

## Pace Professor Wins Award For Therapy Program at Jail

Pace University criminal justice professor Dr. Kim Collica-Cox won a prestigious national Jefferson Award on June 28 for outstanding public service related to her innovative animal-assisted therapy program, which helps to heal mothers incarcerated at the Westchester County Jail.

Developed in partnership with the County's Department of Correction and non-profit The Good Dog Foundation, "Parenting, Prison and Pups" pairs incarcerated mothers with trained therapy dogs to teach them parenting skills as part of their return home after release. Collica-Cox won the award over 75 other nominees nationwide, and was cheered on at the ceremony by her daughters Antoinette, 24, and Annalise, 6.

"Parenting, Prison and Pups" is one of 22-plus inmate recovery programs in place at the Westchester County Jail. Nationally, it is the first program of its kind to incorporate animal-assisted therapy into a structured classroom curriculum, and instills trust in female inmates – many of whom have experienced prior trauma and violence or suffer from mental health issues and addiction. In working with therapy dogs, the program enhances inmates' parenting skills in an effort to return them to their families and to reduce intergenerational incarceration.

The Jefferson Awards Foundation was created in 1972 by Jaqueline Kennedy Onassis and other members of public service. The foundation partners nationally with groups such as the NFL, Yale University, the Hispanic Heritage Foundation and the United States Conference of Mayors, in an effort to foster meaningful public service for underserved populations and youth. In addition to Collica-Cox, the Jefferson Foundation honored Super Bowl Champion Chris Long, who donated his entire 2018 salary to underserved youth; billionaire philanthropist Elaine Wynn; and Pia Phillips and Abbie Nelson, teenagers who founded Pab's Packs, an organization that custom designs backpacks for seriously ill children.

"Professor Collica-Cox's receipt of this prestigious award confirms her commitment to ensuring that incarcerated mothers are provided with transferable skills that are critical for a safe and productive reunification with their families," said Commissioner of Correction Joseph Spano. "Programs like 'Parenting, Prison and Pups' have resulted in a steady decline in our inmate population – to the low-



Dr. Kim Collica-Cox

est level since 1986. This benefit is two-fold: A lower inmate population results in a safer working environment for staff, while also allowing us to provide more programming opportunities for those individuals who are in custody."

Dr. Nira Herrmann, dean of the Dyson College of Arts and Sciences at Pace, added: "Professor Collica-Cox truly epitomizes the goals of the Jefferson Award. Not only is she fully engaged in supporting an often-forgotten community of incarcerated women, but she has also engaged Pace University students in life-changing experiences with this community. Her personal commitment is expanding outward through her mentoring of students, to touch more and more lives in positive and uplifting ways. She is truly an influential role model and we are very excited to see her excellent work acknowledged with this prestigious award."