship is sustained for up to a year upon release (Jarjoura 2005). AIM mentors help youth to develop decision-making and problem-solving skills, seek out educational and employment opportunities, and build prosocial bonds in their communities. However, no formal evaluation of the program has been undertaken.

Research on mentoring programs for incarcerated youth is, in fact, very limited, and the few studies that have been done reveal great variation in the definition and application of mentoring and how it is evaluated (Britner et al. 2006; Blechman and Bopp 2005). In one of the few evaluations of a mentoring program for youth in custody, Barnoski (2006) found that mentored youth had lower recidivism rates over a 12-month period following release compared to those with no mentoring, but the effect disappeared at a 36-month follow up. However, methodological limitations, specifically the absence of an experimental design with random assignment to treatment and control groups, suggest that any observed differences, or lack thereof, might be due to spurious or selection effects.

Positive Youth Development: A Conceptual Framework for Helping At-Risk Youth

In addition to a lack of research on whether or not mentoring reduces juvenile offending or reoffending, there is also a critical gap in understanding how mentoring affects positive change for youth. Rhodes' (2002) model posits that mentoring relationships promote social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development, which in turn promotes positive outcomes. While it is important to understand if a mentoring program reduces juvenile offending, it is equally important to understand the program's conceptual framework and the developmental factors it targets to produce positive outcomes. Such an understanding is critical to clearly articulating and advancing evidence-based practice.

Consistent with Rhodes' emphasis on developmental processes, the PYD model offers a robust conceptual framework for mentoring programs, particularly those designed for at-risk youth. The PYD model is rooted in decades of sociological, criminological, and psychological research focused on understanding protective factors that promote resilience and positive outcomes (Butts et al. 2005). Programs based on a PYD framework emphasize youth attachment to supportive adults, civic engagement, and socialization, and provide opportunities to experience a sense of usefulness and belonging. A meta-analysis of 25 PYD programs provided empirical evidence of the impact of these programs on enhancing positive attitudes and behaviors, and reducing delinquency and other problem behaviors (Catalano et al. 1998). Butts et al. (2005) at Chapin Hall argue that "Concentrating on PYD goals in working with young offenders may provide the juvenile justice system with a new and compelling framework for service delivery."

Constructs central to the PYD model are social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and moral competencies (Catalano et al. 2002). These competencies are significant for youth development to the extent that they assist youth in integrating their feelings with thinking and action (Catalano et al. 2002). Emotional competence, empathy in particular, can help youth to identify, understand, and share how others are feeling; thus, empathy is central to moral development and serves as an individual protective factor, decreasing risky and delinquent behavior (Jolliffe and Farrington 2004). Accordingly, many studies have examined the role that empathy plays in shaping one's moral development and influencing offending and recidivism. In a meta-analysis examining the relationship between empathy and offending, evidence suggests that young offenders who lack empathy are more likely to offend (Jolliffe and Farrington 2004).

Positive Youth Development and the Role of Human–Animal Interaction

Building on this line of research that indicates empathy is a key protective factor in preventing youth delinquency, recent studies of the human–animal bond shed light on the role that animals may play in building empathy, enhancing youth's

moral, cognitive, and identity development, and ultimately reducing recidivism. Scholars working in this field have found that children's relationships with animals can have an important impact on human-directed empathy (Ascione 2001; Ascione and Weber 1996; Daly and Morton 2006). Children's relationships with animals allow them to emotionally invest in another creature's well-being and freely express love and compassion; these experiences are thought to foster positive affect, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Thompson and Gullone 2003).

Though systematic evaluations of programs promoting human-animal interaction are rare (Ascione 1997) and evaluations of such programs in juvenile correctional facilities rarer still, several qualitative studies suggest the positive effects of animal care on youth in custody. Interviews with participants in Project POOCH, a program established in 1993 in which youth in an Oregon correctional facility train shelter dogs for adoption, found that youth reported improvements in honesty, empathy, nurturing, social growth, understanding, self-confidence, and pride of accomplishment (Deaton 2005).

The Lifetime Bonds Program Model

Based on a PYD framework, Lifetime Bonds offers a critical opportunity to foster prosocial attitudes and behaviors among court-involved male youth. Unlike the traditional juvenile justice system approach that focuses on youth deficits and seeks control as a primary goal, Lifetime Bonds focuses on the role that adult mentors and animals play in enhancing young men's empathy and self-esteem, shaping cognitive and identity development and their capacity for self-determination, and ultimately increasing the likelihood of successful reentry into their community. The companionship of the dogs during the sessions at IYCC provides positive psychological impact for these young men, who struggle with loneliness and emotional isolation as well as physical isolation. Volunteers consistently comment on the calming effect the dogs have on the young men and the ways in which the dogs motivate the youth to develop problem-solving skills, particularly with respect to helping the dogs learn new cues or tasks.

Lifetime Bonds also aims to help young men learn nonviolent, compassionate ways of interacting. Working with adult volunteers, the youth learn to bond with, socialize, and train shelter dogs, saving their lives, and making them more adoptable. Consistent with PYD principles, Lifetime Bonds focuses on the assets of youth in custody and provides them with opportunities to: (1) form prosocial relationships with caring adults, (2) develop skills, (3) participate in structured activities, and (4) engage in efforts that benefit the community, including receiving emotional satisfaction from contributing to another creature's well-being. The ultimate goal is to provide a model of how to live a life of respect and kindness toward animals and people that also helps the young men thrive in communities beyond their neighborhoods. The program reaches those who can stop the cycle of violence—male youth who are among those most affected by the cycle, some of whom have also contributed to the violence.

In fact, comments often made week after week during the program concern the need for these young people to be “men.” “I’m not a kid anymore,” said one 15-year-old to a volunteer facilitator. “I have two babies, and I have to do what I do to provide for them—and that probably means I’ll have to stay in the gang.” What it means to be a man is most often connected to a status founded on being “street tough” and having money. Conversations about dog fighting and breeding dogs for fighting and protection often focus on the payoff in cash and the “respect” (generated by fear) others show to vicious fighters and those accompanied by proven fighters or vicious-looking dogs. Program participants also comment that they feel safer discussing these issues in the program environment than “on the outside” and even sharing their feelings in journals, poetry, rap, and art. One young man drew a very gentle portrait of a dog, commenting to a facilitator who noted the gentleness that he could do it because of the calm he had experienced and achieved in being around the dogs and hearing the facilitators’ love and concern for dogs.

The population served in the IYCC program is primarily African–American and Hispanic/Latino, and most of the youth are from low-income families who live in the south and west sides of Chicago, communities most impacted by violence (including abuse of both people and animals) and lack of resources for their human family members and companion animals. A minority but significant number of the youth at IYCC are from low-income families who live outside the city of Chicago, in Chicago suburbs and Illinois counties west of Cook.

All youth at IYCC have a record of arrests and justice involvement. Some two-thirds to three-fourths have a diagnosis of some mental health or developmental issue and substance abuse. Excluding those with substance abuse issues, about half of the young men have mental health or developmental issues (Illinois Models for Change Behavioral Health Assessment Team 2010). A few would have been arrested for animal abuse, but many will admit to have engaged in or seen animal abuse.

Lifetime Bonds has two phases. Phase I involves a small-group format while young men are at IYCC, and Phase II, following release from IYCC, uses a team format in which young men work with adult mentors in community-based internships. Figure 7.1 provides an overview of the Lifetime Bonds conceptual framework. Figure 7.2 is a brief overview of the curriculum. A more detailed curriculum and supporting materials may be obtained by emailing getconnected@safehumane.org.

Lifetime Bonds Phase I: Inside the Illinois Youth Center—Chicago

In Phase I, the program is provided by a dedicated group of 10–15 adult volunteers, including mentors, dog handlers, and trainers. To date, the majority of these volunteers are women between the ages of 25 and 65; the men who are the minority of volunteers are in the same age range. This 12-week program involves weekly, 90-min sessions during which young men work with in small groups with adult mentors and first with trained ambassador dogs and then with shelter dogs. Sessions are

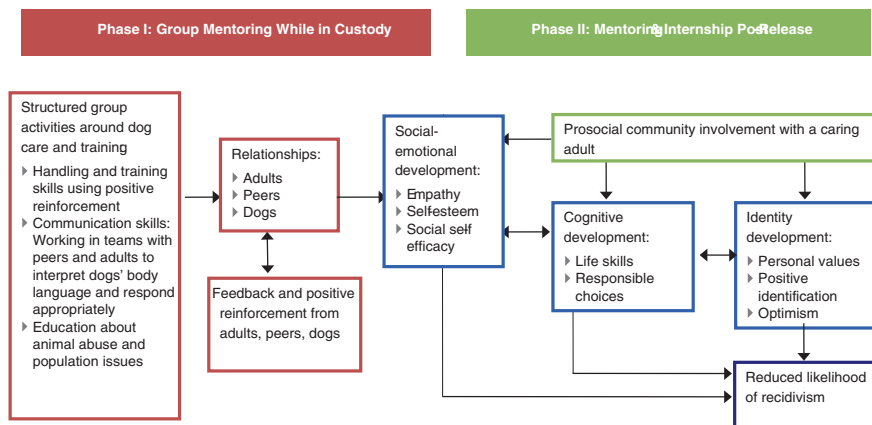


Fig. 7.1 Lifetime bonds conceptual framework

led by the Lifetime Bonds Facilitator who is assisted by dog handlers and other facilitators. The first three or four classes are spent connecting the youth to trained dogs (Safe Humane Ambassador Dogs), learning how to train dogs with positive, relationship-based methods, learning “safe humane” messages about companion animals, and helping the youth connect those messages to their own interactions with other people. In the remaining classes, the youth work mainly with Safe Humane Court Case Dogs or other shelter dogs, allowing youth and dogs to help and learn from each other. The facilitators are trained to listen and encourage comments, questions, journal-writing, rapping, drawing. Following a discussion of the benefits of positive, healthy relationships with one of the facilitators, a 17-year-old came back to the next class with a journal entry that included 5 short-term goals for himself (Fig. 7.3).

Key Phase I objectives include: (1) teaching young men dog handling and training skills using only positive, relationship-based reinforcement and making the connection to building healthy relationships with others; (2) helping the young men learn and practice communication skills by interpreting dogs’ body language and responding appropriately and compassionately and making the connection to communication and coping strategies in other relationships; (3) developing the young men’s sense of social responsibility by educating them about animal abuse and population issues and making the connection to accountability and caring for others who depend on them; (4) allowing the youth to give back to the community by saving dogs from euthanasia and making them more adoptable and then enjoying the feelings of making positive differences in their own and others’ lives; and (5) educating the young men about animal-related careers through guest speakers (dog trainers, dog business owners, dog groomers, dog masseuses, and dog agility instructors, among others). The session with the canine masseuse is especially noteworthy for the young men, as they learn to understand the importance of touch as a connection and a calming tool as well as a stimulus. The field trip to CACC drives home the societal point about homelessness and responsible animal care and always results in comments about compassion and empathy (usually expressed as “sympathy” from the young men).



**Lifetime Bonds Curriculum Template
Illinois Youth Center Chicago (IYCC)**

Week 0: Recruitment

Goal/Educational Theme: Understanding the Safe Humane Chicago Lifetime Bonds program. Recruit a maximum of 12 to 15 youth for a session in which 10-15 volunteers are available; invite "graduates" who are still at IYCC and interested in continuing to join next session for advanced programming. Interested youth complete a simple application with help from volunteers.

Week 1

Goal/Educational Theme: Respect, positive reinforcement, compassionate regulation in dog training. Connect with dogs as individuals: understand that each dog is a unique being, a unique personality; begin learning positive reinforcement, compassionate regulation in training, and basic training concepts. Facilitate connection to all types of relationships.

Week 2

Goal/Educational Theme: The human-animal bond. Focus on humane and responsible pet care. Connect with dogs as individuals; learn humane, responsible care giving of dogs. Facilitate connection to all types of relationships.

Week 3

Goal/Educational Theme: Hygiene and Grooming; dog grooming as a job, profession or business. Learn how to make a dog feel good about grooming; learn tools of the grooming trade. Understand the importance of touch and massage. Invite groomer or dog massage therapist. Effectively implement problem solving with individual dogs.

Week 4: field trip to city animal shelter (if possible)

Goal/Educational Theme: Need for spay/neuter, focusing on homeless and abused pets and respect for life; the life of shelter animals; what we can do to help (such as socialization and training for shelter and court case dogs and adopting animals from shelters). Learn about spaying/neutering animals and the connection to animal homelessness.

Week 5

Goal/Educational Theme: Shelter dogs. Learn about (and address) typical feelings and behaviors of shelter dogs: shy, fearful, excited and anxious. Review field trip to CACC, spay/neuter, and life of homeless animals.

Week 6

Goal/Educational Theme: Dog-breed stereotyping, fears and facts about pit bull type dogs. Understand negative impacts of dog-breed stereotypes/breed labeling. Discuss stereotyping and prejudices applied to youth.

Week 7

Goal/Educational Theme: Animal abuse and dog fighting. Understanding animal abuse; educate about dog fighting and the negative impacts it has on the community. Discuss what we in the program can do about animal abuse and dog fighting.

Week 8

Goal/Educational Theme: Job opportunities with animals, particularly dogs. Learn about the many job opportunities working with animals (provide lists and discuss jobs that the volunteers may have). Invite dog massage therapist or groomer if not previously a guest.

Week 9: field trip to agility center (if possible)

Goal/Educational Theme: Positive, fun, beneficial activities you can do with dogs. Learn about positive activities you can do with dogs such as agility, nose work, and obedience and get introduced to them with Ambassador Dogs, practicing the skills themselves.

Week 10

Goal/Educational Theme: Preparing for graduation. Decided what two special skills each youth will do with assigned dog and practice pre-graduation run through. Discuss comments that would be usefully shared with the audience by each youth.

Last Week: Graduation

Goal/Educational Theme: Graduation, called the "dog show." Celebrate the boys' and the dogs' skills and knowledge while educating the IYCC population about the program and Safe Humane messages. Complete the end-of-session questionnaire.

Fig. 7.2 Lifetime bonds curriculum overview

Lifetime Bonds Phase II: Internships in the Community

In Phase II, upon release from custody, the young men are provided a 6-month internship with Safe Humane Chicago's Court Case Dogs program, during which they work one-on-one with a mentor and trainers to socialize and advocate for dogs who are victims in animal cruelty cases, coming full circle from juvenile offenders to productive community members actively defending innocent victims

Fig. 7.3 Lifetime bonds participant's journal entry: short-term goals

5 short term goals
 Be in all safe humane groups
 Be polite in group
 walk away from negativity
 Don't let bad influence attract me
 Do all my school work
 Don't goof around in class
 Ignore negativity

of violence, abuse, and neglect. The internship allows youth to build on the prosocial skills they learned in the program at IYCC and further support their successful reentry into the community. Each youth begins the internship by participating in three consecutive dog training classes with Safe Humane volunteers at CACC. Following those trainings, each youth helps to develop a set of learning objectives for working with the dogs and is paid a stipend of \$10.12 per hour plus transportation costs for 12 weeks. They are also provided with necessary equipment (e.g., dog collars, leashes, treats) and a shirt and badge to be worn while at CACC. Upon successful completion of the session, each youth is eligible to participate in another 12-week session with a new and more demanding set of goals. Those who complete 6 months of interning are helped with finding job opportunities in the growing pet industry, should the young man be interested.

Lifetime Bonds: Challenges and Successes

The key challenge for Lifetime Bonds is offering enough sessions to accommodate the interest shown by the youth at IYCC. The demand for the program exceeds Safe Humane Chicago's capacity to provide it, particularly because it is essential to ensure a program ratio of no more than two youth per dog and mentor. The volunteer approval process is lengthy and the state budget constraints limit the number of background checks that can be performed and have significantly extended the amount of time required to complete them.

There are also challenges engaging the youth in Phase II of Lifetime Bonds. Approximately, 10 % of the youth who have been released from IYCC contact Safe Humane Chicago about internships. Safe Humane Chicago has provided internships for 21 of these young men since 2012. A key finding is the importance of connecting interns with social workers who are assigned to help the youth during their reentry in order to encourage and facilitate their continuing participation in the program. Social workers are able to establish a relationship with the young men, providing the support they need to avoid the people and situations that precipitated their entry into IYCC and choose more prosocial pursuits. They also offer practical assistance getting the youth to the program, as many of the young men live a long distance from CACC. Without the encouragement of the social worker, many of these young men drop out

of the program to pursue activities—some of which may not be prosocial—in their own neighborhoods. Six young men dropped out of Phase II or completed only one 3-month session for positive reasons, having gotten a job or begun a college education. One strategy being explored to address this challenge is offering more Lifetime Bonds activities in the neighborhoods of youth who participate in Phase I at IYCC.

Despite the challenges, since September 2009, the numbers show positive impact and success: 23 three-month sessions of Lifetime Bonds at IYCC have served 270 youth. Of these youth, less than 20 % have come back into the justice system following release from IYCC. This compares to a 50 % recidivism rate estimated by the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission (2011) for youth released from IYCC. These young men have helped some 290 shelter dogs become more adoptable, increasing their chances of finding permanent homes. To date, all of the dogs who participated in the program have been adopted.

Comments from volunteers, program staff, and the young men reflect the impact of the program. One volunteer observed: “It’s amazing to watch the boys from when they first come in. They’re very straight-faced and quiet. They’re not quite sure why they’re doing this. And then as the weeks go by you see smiles and them actually warming up to us and the dogs. By the end of the sessions they are very comfortable with us, they tell us about their personal lives.” Another volunteer commented, “It feels like a miracle seeing young men initially so defensive and angry become so caring and humane toward dogs that have been rescued/abused. These men open up and share their feelings about the dogs. The dog-human bond is transformative.” Yet another: “It’s amazing when you bring the two [young men and animals] together, this nonjudgmental, silent bond happens between the two. It’s amazing what animals do.”

The Lifetime Bonds program manager emphasizes the importance of giving young men opportunities to show compassion: “It’s so important if we’re ever going to help animals to help people. It’s been amazing to see each of these boys as individuals and their capacity and potential for compassion and learning. They’re just starving for it.” In fact, IYCC staff note that “This is one of the few programs for which we don’t need security.” Indeed, the dogs provide an opportunity for young men to show affection and simply to touch, something that is especially significant because young men at the detention center are discouraged from physical contact with anyone. “When they can actually touch the dogs, put their hands on them, it’s pretty powerful,” observed a volunteer. “Being a man” while in the class with the dogs, facilitators, and fellow classmates means working as a team with all of them and sharing insights, questions, help, and just hanging out quietly with the dogs in small groups.

The parallels between the experiences of the dogs and the young men are also important to the success of the program. As one of the young men said, “You take a throw-away boy and a throw-away dog, and you put us together. We help them; they get adopted and find homes. We get out and have better skills and feel like we’ve accomplished something.” The field trip the youth take to CACC is often a turning point for the young men. During the trip, the youth have the opportunity to see the shelter dogs in cages, and they immediately identify with the fact that the dogs are behind bars. They say, “Hey, we understand what you’re going through”

and “I got it, man.” One youth said, “They feel just like people in jail feel. They don’t want to be in cages. I never knew there were so many dogs that were abandoned. The population of abandoned dogs is really large. If everyone came together we could change that.” Another commented, “They feel worse than zoo animals, just being in a cage looking at each other.” In commenting on the youth’s reaction to the trip to CACC, the Safe Humane Chicago Executive Director said, “It’s very touching because not only are the boys showing empathy but they’re also talking about respect for life and freedom.”

As the young men develop relationships with the dogs, they also have opportunities to just have fun with them. At a recent Lifetime Bonds graduation ceremony attended by the entire population at IYCC, Devon, one of the program’s graduates, performed a break dance while Chico, a Safe Humane Ambassador Dog, performed his version of the dance, both taking a bow together at the end of the performance.

The success of the program is due in large measure to the commitment of Safe Humane Chicago volunteers to the program and the youth they work with: between 2010 and mid-2015, 70 volunteers led by a dog trainer and program facilitator staffed approximately 50 classes and field trips for a total of some 1100 h per year.

The success and popularity of the program among youth and youth service providers are clear and reflected in requests for more neighborhood programming. With the generous support of a grant from the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust, in 2015 Lifetime Bonds will be offered in collaboration with Becoming a Man (B.A.M.) program, a dropout and violence prevention program for at-risk male students in grades 7–12. The program will be held at the K.L.E.O. Community Family Life Center, a nonprofit that offers an array of violence prevention programs to children and families living in some of the most isolated and dangerous neighborhoods in Chicago. Ninety percent of students who participate in B.A.M. are low income, and more than 95 % are African American and Hispanic/Latino.

Modeled on the Lifetime Bonds program at IYCC, a 3-month pilot and a 3-month follow-on program will be offered to a total of 15–20 at-risk males recruited from B.A.M. and other programs at K.L.E.O. Center. Objectives include helping the youth to develop a sense of social responsibility, educating them about animal abuse and population issues, providing them with animal-related job skills and allowing them to give back to the community by saving dogs’ lives. Youth will work with trained and adoptable rescue dogs or participants’ own dogs, depending on the class composition.

Of note, an evaluation of the project will be conducting, including outcome and process components. Although attempts have been made to evaluate Lifetime Bonds at IYCC, significant challenges were encountered with respect to obtaining consent to participate and facilitating the evaluator’s access to the secure facility. As a result, pre-post changes in variables of interest such as empathy have not been formally assessed.

The evaluation of the Lifetime Bonds program in collaboration with B.A.M. will examine changes in participants’ knowledge with respect to responsible pet ownership, dogs’ body language, pet overpopulation, dog fighting, and animal abuse. In addition, standardized measures of positive core values and sense of self from The After-School Initiative’s Toolkit for Evaluating Positive Youth Development will be completed by participants prior to and following program

participation. A 6-month assessment will also be conducted to understand the extent to which these changes persist over time, something that has not been attempted with IYC Lifetime Bonds graduates because of the challenges accessing them after release from IYC. The evaluation will also include process measures designed to assess the fidelity with which the program is implemented and a qualitative component, including interviews with Lifetime Bonds graduates.

Final Comments from the Young Men

Although not a requirement of the program, some of the young men who have graduated from Lifetime Bonds have written comments and poems, performed raps and skits, and shared art work. Here, we share four pieces that illustrate the profound effect participation in the program had on each of the youth. Justin's written and oral presentation of his thoughts in front of the incarcerated youth, parents, and guardians, staff, and visitors to the Illinois Youth Center Chicago during a "volunteer appreciation" luncheon surprised and delighted the Safe Humane volunteers. Although Justin often asked questions during classes, he did not always volunteer to share comments with the entire class, much less an audience of at least 75 youth and adults.

... First I would like to thank the volunteers from Safe Humane. Since being in the Safe Humane program, I can honestly say that when I am released I'll do my best to help inform our community about the horrible things that happens to dogs all year long – not even just dogs, all types of animals are given up over some of the craziest, most outrageous things. The other day me and some of my peers went on a trip to the animal control center, and we took a tour around the building; and on the tour one of the volunteers in Safe Humane told us that a cat was given up and brought to the animal control center because it didn't match the owner's couch any more, or the owners are giving up dogs because it poops too much in the grass. And these animals are worth much more than what people in our community and city treat them like. So I would like to thank Safe Humane for sharing that information and wonderful experience with me. It was a good experience for me because I was always the type of kid that thought it was okay and interesting to see a dog chase a cat or see two dogs go at each other or maybe even just mating dogs together so they can have puppies. But once I found out what most of these animals go through from this kind of abuse, I really do owe Safe Humane and the animal control center a big, big apology....

Another young man decided to write a poem to share with the class what he had been thinking about as a result of the discussions:

Dogs Need Love

By Roma

It's not right how people treat dogs now a days. Yell at them, beat them, keep em in a cage.

I can see it in their eyes. I can feel their rage. How would you like to be yelled at, Beat, Keep in a cage.

Dogs need love.

When I see a dog that has been beaten, I wanna beat up the person that did it. It makes me sad, I cry inside.

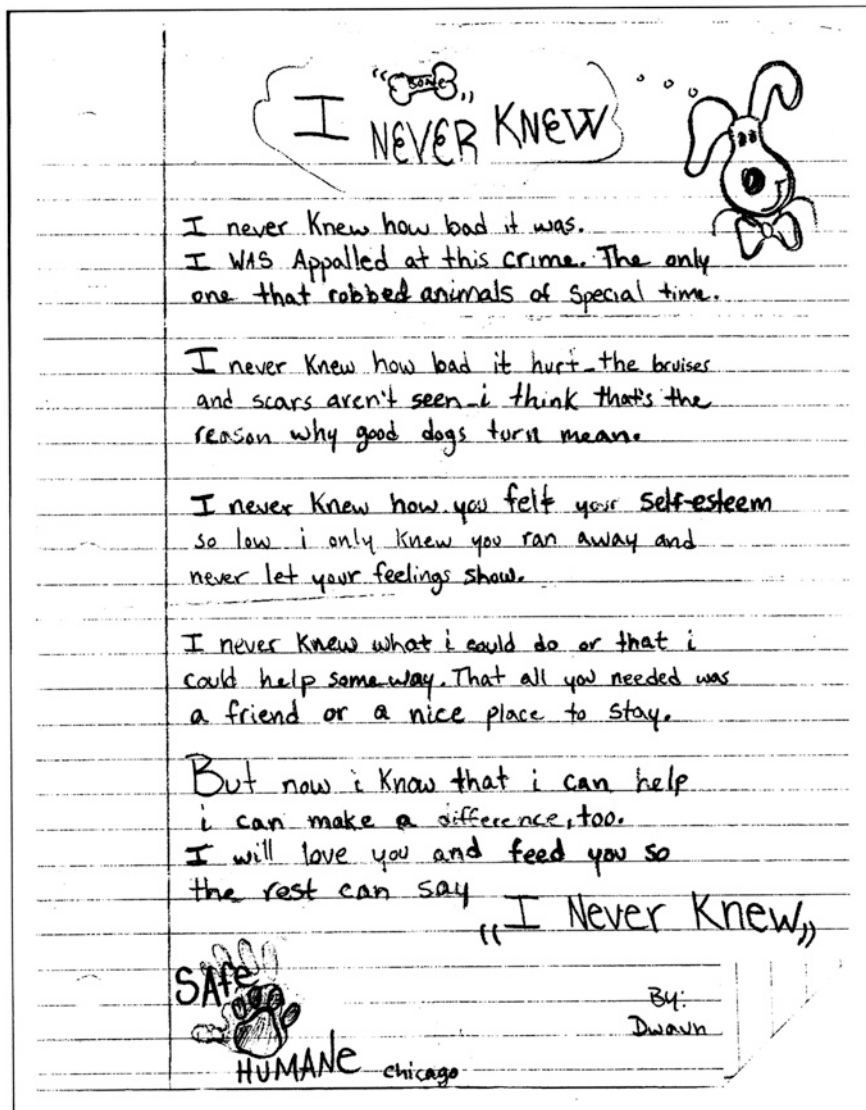
OK I'll admit it cuz I'm a man and a man knows real pain just like that dog that has been beaten with belts and chains.

I know some times dogs don't do what you want them to do but think about didn't you have to learn 2.

But at the end of the day. Dogs are sweeter than chocolate dove.

At the end of the day dogs need love.

Dwaun wrote this poem after a field trip that the youth took to Chicago's municipal shelter. This is one of the young men who continues to check in with Lifetime Bonds staff in his life in his community.



"BONE"
I NEVER KNEW

I never knew how bad it was.
I WAS Appalled at this crime. The only
one that robbed animals of special time.

I never knew how bad it hurt the bruises
and scars aren't seen i think that's the
reason why good dogs turn mean.

I never knew how you felt your self-esteem
so low i only knew you ran away and
never let your feelings show.

I never knew what i could do or that i
could help some way. That all you needed was
a friend or a nice place to stay.

But now i know that i can help
i can make a difference, too.
I will love you and feed you so
the rest can say "I Never Knew,"

SAFE
HUMANE chicago

By:
Dwaun

A Lifetime Bonds participant at IYCC, Edward used only the No. 2 pencil allowed at the facility until he was permitted to use in a supervised setting a small number of other pencil weights that the Lifetime Bonds program provided for him. He was one of the young men who completed a Phase II internship and went on to community college.



The young men's visual and performing art works reflect their willingness to share their observations and feelings with their incarcerated peers at IYCC. They also demonstrate development of leadership skills, willingness to speak out on behalf of animals, and unabashed pride in connecting with another living being. These young men's words and, in one case, visualization, reflect how deeply their experiences with the dogs changed them and their commitment to sharing their new-found empathy and understanding in an effort to make their communities safer and more humane.

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