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Drawn Together: Dogs, Art, and Inmates



Chapel Hill, NC, February 28, 2020 — We invite you to join us on March 13 for “Drawn Together: Dogs, Art, and Inmates”, a pop-up art benefit for Eyes Ears Nose and Paws (EENP) at FRANK Community Gallery at

Eyes Ears Nose & Paws, Inc.
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Directors Josh Gurlitz - Chair
Lynn Ikenberry - Vice-Chair
Anne Arwood - Secretary
Gretchen Aylsworth - Treasurer

Nori Comello
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Maria Ikenberry 

University Place in Chapel Hill.

EENP is a local nonprofit agency founded in 2008 with the mission to partner people with dogs to improve lives. In 2014, EENP started a partnership with the NC correctional system called At Both Ends of the Leash (ABEL). Through ABEL, EENP teaches inmates to train assistance dogs that are then partnered with people who have disabilities. This is a triple win: the dogs get full-time attention, training, and love; the inmates develop interpersonal, leadership, and job skills while giving back to the community despite their incarceration; and the clients receive life-changing support for their disabilities in the form of a highly trained canine partner.

For the ABEL trainers, the program often starts as just a job working with dogs but it grows into an opportunity for intense self-discovery and connection. ABEL teaches skills needed to train assistance dogs that will help improve the lives of EENP clients. By design, it also gives the inmate-trainers an opportunity to connect with each other and the outside community to improve their *own* lives.

It is through this connection that “Drawn Together” was conceived. An ABEL trainer who is a gifted illustrator was inspired through his work in ABEL to turn to EENP dogs as subjects. He was drawn to the challenge of capturing and sharing their emotional connection. As he drew the dogs, he donated his portraits to EENP with hope that they could be used to further EENP’s mission.

These portraits form the basis of “Drawn Together” and will be featured along with art by others working in and with ABEL. The artwork will be accompanied by narrative text from the ABEL trainers about their experiences in the program and photos of EENP dogs and the ABEL trainers, spotlighting the talents, care, and effort the trainers give in their quest to help others.

The community is invited to join EENP for this pop-up art benefit to learn more about the ABEL program and how EENP’s dogs connect the worlds inside and out of prison, and support this work through purchase of artwork. Original artwork as well as prints will be available for sale with all proceeds benefitting EENP’s ABEL program.

The opening for the show will be on Friday, March 13, 2020 from 5:30 – 8:00 pm and the show will remain up for viewing through the weekend, with hours and information available on EENP’s website at <http://eenp.org/drawn-together>.

For additional information, contact: Maria Ikenberry, Eyes Ears Nose and Paws, PO Box 3443, Chapel Hill, NC 27515; 919-408-7292; maria@eenp.org.

About EENP

Eyes Ears Nose and Paws (EENP) partners people with dogs to improve lives. EENP trains and places assistance dogs to work with individuals with disabilities. EENP trains its dogs in partnership with the correctional system.

EENP’s Service Dogs assist people with mobility impairments such as quadriplegia or Multiple Sclerosis. These dogs assist with a wide variety of daily tasks, including retrieving items, opening doors, operating buttons and switches, and helping prevent and recover from falls. EENP’s Medical Alert Dogs are trained to detect and alert to changes in medical conditions such as diabetes; retrieve medical kits; and get help in an emergency (including using a special phone to call for help).

EENP believes learning and service happen at *both* ends of the leash, so we started a partnership with the correctional system where we teach inmates to train our assistance dogs. The dogs receive full-time attention, training, and love; the inmate-trainers are able to develop interpersonal, leadership, and job skills while giving back to the community despite their incarceration.

EENP is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization based in Carrboro, NC. It was founded in 2008 as the first assistance dog organization in the Triangle area, with the intent of making assistance dogs more available for local residents. has placed 35 assistance dogs and expects to place 4 more on March 7th.

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