Like many love stories, Bellin’s begins with a kiss.

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Pet Partners is required to file financial information with several states. Ten of those states will provide copies to their residents upon request:

California: Pet Partners is registered as ‘Pet Partners Therapy Animals’ in the state of California.

Florida: A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE, WITHIN THE STATE, 1-800-HELP-FLA. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. CH3226.

Maryland: For the cost of copies and postage, Office of the Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401.

Mississippi: The official registration and financial information of Pet Partners may be obtained from the Mississippi Secretary of State’s office by calling 1-888-236-6167. Registration by the Secretary of State does not imply endorsement.

Missouri: Pet Partners is registered as ‘Pet Partners Nonprofit Corporation’ in the state of Missouri.

New Jersey: INFORMATION FILED WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL CONCERNING THIS CHARITABLE SOLICITATION and the percentage of contributions received by the charity during the last reporting period that were dedicated to the charitable purpose MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY BY CALLING 973-504-6215 and is available on the internet at www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/ocp.htm#charity. REGISTRATION WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT.

New York: Office of the Attorney General, Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

North Carolina: Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 1-888-830-4989. The license is not an endorsement by the state. Pet Partners is registered as ‘Pet Partners Nonprofit Corporation’ in North Carolina.

North Dakota: Pet Partners is registered as ‘Pet Partners Therapy Animals’ in North Dakota.

Pennsylvania: The official registration and financial information of Pet Partners may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Virginia: State Division of Consumer Affairs, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218.

Washington: Charities Division, Office of the Secretary of State, State of Washington, Olympia, WA 98504-0422, 1-800-332-4483.

West Virginia: Residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305.

REGISTRATION WITH A STATE AGENCY DOES NOT CONSTITUTE OR IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THAT STATE.

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MORE THAN ONLY DOGS

dog 9,957
equine 249
cat 212
rabbit 78
bird 26
llama/alpaca 22
guinea pig 21
pig 7
rat 6

Grand Total 10,578

over one million visits last year in all 50 states
As the time of year approaches when we’re reminded of the importance of gratitude, thank you to the Pet Partners volunteers who make a difference year-round. To our Instructors who share their knowledge and passion with prospective handlers, to our Evaluators who uphold the highest standards, and to our Handlers and their amazing animals that lessen anxiety, relieve loneliness and unfold a hand gripped in pain, thank you.

The past six months have been incredibly busy at Pet Partners HQ. I had the opportunity to represent you at inspiring and informative meetings. Both organizations that Pet Partners helped found, the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO) and the International Society for Anthrozoology (ISAZ) are leading the explosive interest in Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAI).

IAHAIO brings together organizations worldwide. What was the takeaway? The cultural differences that have contributed to how AAI is growing are profound. In the United States, where volunteerism is as familiar as apple pie, the birth of AAI was volunteer therapy animal teams that perform visits. In Western Europe, the early adopters are professionals involving (often their own) animals in their practice. There’s no doubt this professional interest is growing here at home, too. We’re fortunate to have the involvement of professionals, such as Dr. Aubrey Fine, who has agreed to chair our new Human-Animal Bond Advisory Board, and ongoing dialogue with Melissa Winkle, the President of Animal Assisted Interventions International (AAII), to determine how we can best continue to support our almost 11,000 teams in a visitation setting while partnering with organizations like AAII to support America’s growing interest in professional applications.

ISAZ brings together researchers and I was humbled by the appreciation expressed for Pet Partners and the number of researchers who reported Pet Partners had participated in their research. That means many of you, in addition to ongoing commitments you are keeping, also are making time to participate in the advancement of the field and the science behind AAI. The researchers are providing the evidence that proves what animal lovers have always believed – we feel better because of the human-animal bond we share with our furry or feathered loved ones. This is important in how our healthcare, criminal justice and education systems view therapy animals from access to reimbursement.

What does this mean to Pet Partners? Surprisingly but fortuitously, almost four decades after our founders came together with a vision, the time is now. In 2016 we’ll unveil a new framework, where we continue to strengthen our core program activity – the Therapy Animal Program, but also embark on bold new strategies for how we come together to make the world a better place because of the relationships we share with these amazing animals. For today, we offer well wishes for happy holidays, and special recognition of the wonderful teams whose visits are a true gift to those who experience depression or loneliness at this time of year – thank you all! We look forward to 2016 with encouragement and hope you share with us all the enthusiasm of a dog with a tennis ball, because taking advantage of the opportunities before us will take a dog park. Seems more appropriate than “it takes a village,” doesn’t it?

Happy Holidays,

C. Annie Magnant
Pet Partners President & CEO
Pet Partners for Professionals

By Melissa Winkle

I am delighted to serve on the Pet Partners Human-Animal Bond Advisory Board. I am an occupational therapist in private practice, with a special interest in animal assisted therapy. I’m also President of Animal Assisted Intervention International, a practitioner-driven organization that caters to healthcare and human service providers who work with dogs in practice, which is not in Pet Partners (PP) current scope of practice. Each of the aforementioned organizations has a specialty area, and all agree that our collaboration with and support for each other only strengthen the areas of Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA), Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT), Animal-Assisted Education (AAE) and Animal Support (AS) – such as trainers and handlers.

For nearly 40 years, Pet Partners has been a leader in the human-animal bond. The organization has provided volunteer visiting teams with the necessary education, evaluation and registration so that people of all ages and abilities can enjoy the benefits. For many years, professionals had no resources for animals in practice, and looked to Pet Partners hoping it was enough to offer animal-assisted therapy. Times have changed, and professionals have appropriate options for professional standards of practice, animal welfare, and continuing education. While Pet Partners does not offer membership specifically for healthcare and human service providers to take their own dogs into paid work settings, the program does have many other opportunities for those who wish to have an animal as part of their practice. Professionals can request volunteer teams to become part of an interdisciplinary treatment team; they can assist patients/clients to reintegrate into the community with their own pets; and they can strengthen their own skills to work toward taking their own pet into professional practice.

Interdisciplinary Teams

An interdisciplinary team (IDT) is a group of individuals who each have specialized training. IDTs may be found in healthcare facilities, schools and community-based services in which the team gathers to make intervention or education plans for individuals or groups. Healthcare and human service providers may have significant limitations for the inclusion of animal-assisted therapy or education. Work schedules, environments, and responsibilities may not be conducive for a professional to handle their own dogs or to meet basic needs and rights of the animal. Appropriate areas for rest, consistent bathroom schedules, free access to water, and 100 percent supervision may not even be a possibility for a professional to manage. In addition, while many professionals are interested in AAT, they just may not have the skills to multitask a dog, equipment, the environment, the activity and the patient or student. In other cases, the professional’s dog may not be appropriate or may not enjoy the population, environment or activities of the workplace.

Pet Partners volunteer teams are a great solution. A PP team already has skills to interact with people, as they independently offer AAAs. However, when included in the IDT, they can make treatment and educational sessions more motivating. When a degree and licensed healthcare or human service professional combines forces with a PP team, they are able to meet goal objectives and it is referred to as AAT or AAE. Another interesting perspective is that the team may offer another visit outside of the session, as part of the support plan for the individual who was receiving services.

It is critical that the facility train the PP team for its own policies and procedures involving animals in the facility, zoonotic risks, population and disability specifics, and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

And while the PP team has a liability insurance policy covering their volunteer work, it is recommended that the facility also carry professional liability insurance as the team is working within their formal treatment or education sessions. In addition, as AAT and AAE have gained momentum as an accepted practice, it is critical that the professional also have continuing education about animal-assisted therapy and/or education. The entire IDT is responsible for understanding that PP teams may visit for a maximum of two hours per day.

Pet Partners and the Discharge Plan

Many times, professionals have limited time to work with patients or students. Yet we know that if we could just motivate them to get out into the community, that activity would support their physical, cognitive and psychosocial skills. Have you ever considered recommending that your patient or student become a Pet Partners team with his or her own family dog? If their pet motivates them, they may be interested in visitations, which can offer the exercise and interactions to support ongoing progress. Keep in mind the costs, community mobility, physical and cognitive skills required in sharing their pets with others. It can be very rewarding to enter a facility knowing so many people are happy to see the team. And it can strengthen both physical and psychosocial components, while also offering autonomy and choice in areas in which they may not have had these opportunities in the past.
Pet Partners as a Prerequisite in Professional Practice

While PP does not offer membership for professionals and their pets in a working capacity, the organization can be a great pre-requisite for the final outcome. One of the best things a professional can do before taking a pet to work is to become a PP volunteer visiting team. By simply volunteering with your pet, you will have more freedom to focus on the pet’s preferences, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. It is a great time to learn about animal behavior without the responsibility of a patient or student. In addition, the professional can learn a lot about their own skills to manage a dog, supplies, environments, and more. The visit can be set up with a population and environment that is similar to the one in which the professional works. And over time, perhaps the professional can volunteer for someone of the same discipline to start fine tuning the skills needed for that environment. This can be a great place to begin thinking about treatment plan activities in an informal manner. Soon, the team is able to identify additional skills needed, ongoing training, and continuing education required for ethical practices. Practitioners and educators must remember that working with an animal in your paid professional setting requires much different criteria. The work has additional requirements for evaluation – including increased distance, duration, precision, proxemics, and activity. There may be other areas that require additional training and evaluation – such as the presence of children, people on the floor, and equipment specific to the professional’s practice setting and population. At this point, the team is ready to pursue professional standards of practice, ethics, animal welfare, liability, and membership to the appropriate organization, such as Animal Assisted Intervention International.

Pet Partners continues to evolve and bring people, pets, and communities together. While the organization is meant for volunteers, these roles can evolve into stronger intervention and educational capacities. And through our professional interactions, we can teach our patients and students about giving back to the community and strengthening themselves with their faithful feathered or furry friends.

Pet Partners CEO, Annie Magnant and Animal Assisted Intervention International President, Melissa Winkle, OTR/L will be presenting a 6-hour preconference institute on Animal-Assisted Interventions and Occupational Therapy:

American Occupational Therapy Association Conference and Expo
McCormick Place, Chicago, Illinois
April 6, 2016; Noon – 6:30 p.m.

Melissa Y. Winkle is an occupational therapist in private practice at Dogwood Therapy Services in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is President of Animal Assisted Intervention International and an assistance dog trainer for Assistance Dogs of the West, an accredited member of Assistance Dogs International. She is a member of the Pet Partners Human-Animal Bond Advisory Board and serves on a number of development committees of similar interest around the world. She has built her career on the human-animal bond as a researcher and author of books and articles, and is a practitioner. She teaches animal assisted interventions, disability, integrated and community-based program development across the globe.
Rescued Husky
Returns Favor in Texas

By Jill Schilp
Photos By Sandy Walker

Like many love stories, Bellin’s begins with a kiss.

For this abused Husky, the kiss was an act of courage. Bellin’s kiss told Steve Fontenot, “If I can do it, you can too.”

With that kiss, Bellin started his comeback from a life of trauma and abuse to achieve new purpose as a registered Pet Partners therapy dog. Today, he inspires others to believe in their strength and resilience in the face of life’s challenges.

When Steve Fontenot first met him, Bellin was between three and four years old, was severely underweight and missing huge sections of hair. The terrified Husky had been repeatedly beaten, was weak, lethargic and had been without shelter, food and water for days on end. On contact, Bellin would freeze up, avoid eye contact and wait to be hit. Fontenot wondered if he was going to be able to help this poor dog.

In a moment that Fontenot will never forget, Bellin answered that question.

“I saw his head turn. Then this abused dog gave my hand the most tender kiss,” Fontenot said. “I had no idea at that moment that Bellin was about to become my personal hero. That look, trust and kiss in that instant said to me, ‘look, if I can do this, you can too.’”

Steve Fontenot knew, with that simple kiss, Steve and Kassia could try one more rescue. Bellin’s life was about to change. So were the Fontenot’s.

The Fontenots went on to foster and then adopt Bellin in January 2012. Early in his rescue, Bellin would not even acknowledge his new human family. The first two weeks of his homecoming, Bellin just slept, ate and went outside when needed. Somehow, he seemed to know he was safe. He was healing.

Bellin eventually became curious about his new world. He met his dog foster sisters and brother. It appeared that Bellin had never been around other dogs, so his new “siblings” were instrumental in teaching Bellin how to play well with others. Bellin showed no signs of aggression with humans or other dogs. In the months that followed, slowly and cautiously, and with the patience of his handlers, Bellin started to show renewed spirit.

Bellin loved playing with his talking tiger head toy. He would hit it once, and it said “Geaux Tigers,” he hit it a second time, and it played a piece of the LSU fight song. When the toy talked, Bellin just held it and waited patiently for the toy to come back to life again.

Bellin was coming back to life too.

The Fontenots started bringing Bellin to their office at Kubena Pediatrics where he could see and visit with the office staff who gradually interacted with him. He loved going to work. He eventually interacted with the children in the pediatric office. Bellin was friendly, and his story was inspiring to those....
who were experiencing challenges of their own. After meeting Bellin, one mother who had a fear of dogs remarked, “if he can overcome the fear of people beating him, then I can overcome my fear of dogs.”

As Bellin demonstrated this special skill and ability to connect with people, the Fontenots considered therapy dog work. The trio began the journey to become a Pet Partners team. Bellin’s transition from a frightened, abused animal to a registered therapy dog presented some training challenges. One was to build the dog’s confidence.

“He seemed to act as if he was letting us down when we asked him to repeat a behavior on command, like a ‘down,’” Steve Fontenot said. After successfully doing one, if we asked him to repeat it, Bellin thought he was doing it wrong, so we learned to shake up the variety of his training tasks. We had to first get a read on him and learn how to do it together.”

Once again, Bellin’s comeback message seemed to say, “if I can, you can.”

In 2013, Bellin and Kassia were evaluated by the Therapy Animals of San Antonio and registered as a Pet Partners team. Now both Steve and Kassia are registered as handlers with Pet Partners and the three work together as Team Bellin.

Today, Team Bellin visits Kubena Pediatrics, Methodist Children’s Hospital, and the San Antonio Children’s Shelter. Bellin is one of a group of five Pet Partners teams that visit the Children’s Bereavement Center of South Texas, beginning a pilot program working with the Sibling Loss Support Group. Christi Bond, Director of the Blue Bird Auxiliary to the Methodist Hospitals calls Bellin “my favorite comeback kid.”

Bellin also serves as a canine ambassador for the potential of rescue dogs and has participated in events with Texas Husky Rescue and San Antonio Humane Society. The busy therapy Husky has a growing online presence at www.facebook.com/teambellin.

According to Steve Fontenot, the special gifts that make Bellin an extraordinary therapy dog are his compassion and empathy. He connects in a special way with those who hurt. Bellin and his message of resilience, “I am Bellin. If I can come back, you can too,” inspires others who must overcome challenges.

Last year, therapy dogs like Bellin and over 10,000 other Pet Partners therapy teams made more than one million visits in all 50 states to people in need. An emerging body of research shows how visits and contact with dogs and positive interactions between humans and animals can improve psychological and physical health. Bellin’s look and kiss may really be “the look of love.” In a 2015 study, Japanese researchers (Nagasawa et al.) showed that oxytocin, the same hormone that creates loving and connecting feeling between mothers and infants, is stimulated when dogs gaze at their special human and that human gazes back.

Change and inspiration can come from both ends of the Pet Partners leash.”Bellin re-inspired our work in rescue,” said Kassia Fontenot, a pediatrician. “He saved us as much as we saved him. Bellin links our worlds of rescue and healing, helping children and dogs together. He completes the circle.”

Perhaps the special meaning of Bellin’s name says it best. The courageous Husky is named after Bellin Bellin, an Australian aborigine symbol for the wind, who is said to unleash the winds to where they are needed. In this spirit, Bellin, in his proud role as a Pet Partners therapy dog and rescue ambassador, unleashes his winds of hope, encouragement, and proof of the redemptive power of second chances and comebacks.

“When we picked Bellin’s name when we rescued him, we had no idea how far his winds of change would blow,” said Steve Fontenot. “Thanks to his work as a therapy animal, we still don’t know where his healing winds will take us next. We are just along for the ride.”

And it all started with that kiss.

Jill Schilp is an award-winning Dog Writer, a Humane Education Specialist and retired psychiatric nurse who writes about the human-animal bond. She is the volunteer coordinator for A New Leash on Life Therapy Animals, a Community Partner of Pet Partners in North Texas and a member of the Dog Writers Association of America. She lives in Texas with her retired Pet Partner Therapy Dog Junior. You can read more of her work at www.thedailyjuniorblog.com
PET PARTNERS APPOINTS HARVARD ALUM AS CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Dr. David Eldon Williams has joined the Pet Partners team as the organization’s first Chief Medical Officer. Going forward, Pet Partners envisions a revolution in the field of Human-Animal Interactions where the benefits of the Human-Animal Bond become an important part of public health.

“I am honored to join Pet Partners and the growing movement acknowledging the importance of pets as they relate to human health. It’s an important conversation.”

Dr. Williams comes to Pet Partners with an impressive medical background. After completing undergraduate work at Princeton, Williams earned his MD from Harvard and his MBA from Northwestern. He has served as Medical Director and Staff Physician at several prestigious medical facilities as well as Associate Chairman at the Mt. Sinai Hospital, Department of Emergency Medicine. Today, Williams works with Sheridan Healthcare as part of their Emergency Medicine Travel Team.

Dr. Williams is not a stranger to the work that Pet Partners does. His daughter Lauren, a ninth-grade student in Chicago, is a registered Pet Partners team along with their family dog, a Bouvier des Flandres name Gia. Since Lauren is a youth handler, Dr. Williams has accompanied her on her journey to evaluate, register and visit. In addition, Lauren is starting a Pet Partners club at her school to educate her follow students about the healing power of the bond.

NEW COURSE: CANINE BODY LANGUAGE: SIGNALS & SOCIAL CUES FOR THERAPY DOGS

Pet Partners knows that successful handlers are able to read their dog’s body language and proactively respond, ensuring safe visits and happy therapy animals. Hospitals and other facilities are beginning to recognize the importance of this skill also. The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) recently published new guidelines for therapy animals visiting hospitals. They specifically called for formal training in two areas: reading of an animal’s body language, and infection control. Pet Partners is proud to create the first broadly available training that meets these new SHEA guidelines. The first of these two courses - Canine Body Language: Signals and Social Cues for Therapy Dogs – will be available on the Pet Partners website in November.
You Are Your Animal’s Best Advocate: The Silent Bark: Our Moral Responsibility to Listen

In his book, “Circle of the Seasons” (1953), Edwin Way Teale wrote, “those who wish to pet and baby animals ‘love’ them. But those who respect their natures and wish to let them live normal lives, love them more.” Working alongside our companion animals as Pet Partner teams is a major responsibility that we all must take to heart. In so many ways, we act as our animal’s voice, and we must consider their wellbeing in our actions. Our companion animals often communicate with us in silence, but their nonverbal reactions can provide important information about their needs and desires. As Pet Partners, it is our moral responsibility to listen to our companion animals’ silent communications and make decisions that are in their best interest.

Many years ago, when my eldest therapy dog (Puppy - a golden retriever who had worked in my office for close to a decade) quite clearly began to display signs of aging (loss of energy and unusual fatigue), I decided to retire her. We even had a retirement party for her. She was the focus of everyone’s attention. It was a special afternoon that I will always cherish. Nevertheless, retirement was not an easy adjustment for my four-legged therapy partner. I will never forget Puppy’s first day when I left her at home and just took my younger therapy dog with me. Puppy seemed lost and sat by the door of our home, until my wife called me to say that Puppy was having a problem. This continued for a few more days until we reintegrated her back into her work, and back to her love of life. Once returned to the office, she seemed to be at peace. For the next 18 months, Puppy worked on an adjusted schedule. She would interact at her own pace, sometimes choosing to sit next to the clients, while at other times, she would wander into the adjacent room and nap. When sleeping, children would quietly walk by and smile when they saw her. Puppy was content to be at a place she seemed to really love.

How can we begin to think about the roles of our animals in therapy activities from their perspective? What is our moral responsibility to them? Over the years, we have all had to make decisions for our animals, and perhaps without even realizing, we have applied suggested guidelines that derive from formal ethical approaches. Two such ethical approaches that can be applied to our work as Pet Partners teams are the rights approach and the ethics of care approach.

According to the rights approach, an ethical action is an alternative that protects and respects the rights of all parties involved. The rights approach suggests that our primary duty is to respect the ethical rights of individuals – even if that means discounting the greater good for all. Following this approach, handlers should place greater importance on protecting the individual rights of both the animals and the clients than on contributing to the overall care of clients. For example, if an animal is clearly tired by his/her work, the handler should reduce the number of hours the animal is working, even if it means that fewer clients will benefit from interactions with the animal. We also must consider the basic needs of the animal, including breaks for play, snacks, and water, as well as time to relieve him/herself.

The ethics of care approach, on the other hand, while still respecting the rights of all parties involved, places more of an emphasis on the relationships and bonds that we have with each other. Our decision making is guided by a motivation to care for dependent and vulnerable beings. Following this approach, handlers should focus on building a strong relationship with their companion animal and making decisions that will foster a sense of trust from the animal. Although most of us already demonstrate care for our companion animals in so many ways, we nonetheless should focus our minds on building a trusting relationship with our animals by only introducing them to environments that make them feel comfortable and at ease, and by going to great efforts to ensure that all parties involved are treating them with care.

These two approaches provide a framework for making ethical decisions and taking ethical action with respect to our animals. Our animals rely on us to make decisions that are in their best interest, but it can be difficult to determine which course of action is most ethical in a given situation. To aid in the decision-making process, we can ask ourselves, “Which option respects the rights of my animal?” (rights approach) and, “Which option promotes the wellbeing of my animal?” (care approach). We can also look at the situation through a different lens, by considering the issue from our companion’s perspective (role reversal test), or by considering the consequences if all handlers took this course of action in similar situations.

Many of us become Pet Partners teams because we enjoy working alongside our animals while providing a valuable experience for others. James Cromwell prompts us to reflect, “Pets are humanizing. They remind us we have an obligation and responsibility to preserve and nurture and care for all life.” As the field of animal-assisted interventions becomes more refined, we need to heed this message and safeguard the welfare of all parties, including our therapy animals. By listening to our animals’ “silent bark” and being attuned to their needs and desires, we can fulfill our moral duty to protect and care for them, and in turn, work more harmoniously as a team.
Northeast

Ellen Lockwood & Rico
Merrick, NY

Since birth, Victoria Raabe has endured 56 surgeries with her mother by her side. Visits from therapy dog Rico during these difficult recoveries have helped provide a sense of comfort and happiness. After surgery, Victoria’s mother was amazed to see her daughter sit upright for one of Rico’s visits. Rico knew to remain still for Victoria to hug and cuddle him while he also insisted on giving her his paw to shake. Rico always knew when someone is sick, and will seek them out to lie down nearby and offer a paw, or gently rest his head on them. “We had an oncology doctor stop us to thank us for the work we do. He said he has seen his patients improve greatly from visits with Rico and it has nothing to do with medication, but what the dog has done to aid in the patient’s state of mind – thus helping the patient recover. He wanted to make sure we understood his gratitude for helping him help his patients.”

Vicky Hughes & Sydney Alice
Mahwah, NJ

Most of the patients at the assisted-living facility where handler Vicky Hughes visits have some form of either Alzheimer’s or Dementia. Despite their daily struggles, the patients are all smiles when they see Sydney Alice walk into the room. Many ask Vicky if the African Gray is real, and they always comment on her bright red tail. Some say that interacting with her brings back memories of birds they have known in the past; they will share stories and even repeat things their birds used to say. They also enjoy holding Sydney Alice and taking pictures with her. “It’s an amazing feeling, knowing that Sydney Alice brightens their afternoon and brings back happy memories for them whenever she visits,” Vicky Hughes said.

Mary Gilbert & Lucy
Syracuse, NY

At Saint Joseph’s Hospital in Syracuse, New York, Mary and Lucy visited with a young man from Africa who spoke no English. Lucy was able to communicate with him perfectly. Hospital staff said it was the first time they had seen the man smile, or had heard him say anything since he was admitted. On a different visit, another patient was overjoyed to receive a visit from Lucy, as she’d had many dogs in the past and had been very active at trial events with a local obedience/training center. She particularly enjoyed connecting with another dog lover and sharing stories of the dogs she had owned. Spending time with Lucy in the hospital lifted her spirits and reminded her of all the wonderful memories she had with her own dogs.
Midwest
Cynthia Donnard & Brady
Newark, OH

One woman Brady singled out broke down in tears, clinging to him as she sobbed. Brady’s unconditional love helped the woman feel safe enough to open up about her painful past of childhood abuse. Handler Cynthia always explains to those who have been through similar trauma that Brady, also, has overcome challenges. As a puppy, Brady survived abuse and a gunshot wound just a quarter inch from his heart. Several years later Brady fought and survived cancer. Now that Brady is healthy, the fact that he can use his past to help others who have experienced abuse overcome challenges is priceless. Because of the healing and kindness they have received at Shepherd Hill Alcohol and Drug Treatment Center, many patients have said they want to “pay it forward” and help others overcome the past as well. Patients also have expressed interest in volunteering with a therapy animal of their own someday.

Sandy White & Cody
Topeka, KS

As an elementary school in Topeka, Kansas was weathering a tragedy and mourning the loss of a Second-grade girl, a team of psychologists and social workers stepped in to help the young students through the trauma. The school principal did not hesitate to call on their most trusted therapy dog, Cody. Cody and Sandy made their rounds through the school and brought comfort to children and staff alike. The team was first directed to the classroom where the little girl had been just the day before; comforting her friends, classmates and teachers. As the children drew pictures of their “topsy-turvy emotions,” one girl held her drawing of a heart by Cody’s nose. Cody gently nosed the picture, and the little girl tearfully whispered the promise she had written for her friend: “she’ll always be in my heart.”

Southeast
Fidele Fuller & Cedar
Northport, AL

Fidele Fuller knew without a doubt that Cedar had made a positive difference in the patient’s day. On a regular visit to a nursing home in Alabama, handler Fidele noticed a man sitting alone in a wheelchair. When she asked if he wanted to pet Cedar, the man didn’t respond. Just before she continued on, the man slowly reached out and buried his face in Cedar’s soft fur. Cedar nestled closer, seeming to recognize the man’s need. “I’ve had countless good experiences as a Pet Partners team, but this one will forever stand out to define the impact therapy animals can make,” Fidele said.
Logan, recently diagnosed with autism, was especially sensitive to touch and sound. During one of Bella’s visits, Logan became intrigued with the dog’s “magic purse” of treats. Despite Bella’s natural drool, Logan wanted to feed her. He nervously pulled out a treat and held out his hand, offering it to her. According to Logan’s occupational therapist, Tiffany Kuyper, that interaction marked the beginning of a very positive change in Logan’s treatment and his life. “I was excited to see how Logan worked through his own nervousness to allow Bella to lick his hand,” she said. She added that staff also saw improvements in his ability to interact with other children. Logan now initiated conversations by asking other children if they would like to feed Bella. The staff would not have been able to achieve these milestones as quickly with conventional therapy in isolation.

Patricia Bisant & Jake
Brighton, CO

Jake and his handler stood in front of two tiny white caskets. The caskets are referred to as “angel beds” and contain remains of babies – all stillborn or miscarried – that have been collected from the morgues of nearby hospitals. As many of these parents are not able to afford a traditional funeral, the babies are buried on a donated site at the cemetery, and family members are invited to attend the services. Patricia’s role with Jake is to offer support and encouragement to the grieving parents and family members during the burial. Having Jake comfort them gives these families an opportunity to express their emotions without judgment. Grieving family members often wrap their arms around Jake, who lovingly accepts their affection and brings them a sense of happiness despite the great pain of their loss. The presence of a therapy dog providing unconditional love at these funerals boosts families’ spirits, makes them smile, and gives them a brief respite from their sorrow.

Southwest

Beth Schutte & Freddie
Scottsdale, AZ

Freddie the mini pig has made quite an impact on lives throughout Arizona and Colorado.

In Ms. Daley’s special needs classroom in Phoenix – where Freddie has been visiting for about year – the teacher always prepares for Freddie’s visits by writing a short story about him for the students to practice. Before Freddie started coming to class, a few of the students had never before found the courage or ability to read aloud. But on Freddie’s very first visit, he immediately made every student feel relaxed and comfortable. The students knew Freddie would not judge them or laugh if they mispronounced or stumbled over their words; he made them feel confident in themselves, put smiles on their faces and made their teachers and parents extremely proud. Ms. Daley and the school principal have seen positive development with the students, and – with Freddie’s help – have even seen some students read to the class for the very first time.

Ginny Flanders & Emma
San Antonio, TX

“Could you please bring Emma to our room so our baby can see a real dog? She’s never met a dog before!” The young couple’s private room had been their “home away from home” for the past year. When Ginny and Emma came in, the baby was taken off her support systems and placed on their bed. Wide-eyed, the little girl gently touched Emma’s fur. The ultimate thrill for Ginny was seeing the young parents’ faces as they watched their baby interact with a dog for the first time. With a lump in her throat, Ginny briefly locked eyes with the nurse; tears streaming down both of their faces. They knew this young couple had been...
aching to see their daughter have a “normal” experience, and Emma had given that to them. The parents were grateful for the precious moments they had just shared. Ginny and Emma left the room knowing they had been part of something very special.

West

Pat Bukieda & Monty
Portland, OR

Nancy, a patient Pat Bukieda and Monty were visiting, was suffering from the final stages of ALS and was nearly unable to communicate verbally or with her hands. Nancy absolutely adored Monty and would often cry when the team was going to leave, so they would stay until she had calmed down. The patient’s family took many photos of Nancy and Monty together and posted them where she could easily see them. One day, Nancy’s caregiver gave Pat a letter Nancy had written to Monty. Pat was told it had taken the better part of a day and a lot of effort for her to put her thoughts down on paper. The note read: “Monty you are always welcome here at our racing dog farm! Monty you’re always, always welcome!”

Barbara Webb & Willey Boy
Judy Lloyd Davis & Cheswick
Bellingham, WA

On a visit to hospice, a large group of family members had gathered in a dimly lit room. As soon as Cheswick (right) walked in, the mood seemed to lighten; people smiled, their eyes lit up, and they became more animated. Cheswick kept his sights fixed on the patient’s youngest daughter. Sitting in a corner by herself, she appeared distraught. Cheswick made his way to her, and she dropped to the floor – wrapping her arms around him and burying her face in his thick coat. She quietly wept as he laid his head over her shoulder. Cheswick noticed the mother awaken and gently pulled away from the daughter to rest his head on the mother’s bed. He slid his nose under her hand and as she opened her eyes, a smile spread over her face and she began to pet him. Soon, laughter and stories were flooding the room.

At a stress relief visit to Western Washington University, a neatly dressed, solemn young man named John arrived just as the team began their visit. He laid in the middle of both dogs, speaking quietly to them. It was obvious John was troubled about something. Despite the crowds of students, John never left this spot. Eventually, he wrapped his arms around Willey (left). Students came and went, but John remained still. As they were preparing to leave, John’s story began to unfold. He was a veteran and had recently returned to the states; this was his first semester back at school. He was excited, but also worried that he may be recalled to service. War had changed John, and it was obvious by his lingering hugs to each dog – especially Willey – and his heartfelt thank you, that he needed that visit for a very different kind of stress.

Both teams have sat with individuals who casually engage in friendly conversations about the dogs as they pet and hug them, only to be informed by staff members later on that these same people have rarely – if ever – spoken to anyone since their arrival at a care facility.

Harriet Ashley & Rocket
Pacifica, California

For a time, teams were not permitted in patients’ rooms at the Bay Area nursing home. When they were allowed to resume their visits, Harriet and Rocket wanted to check in with their old friend Harry, who had been bedridden since Harriet started visiting eight years earlier. When the first team to visit Harry came out of his room, the handler shook her head and said Harry hadn’t responded to them at all. When Harriet and Rocket first entered the room, Harry still didn’t react. Harriet began speaking to Harry and reminded him of the times she and her former Pet Partner dog Bandit used to visit. Harry’s eyes opened. Every time Bandit’s name was mentioned, Harry responded. He extended his arm and grasped Harriet’s hand; softly saying “thank you.” With animal-assisted therapy, Harry continues to be more aware, more animated, and more talkative. He is even smiling and petting the dogs for longer periods of time.
Here are four easy steps to guide you in getting started:

1. Make Sure It’s a Good Fit
   Go to www.petpartners.org and thoroughly review the program requirements and policies and procedures to see if this is a good fit for you and your animal. If you’re ready to proceed, you’ll want to confirm there is a team evaluator in your area, because all teams must complete an in-person evaluation in order to register. You can perform a location-based search on the Pet Partners website. Once you’re confident Pet Partners is in your area, we invite you to set up a free account which will help you manage your registration process.

2. Complete the Handler Course
   The key to safe and effective visits is training for the “human end of the leash.” The handler course can be taken online or as an in-person workshop if there is an instructor in your area. You’ll spend time learning about ways you can support your animal while on visits, as well as orient yourself to the standards of the Therapy Animal Program and best practices. This will include preparing you for what to expect when you are evaluated.

3. Visit the Vet
   All animals who participate in the Therapy Animal Program must be healthy, so you’ll ask your veterinarian to complete an Animal Health Screening Form to submit with your application.

4. Pass Your Team Evaluation
   Evaluations take approximately 45 minutes and are a role-play of a visit. The Team Evaluation process evaluates the animal/handler team; how well the handler interprets and manages the animal’s behavior and how well the animal responds to the handler. This process enables Pet Partners to identify teams that will be safe and successful in the community.

HONORING OUR THERAPY ANIMALS

We are proud to have nearly 11,000 Pet Partners teams in all 50 states. As new teams join us from around the country, we must also say goodbye to those dedicated therapy animals that retire from service or pass away after a life spent enriching others. We honor them on our website at https://petpartners.org/volunteer/honoring-our-therapy-animals/ and thank them for making the world a better place.
Hal and Sadie: Making a Difference in Flagstaff, Arizona

When Sadie walks in the room, all heads turn. After all, this regal white Standard Poodle commands attention. Yet while the attention appears to be focused on her, in reality, Sadie’s focus is on the people she visits at Flagstaff Medical Center. The love and gentleness Sadie shares with those she visits is what makes her so unique.

Sadie, along with her owner, Hal Stern, lives in Flagstaff, Arizona. Hal, who has been a successful real estate broker for over 20 years, agrees that Sadie is something special. “I have never had a dog with the intelligence of Sadie,” he said. “Regardless of the situation, she is as cool as a cucumber.”

Hal recognizes that the visits he and Sadie make are with people from all walks of life. Once a patient gets acquainted with Sadie and Hal, they realize they can engage in a conversation and not be judged. Hal says, “the patients recognize that Sadie and I care and that we can assist in grief, pain and sorrow in difficult times.”

Hal and Sadie have been volunteering for Pet Partners for three years. Not only does Hal generously share his time (and Sadie’s time as well) but he also provides financial resources for Pet Partners. He contributes regularly to Pet Partners and has now taken the step to include Pet Partners in his estate plan, through his trust. Hal has designated that Pet Partners will receive a specific bequest, which will help the organization underwrite the cost for volunteers to register and undergo training through Pet Partners.

By taking this step, Hal is ensuring that others will have the same joy and contentment of visiting patients that he and Sadie have by being a Pet Partners volunteer. “If I can bring something positive in such a difficult time for people I visit, it is rewarding,” he said.

When Sadie is not busy bringing hope and happiness to those she meets at the medical center, she loves to run in the forest near her home, chasing squirrels. She also accompanies Hal on both social and work appointments. She attends the local service club with Hal, and if the topic is of interest, she listens attentively. If not, a nap is in order for this hard-working dog.

Pet Partners is appreciative of what Hal and Sadie are doing to help people in need who benefit from interactions with therapy animals. They not only are dedicated volunteers, but individuals like Hal also share their support through current and future donations. Through his commitment of a gift through his estate, Hal joins others in the Caring Community by making arrangements to leave a legacy to Pet Partners.

For information on how to include Pet Partners in your estate plan and join the Caring Community, please contact legacy@petpartners.org or call Pet Partners, 425•679•5502.

Leaving A Legacy

Contact us at legacy@petpartners.org or 425•679•5502 for official language needed to leave a gift to Pet Partners in your will, trust, through a retirement account or a paid-up life insurance policy.
Animal-Assisted Interventions

Mood Enhancer.