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**•New program teams children with canines.**

By Rosette Gonzales, The Leader

Teenagers did the training, but both the dogs and trainers learned a few new things during their three-week relationship. "I learned about goal-setting and how to make them possible," said Damian Mendiola, a seventh-grader at Community Day School.

Six students from the continuation school participated in K9 Connection, a new program that teams children and dogs in a training partnership. The students and their four trainees graduated Friday at Monterey High School, completing nearly 15 hours of successful training, K9 Connection owners said.

During the time students spent with the dogs, the teens acquired patience, compassion and responsibility, said K9 co-founder Katherine Beattie.

"This class was absolutely wonderful," she said. "They became so focused."

And the dogs, who were a little rambunctious in the beginning, became tame and bonded with their masters, said Lynn Medlin, supervising trainer.

"What I saw is that [the dogs] really got so they would calm down among one another," she said. "As soon as they got so they knew these children, they would calm down immediately."

To Rex, a 5-year-old German Shepherd mix, calming down appeared to mean barking and wagging his tail. As soon as he spotted Russell Wines, Rex seemed to know his trainer was carrying a bag of hot dogs.

"I'm going to go to the shelter after this to volunteer and say hi to the dogs," Wines, 15, said.

K9 Connection has been working with the Burbank Animal Shelter to pair dogs with student trainers. This was the first time Community Day School students participated.

At Friday's graduation, Travis, a 2-year-old German Shepherd/ Rottweiler mix, was adopted. K9 Connection owners said the objective is to find all the dogs homes after their training.

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