

International Conference on Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Studies

August 7-8, 2017 | London, UK



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PAWS ON PAROLE PROGRAMS: INMATES' PERCEPTIONS AND THE IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of prison inmates participating in Paws on Parole program. The Paws on Parole program involves incarcerated inmates training local humane shelter canines' obedience training techniques using the canine good citizen model during an 8 week program. Using secondary data from self-report questionnaires completed by the inmates, this study sought to explore how the inmates felt before and after their exposure to the Paws on Parole program. Specifically, this research seeks to better understand how the Paws on Parole program is perceived as helpful by the inmates in helping them to cope with prison life and their overall personal well-being. Once the dogs have been trained they are distributed into the community in a variety of modalities; from companion dogs, to therapy and service dogs. For years, animals have been used with great benefit in the treatment of the aged and the terminally ill and as service dogs to the infirmed. Animal assisted therapy is thought to be a useful tool for children with mental and physical difficulties; helping to promote a general emotional well-being, aiding in fine motor skills and balance and assisting with both educational and motivational purposes by encouraging long or short-term memory, increasing vocabulary and improving a person's interaction and involvements with others. Animal therapy is also making strides in the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Animal Assisted Therapy in the treatment of PTSD patients has seen significant results.

Biography

Mims is a retired Tampa Police Officer. While at the Tampa Police Department Dr. Mims served on the Mounted Patrol Unit, was a Community Police Officer, Bicycle Patrol Officer, and Under-Cover Officer and was an Elderly Abuse Investigator, Domestic Violence Investigator and a Child Abuse Investigator. Dr. Mims holds a doctoral degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Criminal Justice from Northcentral University. She is an undergraduate faculty Professor of Criminal Justice at Saint Leo University and also teaches at the Pasco-Hernando State College and Hillsborough Community College Police Academies. Dr. Mims is a certified firearms instructor, CPR and Basic Life Support instructor and holds a private investigators and recovery agent license. She professionally trains and shows dogs in obedience, agility, freestyle, tricks and therapy and owns five border collies and three papillions.

Waddell is a Professor and Associate Chair of the Undergraduate Social Work Department. She has been a member of the Saint Leo University (SLU) Community since August 2010. She received the bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in Sociology, the Master's and Doctorate degrees in Social Work from Florida State University. She previously worked as a medical social worker and taught an interdisciplinary family health course with Shands Hospital and the University of Florida in Gainesville for a combined 19 years of service. Currently Dr. Waddell has taught all of the undergraduate social work courses offered at SLU. Her research interests include interdisciplinary collaborations on social justice topics to include community health, humane education, and veterinary social work topics of study. She enjoys her family which includes two daughters, Sarah and Maggie, one grandson, Richard, three dogs, and a pot belly pig.

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