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OPEN NINTH:
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM
K9TH PROGRAM...EVERYONE'S BEST FRIEND
EPISODE 19
MARCH 23, 2017
HOSTED BY: FREDERICK J. LAUTEN

1 (Music.)

2 >> Welcome to another episode of "Open Ninth:
3 Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" in the Ninth Judicial
4 Circuit Court of Florida.

5 Now here's your host, Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten.

6 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Good afternoon. Welcome to "Open
7 Ninth." I'm here today with Cindy Frongello and Tonx and
8 Joanne Rittenhouse and Karl. And I want to thank you both
9 for joining us to discuss the wonderful work you do with
10 these amazing dogs that you've brought with you. And thanks
11 for bringing them today.

12 So, first of all, could each of you tell us just a
13 little bit about your canine companion and how you were
14 brought together? And, Cindy, I'll start with you. And,
15 Joanne, I'll go to you.

16 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Okay. Certainly.

17 Tonx and I were placed together through an organization
18 called Canine Companions for Independence. I had formerly
19 worked with another dog whose name was Harv. And my training
20 is as a psychologist. Initially I worked for the Orange
21 County Public Schools and Harv and I were a team.

22 Unfortunately, Harv passed away, and so I was placed
23 about a year and a half ago with Tonx. And we've continued
24 to work with the school system, but we also work with the
25 K9th Circuit and also the Child Advocacy Center.

1 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** So for our listeners, I'm hoping
2 they'll look at the picture we put on our website, but
3 describe Tonx for anyone who wasn't able to look at that so
4 they know who Tonx is and what he looks like. He's
5 beautiful, by the way. But why don't you tell our listeners
6 what he looks like.

7 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** He's a golden lab mix, and he has
8 these wonderful eyebrows. He has these wonderful eyes. He's
9 very, very mellow. He was born and bred to be a mellow,
10 mellow dog. He, um -- he loves children. He's kind of a
11 snuggly kind of a guy, and he's pretty much bombproof --

12 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Wow.

13 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** -- in terms of noise --

14 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay.

15 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** -- distraction.

16 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yeah. He's got a phenomenal
17 disposition. It is very mellow.

18 So, Joanne, how about you and Karl?

19 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Well, um, I got Karl when he was
20 five weeks old. I had no intention of getting another dog.
21 I had a breeder from Atlanta, Georgia, call me and tell me
22 that she had a little deaf, white boxer puppy, and she was
23 looking to place him. And I didn't know what to do with a
24 deaf dog. And I told her, no, I wasn't interested, and she
25 said, okay, fine, I'll put him to sleep.

1 So then I said, oh, I can't do that. So I took Karl,
2 and Karl has been an adventure, but a wonderful adventure.
3 He's taught me more than I could ever hope to teach him. He
4 knows 120 signs in American Sign Language. He's been a
5 therapy dog since he was a year old.

6 Testing him was a little difficult because his nose is
7 very sensitive, and they have to go into a medical facility
8 nursing home, hospital, in order to be tested to be a therapy
9 dog. And since his nose is so sensitive, he didn't really
10 want to go into any kind of facility like that. But
11 eventually he did.

12 And now he likes doing those visits. He loves children.
13 And he's -- he's bombproof too. He doesn't hear anything, so
14 he's not afraid of storms and he's not afraid of thunder and
15 lightning, and he can sleep through everything.

16 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** So one year old, you said you knew
17 he'd be a therapy dog. How do you know that? Did you know
18 that with respect to Tonx early on too? Do you know right
19 away or after about a year?

20 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** I didn't know Tonx when he was a
21 year. I actually go -- went to Canine Companions for
22 Independence, which is a local, wonderful organization, and
23 they breed, train four types of dogs. And they begin by
24 watching the dog from the time they're born. Their breeding
25 takes place out in California. They have seven different

1 training centers. We are fortunate enough to have one here
2 in Orlando.

3 And so what I'm told is that basically they just begin
4 watching them from the time they're born. And then I applied
5 to Canine Companions. And at that point in time, they begin
6 looking for a dog for me with my particular needs, and they
7 saw Tonx, and we were brought together.

8 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So when you applied, you applied for a
9 therapy dog?

10 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** I applied for what they call a
11 facility dog.

12 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right.

13 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** A facility dog is a dog that is
14 placed with a professional to help aid them in their tasks.
15 And so I applied for a facility dog. His title, I guess, is
16 called facility. Which means that he has -- he is assigned
17 to a facility with me.

18 And they've basically formed teams. There are facility
19 dogs that work in hospitals. There are facility dogs that
20 work in child advocacy centers all around the nation.

21 But, basically, it's very confusing. Facility dogs and
22 therapy dogs are wonderful, wonderful dogs. The titles are a
23 little different. And I think what happens is how they get
24 to work is a very, very different process.

25 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So not -- there's not a huge

1 distinction between a therapy dog and a facility dog? Or is
2 there a big distinction between the two?

3 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Well, one distinction -- there's
4 not a distinction in how they love children.

5 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right.

6 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** But there is a distinction in the
7 training that they have had and the ongoing evaluation that
8 they have. Tonx is actually a service dog. He has gone
9 through all of the professional training that any other
10 service dog would go through, and then he has to go through
11 very special testing from the American Disabilities Act, the
12 ADA testing. And he goes through that every year.

13 So he also has public access. If I need to go and meet
14 a client somewhere, we can go anywhere because he does have
15 that public access.

16 Therapy dogs, I can let Joanne speak to that.

17 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay. Why don't we let -- why don't
18 we have Joanne explain, specifically, therapy dogs.

19 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Service dogs are allowed to go
20 anywhere. Therapy dogs have to be invited. They don't have
21 the same rights. They can't go into restaurants. They have
22 to be invited. So if we're invited to a nursing home,
23 hospital, any type of facility, then we're allowed to go in.

24 Our insurance also reads a little bit differently, I
25 believe, than a service dog. We're insured as a team.

1 You'll hear that we keep relating as teams, and we are.
2 We're a team. As long as we're holding on to that leash,
3 we're a team, and we're insured for \$5 million through
4 Alliance of Therapy Dogs, which is a national organization,
5 and that's who Karl has been tested and observed through and
6 registered as a therapy dog.

7 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So let's talk a little bit about the
8 Ninth Judicial Circuit. So in the juvenile court building,
9 as Chief Judge, it was presented to me that perhaps children
10 who are required to be in court for any number of reasons
11 might benefit from a therapy dog being present with them
12 because oftentimes, young children -- it's probably true for
13 adults, but let's focus on young children -- find the court
14 setting traumatic, scary, intimidating, confusing.

15 And what I was told -- and I'm not an expert -- is that
16 the presence of a therapy dog can -- can have a calming
17 effect on children and a reassuring impact on children so
18 that they're able to tell whatever story it is that they're
19 there to tell, whether they're there as a witness to
20 something or perhaps a child in dependency court, whatever,
21 maybe even there in juvenile court as an accused, whatever it
22 might be, that the presence of the dog assists them in
23 communicating.

24 So is that a fair description and is that -- so you were
25 invited. So when I heard that, I thought well, that sounds

1 good, let's give it, at least, a try.

2 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Mm-hmm.

3 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And in that sense, your therapy dog's
4 invited into the juvenile courthouse.

5 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yes.

6 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And how has that been going?

7 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Well, for me, it's been -- it's
8 been going -- it's been going very well. We -- we have
9 similar missions but different missions. I -- my --

10 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** We being you and --

11 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Joanne and Karl.

12 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Karl.

13 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** And their teams. My -- I am -- I
14 guess, a single team with Tonx. My goal is to work with a
15 child from an incident. So to go through a forensic
16 interview. I want the child and the dog to know each other
17 all the way through and even beyond the court experience.

18 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So if there's a call about, perhaps,
19 abuse in a home, you might respond to that home?

20 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Yes.

21 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right.

22 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** I have done that. We work with the
23 Child Advocacy Center, and we take -- we work with children
24 all the way through the therapeutic process. I can go to the
25 school systems so that oftentimes children who have

1 experienced a lot of trauma have trouble at school. So Tonx
2 and I go into the school and try to work with them and work
3 with them in their environment there in addition to coming to
4 court.

5 Now, I also have to say that when I witness any dog team
6 come in, the children are much more relaxed, but I also see
7 the attorneys relax, I see --

8 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Hmm. Interesting.

9 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** -- the staff relax. It's
10 wonderful. I think that they bring a calm that, um, is
11 palpable, really, when you see them together.

12 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. Great.

13 So Karl, is his work as extensive? In other words, do
14 you respond to the scene or just work in the courthouse?
15 Maybe you can tell us if it's the same extent or different.

16 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** We don't -- we're not at the
17 scene, but the ideal way for us to start with a case would be
18 to do a couple meet-and-greets with a child, whether it's at
19 school, whether it's at the courthouse. And then from there,
20 the dog and the child kind of get a relationship. They get
21 to know each other. So that by the time it comes to
22 deposition time or trial time, that they know each other.
23 They feel comfortable together.

24 And it empowers the child to have a dog, especially a
25 big dog, by their side, especially when they're facing the

1 person that hurt them. A lot of times they don't have their
2 family by their side for one reason or the other, so they
3 have their dog by their side who's their buddy.

4 And one of the things that we discovered, that even when
5 the case was over, the pain's not over.

6 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Mm-hmm.

7 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** So we all stay in the child's
8 life for as long as they need.

9 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's fabulous. So have you -- have
10 you encountered anyone -- but in this case, let's focus on
11 attorneys -- who object to your participation with the
12 therapy dog in their proceedings?

13 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** I have not.

14 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right. Good. That's good.

15 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** However, I believe it's a new --
16 it's new for this area and there's a lot of questions. So a
17 lot of times we answer a lot of questions.

18 Once the attorneys get to know the dogs, they think they
19 realize that these dogs are very different than something
20 that they might have at home, and they -- so their concept
21 gets changed about how a dog can work in the courtroom.

22 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay. So that's good. So that's
23 not -- you're not encountering objections so much as
24 inquiries, like tell me what's going on, why is this dog
25 here? How does this dog help? You know, how can I be

1 assured the dog won't interfere -- those kinds of questions
2 is what I'm sensing from you?

3 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** That's for me. And I'm not sure --

4 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yeah and Joanne --

5 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** -- that Joanne --

6 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- maybe you've gotten some objections
7 from your --

8 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yes, we did. We had a defense
9 attorney object to the dog being in the courtroom. His
10 concern was that the jury would take sympathy knowing that
11 there was a therapy dog there. And we had to hide, in one of
12 the cases, we actually hid in the witness stand. But I think
13 as this program develops, that it's gonna be looked at
14 differently. We haven't had any issues with the jury being
15 swayed because there was a therapy animal there.

16 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And just so we're clear for our
17 listeners, in the juvenile courthouse there are rarely, if
18 ever, are jurors. No those are hearings before the Court.

19 In this courthouse, one -- a young child might testify
20 as a witness in front of a jury, but not normally in a
21 juvenile proceeding. That would be in a divorce proceeding,
22 perhaps, or --

23 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Custody.

24 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Custody proceeding or --

25 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Shelter.

1 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Criminal --

2 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- criminal case. And so I could see
3 where at least that issue would be raised. Like, wait a
4 minute, a jury, they're gonna automatically be sympathetic to
5 this witness, and you've encountered that.

6 And ultimately did the judge rule that the dog could be
7 in the jury box?

8 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yes. Yep.

9 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Just out of view?

10 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Out of view, yes.

11 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And I notice that Karl pretty much
12 follows commands, so if you told him to sit or lay down, he'd
13 wait for you before he'd move to any -- in any other place?

14 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yeah. He took the command sleep
15 very seriously and slept through the whole trial.

16 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay. All right. Great. Did the
17 jury -- do you know, did the jury ever even see Karl, do you
18 think?

19 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** No.

20 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So it was --

21 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** No.

22 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** He was present, offering comfort to
23 the child witness, but not observed by the jury. That's
24 fascinating.

25 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** One of the things we have the

1 children do during a case like that is we tell them to wear
2 shoes that they can slip off. And that way, when they kick
3 their shoes off, they can have their feet on the dog --

4 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's fabulous.

5 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** And that gives them some more
6 comfort.

7 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Have you had therapy dogs participate
8 with adults, other than -- you mentioned the impact about how
9 it sort of changes everybody. I mean, they're designed to
10 sort of give comfort for the children, but spillover effect
11 is it gives everybody a little bit of comfort and calming.

12 But have you had cases where the therapy dog is there
13 specifically for an adult witness or an adult participant in
14 a case? I'm curious about that. Maybe, so far, just
15 children?

16 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** I have had -- when we're in the
17 court -- in the juvenile justice center, I have had people
18 call me and say there is a mother over here who's really,
19 really upset, could you work with -- could you and Tonx work
20 with her.

21 In terms of going into court with that person, we
22 weren't able to do that. Well, actually, there have been
23 many -- a lot of -- a lot of emotion at the juvenile justice
24 center.

25 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Sure. Sure.

1 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** So a lot of times it's calming.

2 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. So you might have someone, I
3 could understand a parent could be upset for all kinds of
4 reasons. Maybe the parent knows that the child's been
5 victimized and feels a sense of responsibility or guilt in
6 his emotions or maybe the child is hearing that perhaps your
7 child will be removed or you have to participate in a plan,
8 whether you like it or not, to ensure that the child is safe.

9 Or any number -- I'm sure the list is almost endless.
10 And so fascinating. Maybe outside of the courtroom that
11 parent is processing information and the dog helps them calm
12 down a little bit. Because we know when participants are
13 highly emotional, whether it's anger or sorrow, that
14 different parts of the brain take over and the rational part
15 of the brain tends to shutdown and that center that processes
16 emotion gets bigger and you kind of need people to be
17 balancing rationality with emotion.

18 So that's great that the dogs are there and have that
19 effect. That's --

20 What about special requirements for both the dogs
21 themselves? You touched about this a little bit because
22 they've been trained and certified. And you, you mentioned
23 insurance.

24 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Mm-hmm.

25 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And do you-all have to undergo

1 training? Not just the dogs, but you, the second member of
2 the team?

3 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** I do. I -- in order to get a dog
4 from Canine Companions, you go through extensive interviews
5 in order to even be selected to have one of Canine
6 Companions' dogs. In addition to that, my training is as a
7 psychologist. But I also have an addendum on my credential,
8 which is I'm an animal assisted psychologist, so I had -- I
9 had to take some classes.

10 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Classes in that? Interesting.
11 How about you, Joanne?

12 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** As far as us with the Companions
13 for Courage dogs, we have no background in therapy. We're
14 just there handling the dog.

15 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay. Great. Great.

16 Does a certain breed of dog make a better companion or
17 breed is unimportant and it's more about disposition and
18 training and personality?

19 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** I think -- I haven't seen that it
20 makes any -- any difference as long as the dog has certain
21 characteristics. I -- I think that we all have loved an
22 animal that may have been -- somebody -- some puppy that came
23 off the street that just connected with us. What we're
24 looking for is attunement. We're looking for connection.
25 And we're looking for empathy. And I haven't seen that

1 there's any specific breed that is any more qualified than --

2 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Any other.

3 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** -- than any other.

4 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Interesting.

5 So you mentioned, certainly, the impact of therapy dogs
6 in a courtroom. But one of you mentioned that -- use in the
7 hospital. And I've read just enough to be dangerous. But I
8 understand that there are some studies that having a
9 companion can help in the healing process. Is that your
10 experience or have you studied that, either one of you, so
11 that this use of therapy dogs might be just beyond courtroom
12 settings and a variety of social settings?

13 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Oh, absolutely. There's a whole --
14 whole area right now of research being done in terms of --
15 we're doing brain scans on individuals when dogs are around.
16 We're also doing brain scans on dogs. A lot of the Canine
17 Companion dogs are working with Duke University in order to
18 study what is this thing? We feel it. We kind of know what
19 it's all about, but what really is going on inside of us?

20 And so now that we have PET scans and CAT scans, which
21 I'm not sure dogs like to go into a CAT scan --

22 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** (Laughing.)

23 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** We can't really ask them.

24 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** You got to change the name.

25 (Laughing.)

1 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** Yeah. They -- we're able to see
2 and we're able to -- and one of the things we measure is the
3 oxytocin, which is a chemical that's produced between mother
4 and child. And they're noticing and they're measuring some
5 of the chemicals that produce this loving, relaxing, caring
6 feeling that we all experience. And it's pretty exciting.
7 And anybody wanting to do any kind of research or do a paper,
8 it's -- there's a lot of that going on.

9 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Fascinating. That is fascinating.
10 So in researching this a little bit, I came across so
11 many different terms. And you've mentioned some of them,
12 like service dogs, therapy dogs, hearing dogs, facility dogs,
13 skilled companions, can either of you help me with the
14 differentiation between these terms? Is there a big
15 differentiation? And I'm going to come back to service dogs
16 in just a moment. But this variety of, kind of, descriptions
17 for companions that help things, what's the -- what's the
18 difference between these terms?

19 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** I think the biggest difference is
20 the tasks that they have been trained to perform. Hearing
21 dogs are service dogs who have been trained to do certain
22 skills with a hearing-impaired individual. And they're very
23 specific. If -- if you're going to have a dog evaluated and
24 pass a certification as a hearing dog, it's very well spelled
25 out what tasks they need to perform.

1 Skilled companion dogs are usually a three-person team.
2 It is a dog, a child, and an adult. So if you have a skilled
3 companion dog, the adult is the handler, the child, or it
4 could be actually an adult that isn't capable of handling the
5 dog, and then the dog. So that those are very -- there are
6 some very specific skills that happen for a skilled companion
7 dog that they -- they're tested on.

8 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Can I stop you there for just a
9 moment?

10 So it seems to me that most members of the public would
11 say, well, the first sort of use of canines, other than as
12 just pure pets that I recall or -- was seeing-eye dogs.
13 Would you agree with that? And that's a skilled companion
14 dog and they have kind of been around for a long time.

15 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** They have.

16 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** And most people say, yeah, right. I'm
17 aware of dogs who help people --

18 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Working dogs.

19 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- who are vision-impaired, working
20 dogs.

21 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Police dogs.

22 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right. Oh, that's true.

23 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yeah, they have a job.

24 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** And then police dogs and working dogs.

25 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** They have a job to do.

1 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And then I guess if you add military
2 training, there was a lot of involvement --

3 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yes.

4 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- of dogs in the military. So maybe
5 I was too narrow there.

6 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** They're all service dogs.
7 They're all working dogs.

8 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** All service dogs. Right. And I
9 interrupted you. So there were service dogs, skilled
10 companion dogs.

11 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Well, and briefly, they all have a
12 job.

13 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** A job. Right. Okay.

14 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** They all have a job.

15 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Now, one of the controversies, I know
16 I saw on the news, and you're going to have to help me with
17 the term, that is you can get on a plane with a service
18 animal; is that right? Is that the term, service animal?

19 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Yes. Mm-hmm.

20 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** But this news report was controversial
21 because it was of such a -- kind of an unusual variety of
22 service animals, chickens, pigs --

23 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Emotional support.

24 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yeah.

25 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Emotional support animal.

1 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** And they can then apparently, you
2 know, accompany an adult or someone on a travel or on a
3 plane, and that whole -- that whole news report, I'm not
4 judging it one way or the other, but it's just controversial
5 about the kind of -- different kind of animals.

6 What -- do you know about that and the controversy about
7 that and what's your thoughts about that whole controversy?

8 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** An emotional support animal is
9 obtained when a doctor or a therapist fills out a
10 prescription and says this person needs emotional support for
11 PTSD or whatever.

12 The animal is not -- does not obtain, necessarily, any
13 training whatsoever.

14 The purpose of having an emotional support label is
15 because that person then can have housing anywhere.

16 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay.

17 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** The emotional support animal does
18 not have public access. It is -- the whole purpose of it is
19 to just help someone who may -- may be in need of some type
20 of emotional support in their home.

21 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** So what's this about different animals
22 kind of occupying seats on airplanes? Is that a -- is that a
23 misnomer or misunderstanding? Is it -- what's that all
24 about?

25 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** It's an abuse of the situation,

1 I think.

2 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So people taking advantage of, you
3 know -- let's say people legitimately being in need of a
4 companion --

5 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Of a service dog.

6 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- for emotional support or a service
7 dog.

8 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Or having a legitimate service
9 dog, they have access to everything.

10 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right. Yeah. So they could take the
11 plane.

12 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yes.

13 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** If I needed a service dog and then I
14 got a service dog, then I could take that dog on the plane.
15 So it's just people kind of stretching this term, which --
16 which has a great use, but bending the rules a little bit, I
17 want my pig, I want my chicken --

18 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yes.

19 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And I forget. Some of the examples
20 seemed a little bit extreme.

21 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Mm-hmm.

22 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- but on the plane with me. I
23 imagine that could have ultimately kind of negative
24 consequences --

25 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** For a service dog, it could

1 really hurt service dogs.

2 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right. Because the reaction to that,
3 if it's abused, might be we're not gonna let anybody on the
4 planes. And someone who really needs that service animal --

5 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yes.

6 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- would be limited then.

7 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** And I think the airlines are
8 confused as well.

9 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** As to what they are?

10 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** It -- it's very difficult.

11 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And so they're afraid sometimes to say
12 no because they don't want to -- especially if someone has
13 something that looks official, that says this is a service
14 companion and I get to use him.

15 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** They don't want to challenge it.

16 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So you know where we are now. Do you
17 see an expansion, certainly a legitimate expansion, of the
18 use for companions, canine companions in the judicial system
19 and then outside the judicial system, and perhaps in society
20 as a whole?

21 I'll start with you, this time, Joanne. Where would you
22 like to see this -- all this go?

23 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** There is actually a new bill
24 being proposed, and it's called the Best Friends Act, which
25 will, again, encourage therapy dogs and service dogs to be

1 used in the courtroom and through any kind of judicial
2 policies.

3 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And how's that going, as far as you
4 know?

5 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** It's moving forward without any
6 opposition.

7 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** It's a little hard to kind of be
8 opposed to canine companions, that's for sure.

9 So that could pass this legislative session, and it
10 would sort of expand the --

11 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yes.

12 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- use of canine companions. Great.

13 What about outside of the courts? I guess you mentioned
14 hospitals. In schools, if a child really needs a companion
15 and they can have one temporarily?

16 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** Well, how I have -- in my career, I
17 have used a canine probably for the last 15 years.

18 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay.

19 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** I had one previous to Tonx. And
20 basically what my role was, mostly crisis. There's a lot of
21 crisis in school.

22 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Sure.

23 >> **CINDY FRONGELLO:** And so I worked in -- I was school
24 based for a while, and then I was administrate -- in the
25 court -- administrative position for a while.

1 And basically oftentimes you have situations where there
2 are children that have school phobia. There are children who
3 are having tremendous behavior issues. And just like you had
4 mentioned in the court, you have to -- kids have to get their
5 calm before they can go in and tell their story. It's the
6 same with learning. If a child stays emotionally upset, they
7 need a way to calm. And so we -- my dog, Harv, and I did a
8 lot of calming. We worked with children who were dealing
9 with so many emotional issues.

10 Also, we have worked with children who were ESE
11 children, exceptional ed children. Oftentimes when words --
12 you can't get the words across, a dog is very able to do
13 some --

14 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Fascinating.

15 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** -- wonderful help that way.

16 There's a lot of grief and loss in the school system, so
17 we worked a lot with grief and loss. I think for anyone
18 who's interested and knows and understands the healing power
19 of animals, if you can dream it, I think you can infuse that
20 into your job.

21 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** One of the areas that we are being
22 educated in as judges is the impact of adverse childhood
23 experiences, or ACEs, and how there are long-term
24 psychological and physiological impacts from adverse
25 childhood experiences.

1 And I wondered if canine companions help in any way
2 minimize that sort of long-term impact or damage, really,
3 that can occur from adverse -- it sounds like they can.
4 Certainly they help immediately, but they perhaps maybe the
5 impact is even long term. You probably have to do long-term
6 studies to be able to say it scientifically.

7 Joanne, you --

8 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Actually, the State had
9 contacted us about going into the youth academies and we
10 started going into the youth academies through therapy
11 sessions, having the boys -- in this case, it's the boys that
12 they interact with the dogs, that they understand that dogs
13 have feelings. And they maybe brush their hair. Read to
14 them. That sounds like something so simple, but it gives
15 them the sense of compassion. And I think the dogs are gonna
16 be used in a lot more studies, a lot more hands on.

17 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, from personal experience, when I
18 go home, I have a sheltie and I have a schnoodle, and
19 sometimes, as you can probably understand, it can be a pretty
20 stressful day around here.

21 **>> JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Yeah.

22 **>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** And they absolutely help reduce that
23 stress just by having them run up and greet me and us
24 interacting a little bit together.

25 So I'm a big believer, but more importantly, I want to

1 thank you for the work you do in the courthouse itself and in
2 the court system. And I didn't know much about this when I
3 became Chief Judge. You can probably understand I was a
4 little skeptical at first, like we're going to bring dogs
5 into the courthouse. Wait a minute, it's a formal setting.
6 I'm not sure about this.

7 Then somebody convinced me, and then I met -- I think I
8 met Tonx and Karl and there were other companions I met, and
9 I was out at juvenile, and I saw sort of how children almost
10 come up to you-all, whether you went to them, and immediately
11 start this interaction. And it didn't take too long to be
12 convinced that this is absolutely what we needed in that
13 building and for children who are required to be there for
14 one reason or another, sometimes horrible reasons.

15 So thank you on behalf of all the judges in the circuit
16 for the work that you do and your dedication to this and your
17 knowledge about it, which is helping us understand trauma and
18 children and how to deal with children in our structure,
19 which is -- which is unfortunate that children have to be
20 here. But with companions like yours, it makes it a little
21 easier.

22 So on behalf of all the judges, thanks for doing that
23 and thanks for letting me interview you today and hopefully
24 getting this word out to our listeners. Thank you very much.

25 **>> CINDY FRONGELLO:** And I would like to thank you for

1 letting us share our gifts. Because sometimes, um, people,
2 like you said, don't understand. But, yeah, we -- it's a
3 great partnership.

4 >> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Thank you. Great. Thanks for being
5 here.

6 >> **JOANNE RITTENHOUSE:** Thank you.

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13 (Music.)

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