

# Dog invaluable to local woman



Photo by courtesy photo  
Loretta Henry, pictured with her dog Molly, talks to Worcester County Sheriff Guy Glodis during a recent celebration to commemorate the success of the Almost Home, New England Assistance Dog Service.

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Shrewsbury -

Worcester County Sheriff Guy Glodis last week celebrated his department's continued commitment to working with New England Assistance Dog Service (NEADS).

NEADS is a non-profit organization dedicated to training rescued dogs and donated puppies to assist deaf and physically disabled people lead independent lives.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office, under the direction of Glodis, has been working in conjunction with NEADS and the Almost Home halfway house in West Boylston to provide individuals with the specially trained animals since August 2006.

Dogs in the Almost Home program live with residents at the halfway house for four months during which time they receive extensive training. The dogs then enter an advanced training program before being partnered with an adult or child with a disability living in the Worcester area.

Glodis first learned about NEADS from the Dismas House of Worcester.

"The partnership between Almost Home, the Worcester County Sheriff's Office and the NEADS program was designed to teach former inmates structure and responsibility and, most importantly, to give back to the community," said Glodis. "This effort has been a tremendous success, and we look forward to working together for many more years."

According to information from Glodis's office, Loretta Henry of Shrewsbury was one of the first recipients of a NEADS dog trained at Almost Home. She met with Glodis at the Almost Home house, May 22, to express her gratitude for the program.

"I wanted to come and thank the staff, Sheriff Glodis and especially Almost Home personally," said Henry. "My dog, Molly, has given me so much joy, companionship and independence, and I couldn't be more grateful."

NEADS was first established in 1976. Executive Director Sheila O'Brien attended last week's celebration to promote the effectiveness of her program.

"The program we've developed over the last year is truly innovative, allowing us to bring together former inmates and the people whose lives are dramatically improved with a service dog," she said.

Almost Home houses former Worcester County inmates. So far, six dogs have been trained through the program.

Recipients of service dogs trained by NEADS have to go through an extensive application process before a dog is placed with them.

After submitting a formal application online at [www.neads.org](http://www.neads.org), the applicant is interviewed and must complete a two-week training program at the NEADS training campus in Princeton before being able to take ownership of the animal.

The current wait period for one of the dogs is two years, according to the organization's website.

Since being formed, NEADS has trained more than 1,000 dogs specializing in various disabilities, from social dogs to military dogs.