

JUDY'S CORNER

by Judy Balter

I have just arrived back from visiting the Laredo Job Corps in Texas. It was definitely one of the best trips of my life. But, I guess that I should start at the beginning and explain.

I am privileged to be on the Board for Working Angels Animal Rescue. Last year the group rescued a lot of dogs... most of which have been placed in loving homes... but we took back a 10 month old chocolate Lab puppy named Chaco. Kelsey and I contacted Major Vince Hester of the Law Enforcement Training Specialist, Inc. (LETS) and he and Billy Walker were kind enough to evaluate Chaco for us. Major Hester got us in contact with Billy Smith in Laredo. (See Issue 42 for a complete story on Major Hester and his dogs Blue and Chance. Blue is credited with \$32 Million of drugs being seized. Blue received his basic training in Laredo and Major Hester completed his training and has turned him into a legend.)

Billy Smith was kind enough to accept Chaco into the K-9 training program and Kirk Brady, Pat Stephens' son, transported Chaco to Laredo.

I really did not know much about the Job Corps, just that it is a Federal Program... but the more information that I got, the more interested I became. My initial interest was in the K-9 training area but

the more I learned... the more intrigued I became with how it functions and the opportunities available to the students.

Several months ago... I received an invitation to go to Laredo and do a speech for the Job Corps girls on Dining Etiquette, Attitude, and Achieving Goals. Adriana Hernandez, the Business Community Liaison contacted me...and took over planning my visit.

I arrived in San Antonio in August and was met by two lovely young ladies, Veronica Limon and Kimberly Rangel. They functioned as my "executive security" during my stay. These young ladies are currently enrolled in the K-9 Program and have already graduated from the Security Program. They spoiled me terribly... and I enjoyed every minute.

The next four days were a whirlwind of activity with welcome events, speeches, a luncheon, fashion shows, tours of the facility, etc. The 14-acre campus actually mirrors what you would expect at a small college, except that the campus is so clean and security is considerably enhanced.

There are many different occupational training programs at this facility including culinary arts, accounting clerks, building and apartment maintenance, clerical, electricity, health occupations,

welding, and of course, Security/K-9 Handler.

The campus is like a small city...the students are learning occupations which they can utilize right there on campus while they are getting their GED's or High School Diplomas and being prepared for college courses. For example, the culinary arts students help with the cooking and the welding students are building a great decorative security fence.

I would like to give a special thank you to Green Gables Co-Op in Jacksonville, Florida. The ladies from the Co-op were kind enough to make special tote bags as gifts for each of the girls. Many of the girls had tears in their eyes when they were given out.

The management of this facility intrigued me more than anything. It was so clean, so efficient, nothing wasted, great morale, and a team spirit that was beautiful to watch. The objective was clear...educate the students to be productive members of society. The administrative staff and instructors treat their involvement like it is their mission and passion...not just a job.

Continued on Page 8...

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Judy's Corner (Continued from Page 3)

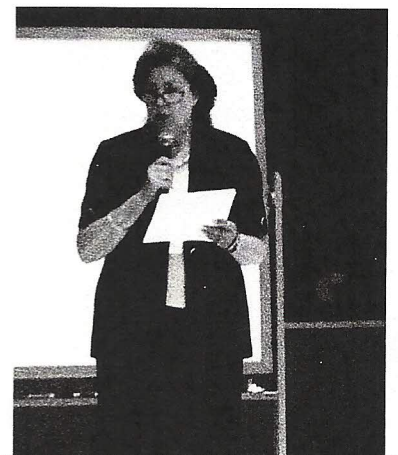
The quality and efficiency of the Laredo Job Corps is amazing so I did a bit of research on the management company. The company is Career Systems Development Corporation. According to their website, they have been a leader in the Job Corps Program since it was initiated in 1964. The Job Corps K-9 Instructor is Billy Smith and this area runs as efficiently as you would expect with his background in the Military and Texas Department of Criminal Justice Corrections.

I made so many wonderful new friends that there is no room to mention them all, but I would like to say a special thank you to a few people that worked so hard to make my trip enjoyable...Mike Fernandez, the Center Director; Monica Robledo, Director of Administrative Services; An-

thony Winterroth, CTT Instructor Security; Adriana Hernandez, Business Community Liaison; Billy L Smith Sr., CTT Instructor K-9; Veronica Limon, K-9 student; Kimberly Rangel, K-9 student.

We live in a dangerous world....wars on multiple fronts... rioting in London... illegal drugs infecting our children...dogs trained for explosives work and drug detection are needed more then ever to keep us safe. My compliments to the Job Corps, and special compliments to Career Systems Development Corporation for Laredo's excellent K-9/Security Program. Thank you so much for this program designed to keep us safe and for the foresight of your company in providing this needed training.

Stay tuned for more about Chaco, Billy L. Smith, Sr., the Laredo Job Corps, and their K-9 program in future issues!



Judy speaking at the Laredo Job Corps' Dress For Success Program

Photo Courtesy of Montserrat N. Hernandez