



ORANGE COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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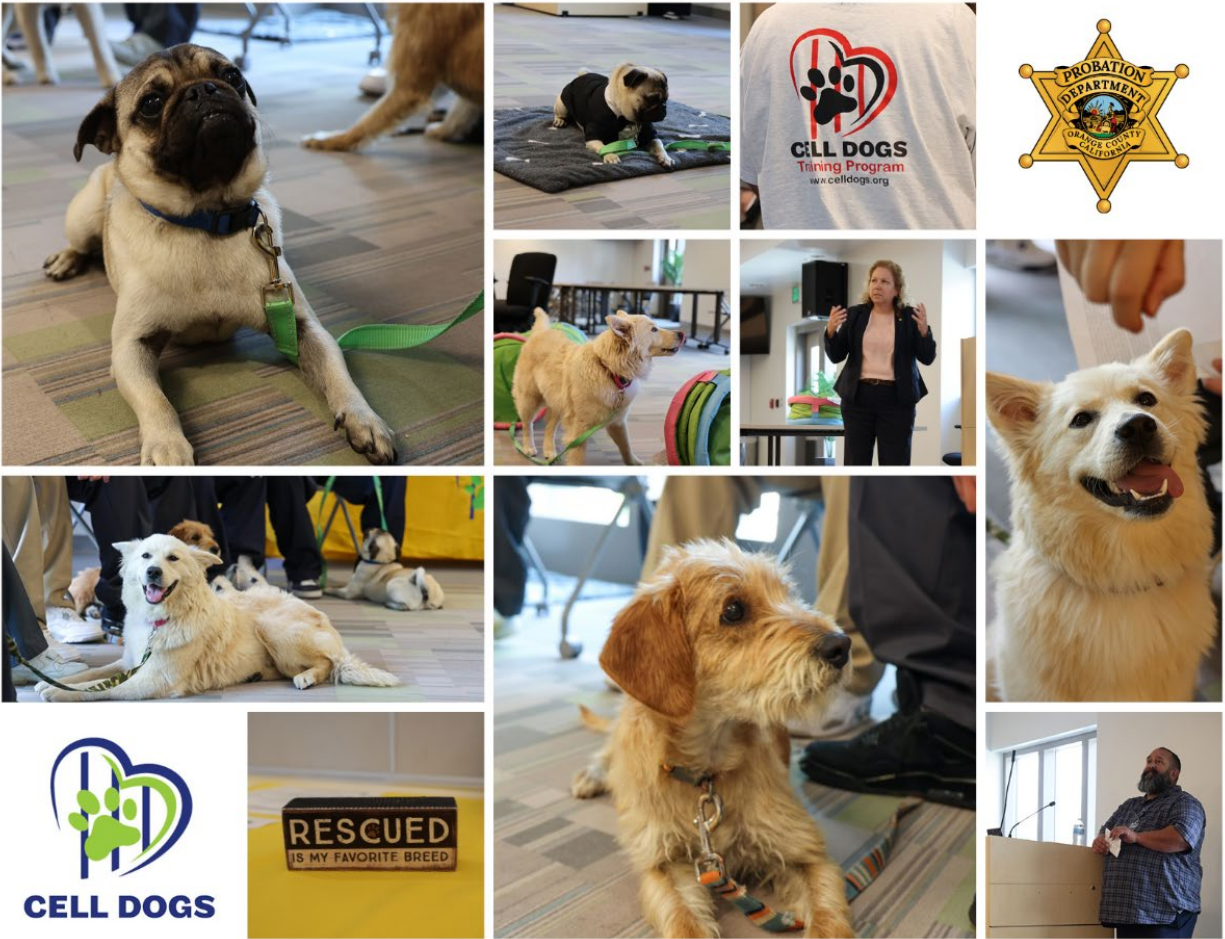
Healing Paws, Healing Hearts: Spring 2025 Cell Dogs Graduation

SANTA ANA, CA- (April 18th, 2025)- OC Probation celebrates the successful graduation of three remarkable dogs—Sandy, Noodle, and Chewie/Oliver—who have been under the training of youth at OC Probation's Juvenile Hall. For the past 15 years, Cell Dogs, Inc. (Cell Dogs), has worked in partnership with the OC Probation to make a positive impact in the lives of youth at OC Probation's Juvenile Hall.

The partnership gives system-impacted youth the opportunity to train a dog in obedience and discipline over a period of 12 weeks. In the first four weeks, the youth learn how to train the dogs, and for the next eight weeks, they put their knowledge into practice, working closely with the animals on a variety of commands and tricks. Many of these dogs have come from backgrounds of abuse or neglect. Some dogs have demonstrated exceptional growth in their skills and training and could even be selected for service dog training to continue their journey of helping others.

Deputy Probation Correctional Officer (DPCO) Kari Willardson, who works directly in unit with the youth and the dogs, remarked, "our youth assume full responsibility for the care and well-being of these dogs and in doing so they have grown in their confidence, their ability to work together. Most importantly, I believe, is the youth's growth in becoming more compassionate and patient individuals".

Youth end the graduation with the "leash exchange," a symbolic and deeply emotional moment where the youth pass the leash to the new adoptive families. It is a poignant moment of self-reflection, as youth come to understand one of the key lessons of life: the importance of letting go. Although it may be the end of training cycle, it signifies a new beginning in the life of both the youth and dog alike.



About the Orange County Probation Department

As a public safety agency, the Orange County Probation Department serves the community using effective, research supported rehabilitation practices and collaborative partnerships to successfully resocialize justice involved individuals. The Probation Department is proud to serve the Orange County community. It is dedicated to continuous improvement, searching out and applying “effective and research supported practices” to assist justice involved youth, their families, and adults to successfully navigate and successfully complete probation. Further, the Probation Department assists the criminal court system through investigations, probation reports and community supervision of thousands of adult and juvenile clients on court-ordered probation or in diversion programs. The Department operates the Orange County Juvenile Hall, and two camps for youth. In addition, the Department operates a Youth Reporting Center serving all of Orange County.

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