

Thomson Federal Prison Launches Innovative Dog Training Program Amidst Staffing Crisis

THOMSON, IL, UNITED STATES, December 2, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Thomson Federal Prison (FCI Thomson) is proud to announce a new partnership with a local Service Dog Foundation to launch the Pawsitive Paws Dog Training Program. This innovative program will provide service, skilled companion, and emotional support dogs to veterans and individuals with developmental, physical, and emotional disabilities.



Under the guidance of professional trainers and volunteers, incarcerated individuals will train puppies in basic obedience, public behavior, and advanced skills for 12 to 18 months. This program provides invaluable assistance to those in need and offers incarcerated men an opportunity to learn new skills, improve self-esteem, and earn certifications.

"We are thrilled to bring this program to Thomson Federal Prison," said [Jon Zumkehr, President of AFGE Local 4070](#). "The benefits are manifold – veterans and differently abled individuals gain crucial support, the incarcerated learn valuable life skills, and the prison environment becomes more positive and calm."

However, the success of this program and others like it is threatened by a severe staffing crisis. [One year ago, Director Peters slashed](#) the pay of all staff at Thomson Federal Prison, leading to 132 vacant positions today.

"We warned Director Peters and Congress that these actions would have serious consequences," Zumkehr continued. "Now, we are at a breaking point. We urge Senators Durbin, [Duckworth](#), and Representative Sorensen to immediately restore pay for law enforcement officers at Thomson Federal Prison. We cannot wait for a tragedy to occur before holding Director Peters accountable."

AFGE Local 4070 has been working with new leadership at Thomson to improve and expand programming despite the staffing challenges. The Pawsitive Paws Dog Training Program is a significant step forward, but addressing the staffing crisis remains paramount.

"Defunding law enforcement officer pay, as done by this administration's appointed Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, has serious consequences. At Thomson, we are struggling with 132 vacant jobs. The administration must take action and hold the Director accountable." - Jon Zumkehr, AFGE 4070

"We are committed to making Thomson Federal Prison a safe and rehabilitative environment for both staff and inmates," Zumkehr concluded. "With the right support from Congress, we can make that vision a reality."

About AFGE Local 4070:

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is the largest federal employee union, representing 700,000 workers in the federal government and the government of the District of Columbia. AFGE Local 4070 represents the dedicated law enforcement officers and staff at Thomson Federal Prison.

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