Pet Partners’ Team, Brad Cole and Spartacus, Picking Up The Pieces in Newtown, Connecticut

Stories of lives improved by positive human & animal interactions.

WINTER 2014

INTERACTIONS MAGAZINE

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Partner Teams
Making a Difference
Pet Partners
Product Picks
Interview with:
Veterinarian
Marty Becker
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I have been part of Pet Partners’ mission for many years. I am proud of our work across the country and excited by some of the innovations taking place. For those of you who may be getting acquainted with Pet Partners, we are a nonprofit formed in the late 70’s by two veterinarians and a psychiatrist who believed deeply in the power of animals to positively impact the physical, emotional and psychological lives of human beings in tangible and measurable ways. Beyond what we already know about the physiological impact of animals is a new awareness of how we must continue to grow in our ability to impact wellness.

Pet Partners recently launched a major initiative to address the issues of crisis response, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and other challenges faced by returning veterans. We are committed to building a portfolio of training for our teams that will put us at the national forefront of human-animal interaction. With 11,000 teams providing over one million visits from coast to coast, we will continue to lead in raising awareness, developing curricula and establishing standards that will continue to be the highest in the industry.

Pet Partners is moving toward reducing fees for our therapy animal teams. This will make it more affordable for our existing teams and attract new teams that may not otherwise be able to afford the expenses necessary to begin this important work. We know how life-changing animal interactions are for people who need comfort and support. We will all feel better knowing there are more therapy animal teams across the country making a difference with Pet Partners’ financial and practical support. By the way, Pet Partners is beginning an 18-month complete revamping of our outdated information systems. We will redesign our public website and the web portal for volunteers and facilities nationwide.

I support the work of Pet Partners and hope you can too, at whatever level you can afford. We will need all the help and support we can get from donors, volunteers, facilities, instructors, evaluators and community partners to make this ambitious new direction a reality. I hope you can help Pet Partners.

Betty White
Honorary Board Member
The church in Newtown, Connecticut was eerily quiet when Brad Cole and his three-year-old Akita Spartacus arrived, only hours after one of the deadliest mass shootings in American history. Twenty young students and six adults had been killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School that morning, and within minutes, the sleepy town steeped in more than 300 years of history was in shock.

In the church, dazed families began gathering long before evening services, searching for any semblance of comfort. Cole and Spartacus moved among them without making a sound. Sometimes Spartacus would stand quietly nearby; sometimes he would sit for as long as someone felt the need to stroke his fur.

Spartacus is registered therapy animal and was among 70 Therapy Animal Teams – including about 15 from Pet Partners – who spent all or part of the 2012-13 school year in Newtown. Teams from the Yale-New Haven Hospital therapy dog program – which is staffed by Pet Partners volunteers – also responded immediately. In the first three days, Cole estimates that all of the teams helped about 300 families cope with the tragedy.

The Pet Partners team of Dr. Robert Aldrich and his Labrador Max first arrived at the middle school four days after the shootings, greeting children between classes – sometimes 10 or 15 kids at a time, with many coming back more than once. The New Haven veterinarian said many teachers and aides turned to Max for a stress break as well, and the team also stopped by to visit first responders at the local police station.

“The station was subdued,” Aldrich said. “I hope we helped some. These people had seen things no one should have to deal with.”

Between December 14 and Christmas Day, the dog teams were everywhere – school libraries, classrooms and cafeterias, churches and community centers. Some worked in community crisis centers with counselors – whether in sessions with the kids or in waiting rooms with other family members. Almost immediately, the counselors with dogs had waiting lines.

Inge van Ark and her Golden Retriever Tess spent several days initially at the Sandy Hook memorial sites, reaching out to adults and children of all ages before heading to Reed School, where many of the counselors were working with the kids.

“It doesn’t matter how old people are,” van Ark said, “having a dog to stroke while you are talking to each other, grieving, crying...it somehow makes things easier.”

Working with Pet Partners and also the Yale-New Haven program, van Ark said having certified therapy dogs is key in crisis situations, as the trained animals know how to “remove their own needs” from the task at hand.

“They focus on the human,” she said, “not on the fact that they (may) want to play fetch or demand belly rubs;
they quietly allow the person to do what they want, be that stroking fur, hugging, or lying on the floor with them, for as long as the person wants.”

For the kids, collecting each dog’s “business card” and keeping track of those they developed special relationships with provided distraction, comfort, and a sense of continuity. Children would seek out certain dogs as if they were old friends – wrapping their arms around them, burying their faces in fur, sometimes smiling and giggling for the first time in days.

Studies show that being around dogs can have a calming effect; that physiological changes occur when people touch dogs. Racing hearts are slowed, blood pressure goes down, stress levels drop. For the young children in Newtown, the therapy dogs brought to life the comfort of a favorite teddy bear. Cole says that for much of the time, Spartacus served as “a big tissue” for grieving children and adults alike.

Parents and counselors knew they needed to find a way to help the young children talk through their feelings and process the traumatic experience, but for some kids, the pressure to talk added additional stress. Cole and Spartacus zeroed in on those kids. Sometimes, Cole would ask if they wanted to see puppy pictures of his dog, as he pulled out an album dating back to Spartacus at three weeks. Or he would say to a child, “I think Spartacus needs a hug.” With kids who were talking but reluctant to address the tragedy, he would ask, “What do you think Spartacus needs to know about what happened?” When Cole succeeded in getting a child to confide in Spartacus, a counselor would quickly join them.

In time, the grief-stricken Newtown parents and counselors alike came to realize the dogs were the single most effective mental health resource in the entire community. The dogs permeated Newtown; even connecting with older teens and a handful of dads who would stand quietly in the background until they were coaxed into hugging one of the dogs. Soon, even the most reserved adults were wiping away tears. Fire fighters and law-enforcement officers tasked with working long hours in a gruesome setting also found comfort with the dogs. One parent said, “You guys are the only thing that’s constant.” For a community in crisis, continuity was critical.

Many of the dog teams also began reaching out into the community; attending sporting events and other public gatherings, hopeful the dogs could help create positive memories for the kids that would extend beyond the initial terror.

By the end of the school year, one local official estimated there had been a quarter of a million interactions between people and therapy dogs.

Yet the legacy of the Newtown experience may be even more significant than the healing that took place over the school year, both in recognition and in reach. Many – including the head of the crisis center – who had never considered using dog therapy teams became hooked on the idea. And the teams’ success in Newtown also led to a new law in Connecticut aimed at broadening animal therapy programs. Believed to be the first such law in the country, the measure formalizes a state-sponsored system for training social workers and dogs in animal-assisted therapy. The program also sets up criteria for quickly identifying qualified volunteers during or after a crisis. Registered teams – operating on a volunteer basis – must be available to respond within 24 hours of a crisis.

The Connecticut law marks a departure from regional disaster teams that typically respond to FEMA events and can take 48-72 hours to get set up, elevating the dog teams’ status to first responders.

There is even talk of extending dog therapy programs into high schools that deal with youth who are having difficulties, as a way of helping kids get back on track before acting out. Such programs may even help derail another Adam Lanza, the troubled student who took his own life after killing 26 others at Sandy Hook.

For Cole, the reality of what the dog teams were able to provide hit home on the last day of the school year, when he and Spartacus stood on a street corner as school buses drove past. Students cheerfully called out to Spartacus, saying goodbye and thanking him for being there. Although forever changed in some way, they were not the same children Cole had first come to know during the darkest hours of the Sandy Hook nightmare. Heading home for summer break, these children were well on their way to healing – thanks in part to the animal therapy teams who had provided comfort in the midst of crisis.
AROUND THE COUNTRY
PET PARTNERS TEAMS AT WORK

Northeast

Andrea Balser and Cooper
Petersham, Massachusetts

Cooper, a German Shepherd mix, and his handler Andrea Balser regularly visit with a children’s psychiatric unit on the weekends. Andrea loves working with children, and Cooper is supremely comfortable and has excelled in his interactions with the clients there.

Nearing the completion of one regularly scheduled hour-long visit, a very young boy entered the room. He had an angry look on his face and sat, arms crossed, in the corner, but repeatedly eyed Cooper with interest. Andrea asked if he would like to come meet him.

“Nooooo, ughhhh!” He quickly looked away. Every question he was asked was responded to angrily with one word answers. But his eye kept returning to Cooper.

Andrea offered the boy a dog treat to hang on to in case he might be interested in giving it to Cooper. His chair inched toward the team a bit. For the next 45 minutes, he kept slow inching closer with piquing interest.

He began to ask questions like: “Is he a wolf?” “Does he have big teeth?” “How is he two different kinds of dogs?”

And then, after 45 minutes, this young boy was laying on the floor eye-to-eye with Cooper, rubbing his head, scratching his ears, and playing with his paws - all the while conversing with Andrea as Cooper stared happily into his eyes - and offered a few licks which were received with laughter.

At about 3:00 p.m. the boy was called to his next group and one of the nurses came over to thank Andrea. She said that this particular boy had had a really tough couple of days and that today was especially rough for him and that most of his morning was spent in tears. She said that what Cooper did for him was huge and that she was appreciative of the team staying an extra hour.

According to Andrea, “Staying the extra time was of no concern because honestly, that extra hour, and the brightening of that young boy’s day is why we do it. That short hour was completely worth it.”

George Moore and Sammy
Trumble, Connecticut

George Moore and Sammy, a female Moluccan Cockatoo, have been visiting local nursing homes for over seven years. Sammy is a large pink bird with dark soulful eyes and a black beak. She is gentle and loves attention from humans. She speaks in her own bird language with a handful of English words, but her real talent is her beauty and calm temperament.

George and Sammy began visiting Alzheimer patients as a memory test to see if the patients would remember such an unusual visitor. Many of the patients do remember Sammy and even ask the aides when she will be coming by again. She is also helpful in working on the patient’s motor skills as it requires a light touch when petting a bird. Often times, patients recall pleasant memories from their past trips to Florida, Hawaii, Costa Rica, etc.

George reports, “Some people are frightened when they see such a large bird, so I ask them if they’d like to pet her. I give them instructions on how to pet a bird and soon their trepidation turns to joy and wonder. One patient said, ‘I have been afraid of birds all my life but I really love that bird!’ It brings me joy to see their eyes light up and the smiles on their faces when we walk into their rooms. People are amazed at Sammy’s ability to peel a grape and only eat the fruit inside, or pull ice cubes out of my ice water and put them in my pocket for ‘safe-keeping.’ They enjoy the softness of her feathers and the gentle way she picks up sunflower seeds from their hands. Sammy seems to brighten their day and they look forward to our visits.”

“Sammy visits her friends twice a week at three different nursing homes. It lights up my life when she can brings a smile to a lonely resident. These birds can live up to 100 years so we have many visits ahead of us, God willing.”
Kathy Kline and Dylan
Middletown, Maryland

Pictured at right is Dylan, Kathy Kline’s registered therapy Dachshund, right before making one of their bi-weekly visits to Frederick Memorial Hospital. During one special visit with an older gentleman, the man could not stop smiling as he told his story about his last dog and the cats he had at home. He continued to tell Kathy the names of his cats and the dog that had since past away. He described each dog he had over the years making sure to include each of their names.

As Kathy prepared to leave, the man thanked the team very much for their visit. The evening charge nurse had apparently been waiting just outside the patient’s doorway and stopped them as they stepped into the hallway.

“I was pleasantly surprised,” said Kathy, “when the nurse explained excitedly that the patient we had just left had come into the hospital not speaking and his chart had been marked ‘non-verbal.’ I found out this patient had not spoken one word the whole time he had been in the hospital (about a week) until our visit. Wow, what an incredible feeling! Thinking back on the visit, I truly think Dylan sensed that this was a special patient. From the minute I picked him up and placed him on a blanket beside this gentleman, Dylan paid extra attention to him and gave him extra snuggles, never losing interest. This is just one out of many special life-changing moments that I have been part of while making pet therapy visits. I hope to encounter many more in the future.”

Marsha Craig and Lily
Raynham, Massachusetts

Kyle Weinstein is a Pet Partner therapy team with her seven year old Goldendoodle, Albert. Kyle and Albert have been visiting Boston’s Tufts Medical Center (TMC) for 5 years. Kyle contacted Marsha Craig inquiring if she and her teammate Lily would be interested in meeting her, TMC Volunteer Director Daniel Bird and the Clinical Director of Inpatient Psychiatry MaryBeth Zambella to discuss the possibility of visiting their Adult Psych Unit on a trial basis. Lily is a miniature horse. If the trial visit was successful TMC would like Lily to visit on a regular basis. That trial visit, six months ago, grew into a monthly visit that now includes the same units that Kyle and Albert visit: Adult Psychiatry, Pediatrics, Cardiomyopathy, Cardiology and Oncology.

Marsha was surprised when Kyle called to thank her. “Thank us?” wondered Marsha. “I couldn’t imagine why she, a fellow Pet Partner team, was thanking us! Kyle stated in the 5 years she and Albert have been visiting Tufts she’d been met with some not-so-positive reactions. However, since Lily and I have been visiting, she’s noticed a change in hospital atmosphere and was now being greeted with smiles, nods and hellos as she and Albert walk the corridors and units.”

Word got to Kyle that patients frequently stop doctors to thank them for allowing Albert and Lily into the units. The patients speak so positively to the medical staff about the visiting animal program, it is changing for the better the perception of animals in the hospital.

Midwest

Laura Kuchta and Oliver
Baraboo, Wisconsin

Over the past few years, Dogs on Call, Inc. has worked with the University of Wisconsin – Madison to provide stress relief to college students preparing for exams. Aleah Kuchta, a registered Pet Partners handler herself, states, “As an undergraduate Badger student, I can vouch for the value of having pets visit when feeling overwhelmed by multiple assignments, papers, quizzes, and exams all at once.”

There have been many positive remarks from fellow classmates and friends, but one question kept coming up: “We love the dogs, but are there any cats that you could bring in?”

On April 20, that request was granted when Cole Hall opened its doors to DOC’s therapy cat team, Oliver the Siamese and Aleah’s mother, Laura. Oliver was a hit. He loved the students as much as they loved him, and it was great to be able to reach out to those cat-loving students in the dorm. The students are looking forward to more visits with Oliver in the future.

Ann Nelson and Ziggy
Bloomington, Minnesota

Pet Partners also registers appropriate Guinea Pigs as therapy animals. Ann Nelson’s guinea pig Ziggy has been an amazing Pet Partners teammate, according to Ann. He is a beige piggy, which means he has pink eyes. The children are amazed by his pink eyes. One child commented that he couldn’t wait to tell his friends at school that he got to read to a guinea pig with pink eyes!
Ann reports, “The power of a piggy was best demonstrated to me when I met a fifth grade girl whose reading skills were closer to that of a second grader. She approached us very tentatively. She wanted to see Ziggy but didn’t want to read. I told her that Ziggy just loves to hear kids read and would like to hear her read to him. ‘Well,’ she said, lowering her head and looking away, ‘I don’t read.’”

Ann suggested that they take turns reading pages and the girl agreed. She picked out a story that was about a second grade reading level and it became clear to Ann immediately why she didn’t want to read. She struggled through the page. When it was her turn to read again she took a deep breath and sighed but began to read. As it turned out Ann only read one more page after that. On the girl’s next turn she continued to read after finishing the page. As she read she was checking to see that Ziggy was “listening.” She made a very real connection with Ziggy and came out of her shell. Said Ann, “As she kept reading I could hear the change in her voice as she became more confident and as a result began to make fewer and fewer mistakes. When the 15 minutes were up she didn’t want to go.” Now that’s piggie power.

Annie Bell-Maron and Sandy
Elkhart, Indiana

A local dog is doing her part to support the fight against cancer in Michiana.

Sandy, a three-year-old Golden Retriever, helps spread cheer to patients while they are receiving chemotherapy treatments. She and her owners, Annie Bell-Maron and her daughter Romey Lee, are registered Pet Partners teams, visiting hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, schools and other similar settings. The team spends time in the chemotherapy room at Michiana Hematology Oncology’s Advanced Center for Cancer Care in Mishawaka.

“It’s not rare for a chemotherapy session to last several hours,” said Kim Woofter, Chief Operating Officer of Michiana Hematology Oncology. “A visit from Annie, Romey and Sandy helps make this time a little easier for many of our patients. We’re grateful to them for taking time out of their day to brighten the spirits of those battling cancer. They’re always welcome at Michiana Hematology Oncology.”

During visits, Annie and Romey spend time with any patient who wants to meet Sandy. “Not everyone is an animal lover, and part of being a therapy animal team is to be respectful of people who prefer to be alone,” Annie said. “We can usually tell right away who wants a visit because they’re pointing and smiling once they see Sandy walk in.”

Just Pet-Um, a Pet Partners affiliate, provided access to the handler’s course and evaluation for their first mother-daughter team to become a registered animal therapy team.

“We make a good team,” Annie said. “As a family, we enjoy spreading cheer to those who are going through a rough time. We’re looking forward to our next visit at Michiana Hematology Oncology.”

Carol Parmenter and her miniature horses
El Dorado Springs, Missouri

Carol Parmenter’s first Pet Partners therapy horse is Cookie, a 14-year-old grade miniature Shetland who is now starting her ninth year of visiting throughout southwest Missouri. Cookie was purchased at a local farm auction because of her good nature, calm attitude and curiosity. Throughout the last nine years, she has visited regularly at several local nursing homes, schools, pre-schools and a local small college. She has visited veterans in Columbia Missouri, promoted miniatures at area festivals and regularly serves as an ambassador for animal assisted therapy work.

The minis have been featured on television and in statewide print. Carol and Cookie, Molly and Tuffy (Carol’s other two registered Pet Partners) have made presentations at the University of Missouri in Dr. Rebecca Johnson’s psychology class on the human-animal bond for the past three years. Cookie and Tuffy were part of a presentation at the Human Animal Interaction Conference in Kansas City in 2009 with Carol again speaking about the use of horses in AAA-AAT.

Molly is the newest mini to join Cookie in making visits. This 33 inch, red and white mini is especially enjoyed by the seniors. At the local healthcare facility one of the minis comes every month from April through September. When they arrive, over 40 wheelchairs are lined up to see their little visitors.

In October, the vans and wheelchairs arrive at the farm and 10-12 seniors visit the horses. Many have wonderful stories to share about their earlier days growing up with horses.

The school children love to read to the minis and teachers are often amazed by how relaxed and eager the children are to read aloud to the horses. A patient, relaxing ear makes difficult reading a bit easier.

Cookie, Tuffy and Molly live at Butterfly Hills Farm along with 17 other miniature horses. Carol opens her farm to individuals, 4-H clubs and pre-schools to come and visit to learn more about minis and how they can enrich our lives. In 2012, Cookie, Molly and Tuffy made over 1400 visits to help promote the human animal bond.
Nicholas Meier and Katie
DeTour Village, Michigan

Late in September, a new student transferred from one local elementary school to another. When he showed up, the teacher assumed that the secretary had made a mistake and that the new student was a kindergartener. He had a very small stature and quiet nature. Because the class’ rapport had already been established, the teacher and her intern took extra time to try and get to know “Charlie” (not his real name) a little better. He remained quiet and very reserved.

By that time, Katie, a Golden Retriever, and her handler Nick Meier had become quite the attraction each week when they joined the class for our reading hour. Tuesdays became known to the 18 children in the class as “dog day” and the energy in the room was electric as they all vied to get the chance to read to Katie for a few minutes.

Charlie demonstrated a very apparent fear of dogs. The teacher tried to give Charlie the chance to read with the dog, but each week he declined. In fact, he would actually go out of his way to avoid the dog and stay as far from her as he could.

Ever so slowly and gradually over the course of several visits, Charlie moved closer to Katie and one day began to read to her. His teacher reports, “In the weeks since, I’ve seen the excitement on Charlie’s face, a face that had once been so blank and full of fear, never engaging either my intern or me in conversation and we had yet to learn much about him. Since the day he chose to read to Katie, Charlie has been lively, talkative and has a constant smile on his face. He’s gone out of his way to engage me in conversation and tell me a bit about himself.

Zeke had a very special bond with Joshua. Joshua would tell Zeke jokes, make animal sounds at him, and once he even shared his ice cream with Zeke. As Joshua’s body was failing, he never ceased to smile and want to be near Zeke. Even when he could no longer pet Zeke, he would ask for his bed to be lowered so his hand could be placed on Zeke’s head… and Zeke would simply stand, lick his hand, and be near him.

Kristy told Pet Partners, “Zeke and I faithfully visited Joshua until he passed away on March 30, 2012 at the age of 18. I’m submitting this story in memory of Joshua Dubcak.”

Southeast
Kristy Schneider and Zeke
Alexander, Arkansas

While Zeke (a Blue Lacy dog) and his handler Kristy Schneider were working in Texas at the Scott and White Children’s Hospital, they met a very special young man named Joshua. Joshua absolutely loved Zeke and looked forward to his time with the dog. Joshua was filled with smiles each time they visited…except for one day. Joshua was undergoing very painful physical therapy. He was crying and having a very difficult time. At first, Kristy and Zeke started to walk past with the intent of seeing him later. But Zeke knew Joshua’s room and sensed the need. Zeke then went up to Joshua, who was being held upright on the side of the bed by the staff who were working on his range of motion. Zeke initially started to lick Joshua’s hand to let him know he was there. Joshua’s crying began to lessen as he talked to Zeke. Kristy then worked with the therapists to utilize Zeke in his range of motion. They positioned Zeke just out of reach and Joshua would have to reach to pet him…and he did…time and time again. By the end, Joshua was smiling and barking at Zeke as he did each time they were together. The therapist was in tears, saying this was the best physical therapy session he had ever had. Zeke was happy to have spent time with his favorite patient – turning his sadness into gladness.

Lalene Tilson and Scamper
North Port, Florida

Lalene Tilson’s Pet Partners therapy dog is a 10 pound, 3 ½ year old male Pomeranian named Scamper. They have been members of Gulf Coast Pet Partners in Florida, an affiliate of Pet Partners, for a little over a year. They visit North Port Pines, a Retirement Community for Independent and Assisted Living, in their neighborhood. None of the residents remember Lalene’s name, but they all remember Scamper’s. He’s quite the goodwill ambassador!

His greatest accomplishment so far still causes Lalene to tear up when she thinks about it. During one visit Scamper and Lalene were visiting a woman named Barbara. Barbara is usually very quiet, but she seemed to enjoy Scamper’s attention. As she cupped Scamper’s face in her hands and stared intently into his little brown eyes she clearly said “I LOVE YOU!” Since that day she talks to Scamper on every visit. On some days she can’t remember her own name, but she always remembers his.

Scamper enjoys these trips to North Port Pines; he has his favorites, Barbara at the top of the list, and turns frowns into smiles on every visit.

“We go to other facilities and attend many other pet activities in our area,” says Lalene. “It never ceases to amaze me how much joy one little dog can bring to all the people we visit. However, I don’t think anything that can top Barbara’s ‘I LOVE YOU!’”
Sue Grundfest was asked by the Children’s Therapy Center in Las Vegas to bring a therapy dog to meet a young boy who was deathly afraid of dogs. Julian is on the autism spectrum and minimally social or verbal. His fear had escalated when neighbors moved in with three dogs. His fear went from anxiety to screaming and panic attacks whenever he saw a dog or thought about a dog. Trips to the park or even playing in his own yard were becoming impossible.

Sue’s first goal was to have Julian tolerate a small dog in the room. Her toy poodle Kirby, who sits in a stroller due to many hip and knee surgeries and failing eye sight, was the first dog introduced to Julian. Within a few minutes Kirby was taken out of his stroller and Julian looked toward him, acknowledging a dog in the room.

Sue showed his therapist and the child’s mother how to safely greet a dog and how to present your hand palm down for the dog to sniff and Julian watched closely. Then she had Kirby lay down on his blanket near Julian as he played games with his therapist. Julian looked at pictures of Kirby and listened to his story. He said Kirby’s name and repeated some conversation about and to the little dog. He was still reluctant to get too close to the dog but Sue encouraged Kirby to lay closer and closer to him.

Sue reports, “And then the moment occurred. Without fanfare or any anticipation, Julian reached out and touched Kirby - just one little boy reaching out one little hand to pet one little dog.”

Over the next four months they continued to meet with Julian once weekly at the Therapy Center and invited him to join the weekly Reading with the Love Dogs. This additional hour gave Julian the opportunity to relate to other children as well as several dogs in a room at one time.

Julian experiences things differently and in unique ways. Through his work with the Love Dogs he had made tremendous strides in his language, comprehension, speech, attitude and sociability and of course his knowledge and respect for dogs. He makes choices and decisions on his own. If a dog is too close, he will calmly back away. He verbally communicates his needs. He makes direct eye contact with the dogs, and with people.

Julian’s mother told Sue, “Since working with the Love Dogs, we now enjoy outings together as a family and we are all more at ease...especially Julian! And in addition to lessening his fear of dogs, Julian has since become much more verbal, confident and excited about striking up conversations, as he always talks about ‘his’ dogs.”

Mary Kay Hasseman and Trinket
Tomball, Texas

“I see such joy and happiness in my students’ eyes when Trinket visits.” This is what Kara Orsak, Copeland Elementary Life Skills teacher, says about Trinket.

Trinket is a 15-year-old miniature horse with a natural talent for connecting with children with disabilities. She and her handler Mary Kay Hasseman visit Life Skills classes a few times each month in the Cyfair School District near Houston, Texas.

Trinket stands still, often nuzzling a student here and there, while they greet her, pet her, brush her, place ribbons in her mane, and play simple games with her. Her unspoken equine language carries a unique relationship. Children who struggle with human language seem to understand it.

One of Trinket’s favorite students is Clair. Trinket has been visiting her for about three years. Clair is in a wheelchair and has limited mobility with her arms, struggles to lift her head, and had not spoken until this year. Clair has been lifting her head to see Trinket more and more often.

On a recent visit, as she lifted her head and saw Trinket, she said “Uh-huh!” in a sweet voice that would have melted your heart. When Clair experienced a mini seizure, Trinket calmly stepped back. When it was over, she gently nuzzled Clair’s arm.

After a summer’s absence from visiting, Trinket walked purposely straight over to Clair. She gently placed her muzzle on the wheelchair. “It brought a tear to my eye,” says Mariah Nomura, a counselor at Copeland Elementary.

“Students that face behavioral, cognitive, and physical challenges each day can share with Trinket a pure and loving bond with a caring animal,” says Ms. Orsak. “We are privileged to call her a friend and family member of our classroom. Clair has made huge strides with Trinket’s help.”

Ed. note: As this issue went to press, Pet Partners learned that Kirby passed away. We express our heartfelt condolences for Sue’s loss and share the appreciation for Kirby’s years of service with the many people he helped and comforted.
Michele Ellington and Simba
El Paso, Texas

Every Friday morning Simba bounces with excitement. It’s time to go to La Familia! The big Great Dane and her handler Michele Ellington visit the Day Resource Center for people with severe mental illnesses. When they first began to visit, some members were frightened of the 140 pound dog. But others gave him an enthusiastic welcome. As the weeks went by he won over those who were afraid of him with his big, goofy grin and silly dog tricks. Soon even the ones who’d been afraid welcomed him and waited eagerly for their turn to pet him and ask him to “shake”. Like most Great Danes, Simba thinks he’s a lap dog, and everybody laughs when he delicately sits on someone’s lap and waits to be scratched.

One of the members who at first grumbled and frowned now greets Simba with hugs and kisses. One lady who was very frightened compliments him and hazards a quick pat. Another said she loves Simba so much she named her new puppy after him. One lady frequently tells me that she feels safer when Simba is there.

The director says she’s seen a positive change in the members since they have been visiting. She says he really brightens their day and they miss him very much when they can’t visit.

Simba had a life-threatening attack of pancreatitis this January and missed two visits. When they returned, the clients had drawn “Get Well” cards which the staff fastened into a book.

Says Michele, “These folks have a heavy burden to carry, and it’s wonderful to see their bright smiles and hear them cry ‘Simba!’ when we come through the door.”

Robi Heath and Nutmeg
Frisco, Texas

Nutmeg, a New Zealand rabbit, and her handler Robi Heath visit with children who have been victims of domestic violence at Genesis Women’s Shelter in Dallas, Texas. Nutmeg has brought joy and safety to these children that have experienced pain and hurt from the people closest to them in their lives.

Nutmeg teaches these children that they are loveable, that love can be unconditional, that life is valuable and should be respected. Nutmeg has been present with her handler in therapeutic counseling sessions, waiting areas and at the on-site school and has been a key piece of many of the clients’ healing process. Some of the major themes that can be discussed with children when Nutmeg is present are relationship building, identifying feelings, safety, good and bad touches, boundaries, and empathy building. The first sessions with a strange counselor can be awkward and uncomfortable but Nutmeg brings an instant sense of safety and security.

Pups and Planes
San Antonio, Texas

The San Antonio International Airport kicked off its “Pups and Planes” therapy dog program on October 14, 2013. This is the fifth airport in the nation to have such a program, and the first in Texas. There are a total of seven teams, five of which are Pet Partners. The response from the public has been overwhelmingly positive. Flying can be a nerve-wracking experience for many people — being able to stop and pet a friendly dog can ease the tension and make their wait in an airport terminal more enjoyable.

All of the visiting teams are required to go through extensive background checks and to go through airport security. The TSA officials seem to enjoy the therapy dogs as much as the stressed passengers do! Volunteers are required to wear a uniform that identifies them as such, which serves to make them approachable while walking through the concourses.

One of the volunteers, Miguelita Scanio, explains, “After two visits it was easy to discern from body language and facial expressions if someone is eager to visit with us. Realizing that some people may be allergic or fearful of dogs, we try not to be too intrusive while walking around the gates. After the program was featured on the evening news and in the newspaper, a lot of folks recognized us when we returned yesterday. We found that flight crews were as excited as passengers. We think this will be a fun place for our teams to visit.”
West

Judy Bin-Nun and Shepzel
Los Angeles, California

On a Thursday in December, Judy was asked to do an on-call visit at Santa Monica UCLA Orthopedic Hospital and Medical Center. Shepzel, one of Judy’s three Brussels Griffons that are all registered with Pet Partners, was bathed and ready because it was his turn to visit.

The team arrived at the patient’s room where a nurse, two women and a male patient were talking. I introduced Shepzel and myself. When I mentioned his name, one woman (Linda) became elated and said to her cousin Rob (the patient) – “Shepzel is here. It’s a miracle because he is like our favorite Uncle named Shepzel”— they had additional family names in common and Rob was beaming.

The connection between the patient and the dog was instantaneous and Rob showed a great deal of comfort. The two women held Shepzel and talked about their family history.

After Judy’s professional workday the following Monday, she decided to stop at a restaurant for dinner. As she approached the walkway, two women were seated in the cold. She heard one of them say, “Its Shepzel’s Mom - come here!” It was Linda from Thursday’s visit.

Linda was effusive about the impact Shepzel made on Rob’s life and shared that they were the last people Rob saw and Shepzel was the last one that Rob touched before he passed away a few hours after the visit. Rob’s sister Carol told me how the visit had made such a difference. She felt that running into Judy was another miracle since they had just come from Rob’s funeral and brought a memorial candle to light. They asked Judy to join them and recite the prayer to connect Shepzel to Rob’s life passage.

Judy reports, “They wanted Shepzel’s card nearby the candle. We huddied together, felt our connection and shared warmth as we recited the Memorial Prayer for the Dead.

“This is what one little 9-pound Pet Partners therapy dog can accomplish. He brought this family comfort and peace. I will never forget this experience.”

Karen Stalmann and Caleb
Arvada, Colorado

When Karen Stalmann was given the grave diagnosis of terminal cancer for her therapy dog Caleb, a German Shepherd, she was heartbroken. “I couldn’t take it in. Visits to the state veterinary teaching college and a canine oncologist resulted in the same news. I went to prayer. I prayed constantly. After considerable research I chose a treatment not involving chemotherapy.”

Karen and Caleb frequently visited a local hospice, but rarely saw young patients there. Dennis was one of those few, sitting in a wheelchair with his head resting on the headrest and his eyes focused in two different directions. Down on one knee, Karen introduced herself and Caleb. As she spoke, she took Dennis’ hand to help him pet Caleb. In a few moments he struggled to raise his head off of the headrest. With slight tremors, he looked at Caleb. She was a dog who made and held direct eye contact with people. In another few moments Dennis took his hand away from Karen and was petting Caleb without assistance.

Karen then noticed a ring of nurses circling and taking in the interaction. “I looked up and asked Dennis if he ever had dogs before. With gurgling sounds, he tried to answer me! Some of the nurses had tears in their eyes. I asked him how many dogs he had owned. With a shaking hand he held up 3 fingers. He was with me. He and Caleb kept eye contact and he was loving her visit.”

Dennis began to show some distress, so Caleb and Karen moved quickly out of the way. One of the nurses then told Karen she had never witnessed anything like that. After leaving the hospice, Karen went to the administration office to report about the visit. Unknown to her, the hospice nurse had called there ahead and they rewarded Caleb with biscuits, a bowl of water, and generously praised her.

Dennis passed away just a few days later. This event took place approximately 17 months after Caleb’s cancer diagnosis! She passed away one month later. Karen thinks, “I often wonder if the Lord let Caleb live that long just to meet Dennis. I was so thankful that she never suffered for one minute, even on the day that I lost her. My prayers were answered.”

Mary Gaines and Isabella (Izzy)
Las Vegas, Nevada

During a convention for the International YMCA in Las Vegas, Mary Gaines and her therapy dog Izzy, an Australian Shepherd, were in attendance to assist Sue Grundfest as she spoke to the group about the power of the human-animal bond, Pet Partners and her local group, “Love Dogs.”

No one realized that Izzy would demonstrate the power of the human-animal bond and animal-assisted interactions right then and there. An 80 year old man walked in during the second session and headed directly for Izzy. Izzy then followed him to his seat and proceeded to do what she does best; give her love and attention to someone who needed it. The gentleman then started to cry.
uncontrollably, then apologized for it and said that he didn’t know what came over him. Said Mary, “Izzy and I did though... he needed her. I knew that a passing visit was not going to be what the gentleman needed so I set up a chair and allowed Izzy to comfort and grieve with this man. Why grieve? Earlier while we were meeting and between the tears, he shared with me that his dog of 18 years had died 3 years ago. My heart went out to him. He said that you never really get over it and I agreed with him. I know that I would have a hard time too so I grieved also. Twenty years in the military has taught me to keep my emotions in check and I am very good at it, until now. My heart was in my throat and my words escaped me. I was feeling what he was feeling and in awe of what the other end of my leash was doing. It was magic.

When he started to cry again, Izzy was there licking his tears away and replacing them with new joy and memories. He had no interest in the other dogs; he knew he needed Izzy and that she needed him.

When Mary saw the man later, he told her that he had not felt that kind of happiness in a very long time. His wife was there and was the witness, as everyone else in the room, of the magic of the Love Dogs and the enormous impact they have, not only for the people they serve but also for the handlers.

Heidi Weston and Trusty
Kirkland, Washington

Trusty the miniature horse and his handler Heidi Weston were invited to attend Pet Partners’ Open House in Bellevue in September. They parked their tiny trailer out front and drew a crowd before he even unloaded! It’s not often that a miniature horse is seen as a therapy animal and so Heidi snapped on his Pet Partners vest and cleaned his little hooves in preparation for his entrance. Because he had been in the building before, he walked right in and stood looking at the crowd. As people exclaimed over his small stature, he calmly sniffed pockets and hands and accepted their strokes. He seems to especially like children, so he was very interested in the children in attendance, politely nuzzling their hands, which is his way of introducing himself.

Heidi answered many questions about him and their work together. Trusty is a regular at Camp Korey, a local camp founded by Paul Newman for children with serious, life altering diseases. They also visit two assisted living facilities, one which includes memory care. He is very careful with elderly people and will often place his head in their laps while they pet him. He seems to know who needs extra attention and has often pulled Heidi toward that person.

During the Open House, Heidi spoke about helping a woman with dementia and blindness recall a special memory about horses in her life. Heidi states, “I am glad to be able to impact other people in such a profound way and share Trusty’s positive energy. I reconnected with a couple of old friends at the event and met a few new ones. We have since visited a local preschool as a result and will be attending a health care fair promoting the value of therapy animals. I hope we have many more years to bring joy to others.”

Raquel Lackey and Pickles
Portland, Oregon

On Saturday September 28th Raquel Lackey, her husband and therapy dog Pickles drove from Seattle through torrential rains to attend Pet Partners’ third annual One Bond ~ One World Fall Gala held at The Nines Hotel in Portland, Oregon. This charity auction is different from so many others because well-behaved pets are welcome to attend. All of the therapy dog teams were extraordinarily well-behaved and “dressed to the nines”, including a Chocolate Labrador that sported a pearl necklace as she greeted guests at the entrance.

There were numerous silent auction items that ranged from dog biscuits to luxury vacations. Raquel described her experience: “Caught in the moment, I was surprised at how easy it was to meet people and how friendly all of the guests were. Afterwards it hit me — data shows having a dog present increases levels of oxytocin in the human body. Oxytocin is the hormone for affiliation and aids in communication and collaboration. I had my beautiful, Black Labrador Pickles with me. Of course people were going to be more extroverted!”

After the close of the silent auction, a delicious plated dinner was served to the guests. Celebrity guest host Dr. Marty Becker was wonderful and had the audience doubled over in laughter a number of times during the evening.

Raquel adds, “I believe in this mission so deeply that it is my goal to have corporate wellness programs advocate for the inclusion of a therapy dog team in each corporate/business office to promote the health benefits for everyone, in addition to making us more collaborative as a team. I’m already looking forward to the next Pet Partners event.”
‘Buddy’ brings happiness, healing

By Jennifer Gentile
Reprinted with permission from The Sunday Herald
The Sanford Herald, Sanford, NC

A diagnosis of elbow dysplasia, a hereditary condition, helped end Buddy’s show career and prevented his owner from breeding him. His success as a therapy dog is no surprise to Edleman, who remembered Buddy’s vigil beside her husband’s chair as he battled prostate cancer.

“[He’s] absolutely the best Border Collie in the world,” Edleman said, “laid back, very loving. He has that instinct to know when someone needs something special.”

Poe recognized the same quality in Buddy at their first meeting three years ago, when he’d been looking for another therapy dog after his companion, Scooter, had passed. Now certified in therapy through the Pet Partners, Buddy makes regular visits with Poe to CCH, the UNC chapel Hill Cancer Center, Wesley Long Hospital in Greensboro, Moses Cone Hospital in Greensboro, and an array of other health facilities. The pair is also welcome at several banks, law firms, car dealerships and other places where they have friends.

“We bring a lot of joy and happiness into people’s lives,” Poe said.

Without assistance, Poe said their work would not be possible, and he particularly thanked Sanford Animal Hospital, Toyota Scion of Sanford and First Bank of Broadway for their contributions. The proud pet owner can produce pictures of Buddy among many of his supporter and caretakers, and other shots, highlighting his star quality, show him posing in front of Jimmie Johnson’s race car at the Sanford Lowe’s re-opening and donning festive trappings at a children’s Christmas party.

Wearing a pink bandana and “get well” balloon during a recent trip to CCH, Buddy coaxed a grin from 5-year-old Zachary Williams, who was about to undergo a second ear surgery. The boy beamed as Buddy obligingly offered his paw for a handshake.

“I thought it was sweet,” said Zachary’s mother, April Williams. “He has a dog, and when he first saw [Buddy] come in, he liked him and was excited about it.”

The reaction to buddy was similar in the Intensive Care Unit, where he climbed onto a chair next to...
patient Frances Gillis’ bed. The furry visitor received an especially warm reception from Gillis, who has a dog named Buddy at home.

“People who have been here a few days don’t get to see their pets,” noted Crystal Hickman, CCH’s director of volunteer services, “so they really enjoy getting to love on Buddy.”

The duo have been coming to the hospital for about two years, Hickman said, and are eagerly anticipated by patients and staff. Buddy is simply “precious,” she added, and clearly relishes his role in lifting spirits.

“J.R. and Buddy are a very essential part of what we do,” Hickman said. “As far as caring for people, putting a smile on their face, buddy definitely does that. As they walk through the halls, people turn and smile. It makes everyone feel better, and we’re so thankful to provide that service here at the hospital.”

According to authorities like the American humane Association, an ever-expanding body of research is documenting the healing power of human-animal interactions. Highly trained, even-tempered animals like Buddy are bringing relief to children who have experienced abuse or neglect, families coping with military deployment, and patients undergoing chemotherapy and other grueling medical procedures.

“They’ve done studies that have linked them to lowering heart rate, blood pressure and anxiety; that’s why these kinds of programs exist,” said CCH Intensive Care Unit Director Annette Schlitz. “It is to decrease the anxiety of the patients and give them therapeutic relief.”

These particulars are lost on Buddy, but as he saunters through the departments at CCH, he relishes the attention he receives in the form of pets, hugs and the occasional treat. And according to Poe, he can still tell when someone needs a bit of extra love.

“We go, we share, we help people; we touch a lot of lives,” Poe said. “This is what we do. The reward is when you go home at night.”

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Wearing a pink bandana and “get well” balloon during a recent trip to Central Carolina Hospital, Buddy coaxed a grin from 5-year-old Zachary Williams, who was about to undergo a second ear surgery.

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THE BENEFITS OF ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY

- Animal-assisted therapy has been shown to help children who have experienced abuse or neglect, patients undergoing chemotherapy or other difficult medical treatments and veterans and their families who are struggling to cope with the effects of wartime military service, according to the American Humane Association.

- Interactions with dogs has been found to lower blood pressure, steady rapid breathing, reduce levels of stress hormones and increase levels of calming hormones.
Saying Goodbye. We thank our therapy animals who touched many lives during their years of service.

Nov 1, 2012 – Sept 30, 2013

RETIRED

ABBIE, Golden Retriever Mix, Laura R. Bastianelli, NH
ABBIE, Golden Retriever, Kimberly Kirschner, FL
AIAK, Wirehaired Dachshund, Maureen Homey, AZ
AISHA, Pekingese Mix, Cathy A. Ferguson, FL
AUTUMN, Labrador Mix, Rosemarie Kral-Victor, PA
BABY, Belgian Laekenois, Karin Kirtner, OH
BAYLISH, Chow Mix, Sharon Leebi, AZ
BEAU, Great Dane Mix, Mary L. Stratton, WA
BECKY, Pointer, Ann P. Duffin, OR
BELLA, Black Lab, Andrea H. Cinimillo, NT
BELLA, Australian Shepherd, Vivian B. Aiello, FL
BENLEY, Golden Retriever, Jen S. McClung, CO
BJORN, Icelandic Sheepdog, Janice Reilly, MT
BLUSH, Doberman, Carolyn Foessett, TX
BRADY, Golden Retriever, Bob and Susan Spisak, OH
BRINK, Australian Shepherd, Kathy Bryan, AZ
BRUISING, Shih Tzu, Laura Duerr, NV
BUBBLES, Aussie, Jan Tucker, MS
BUDDUY, Golden Retriever, Karen Peckham, WI
BUGZY, Lhasa Apso Mix, Pam M. Reinke, AZ
CAESAR, Border Collie, Jeanmarie Kautzman, WA
CALVIN, Labrador, Alicia Conkin-Wood, PA
CAMDEN, Golden Retriever, Bob and Susan Spisak, OH
CAPONE, Golden Retriever, Bob Spisak, OH
CASSIDY, Border Collie, Anthony and Patricia Legan, OH
CHICA DIVA, Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, Vicki R. Lee, MT
CLOUDY, Mixed breed, Eva-Lynn Podietz, NY
COMET, English Setter, Judy Brown, VA
COOPER, Yellow Lab, Teri A. Templar, PA
COULTER, Golden Retriever Mix, Patricia A. Owen, CO
CRUSH, Portuguese Water Dog, Margaret Sliesner, ID
D2, Golden Retriever, Nancy Eimer, WA
DAISY, Golden Retriever, Rose Krull, GA
DAISY, Rat Terrier, Carol Altvater, CO
DAKOTA, Yellow Lab, Julie J. Baxter, CO
DANIEL, Italian Greyhound, Susanne Schulz, NJ
DANCER, Sphynx Cat, Tracey Knighton and Denise Matthews, GA
DARI, Great Pyrenees, Mary Urrutia, CA
DEKLIA, Miniature Schnauzer, Debra L. Latten, AK
DIXIE, Westie, Biev Bair, IL
DOODLE, Labradoodle, Kit Corson, AZ
DUKE, Chocolate Lab, Claudine P. Singer, CA
DUPOUNI, Springer Spaniel, Nancy Lindblom, NJ
EMBER, Vizsla, Karen Beckwith and Katharine Murray, NC
EMMA, Black Lab, Shari Goldfarb, CA
EMMA LOU, Golden Retriever Mix, Patsy Thomas, MS
ENZO, Golden Retriever, Ruth Demar, AZ
FAISIUN, German Shepherd, Janet L. Carr, AZ
FLETCH, King Charles Spaniel, Stephen and Judith Spelman, OR
FOSTER, Rough Collie, Mary Sicurbi, WA
FUJUHA, Labrador Retriever, Susan F. Anderson, OH
GAGE, German Shepherd, Sarah E. DeLone, IN
GI GI, French Bulldog, Marilyn Edwards, OH
GIULI, American Staffordshire Terrier, Gualadupe Santos, TX
GRIFFIN, Westie, Jan M. Hoffman, WI
HALLE, Beagle, Barbara Holder, AL
HEATH, Bassett Hound, Sandra Bonenberger, PA
HOLIH, Doberman, Kathy Thurow, CA
HOOGAN, Golden Retriever, Robert Hart, KY
HOLLIE, German Shepherd, Connie Lau, CO
HULLY, Labrador Mix, Beth Mann, OH
HOLLY BERRY, Golden Retriever, Becky L. Hershberger, OH
HONEY, Yellow Lab, Deb Easter, WA
JACKSON, Labrador Retriever, Brianne Daveye, OR
JASMINE, Australian Shepherd, Hita L. Luttrell, WA
JASPER, Havanese, Nelson A. Lerner, AZ
KALI, Border Collie, Maria O. Tully, SC
KAYLA JOY, Black Lab, Janet J. Novicki, IN
KELLY, Australian Shepherd, Carol Stafford, AZ
KELSEY, Bouvier des Flandres, Barry Booshant, NY
KHITTI, Rhodesian Ridgeback, Faith H. Martin, VT
KURT, Border Collie, Lynne Green, WA
KYHIT, Icelandic Sheepdog, Janice Healy, MI
LOLA, Golden Retriever, Lynda Prejna, WI
LOYE, Beagle Mix, Linda Mazer, NC
LUCY, Lab Mix, Julie Jensen, OR
LUNA LUZ, Havanese, Anne M. Dilsenachner, ND
MACKENZIE, German Shepherd, Julie A. Yoder, KS
MADISON, Lab Mix, Kimberly McConkey, TN
MASON, Golden Retriever, David F. Hendry, FL
MATTIE, German Shepherd, Alana Castillo, CA
MCLOUD, Great Pyrenees, Linda Williams, CA
MIKEY, Golden Retriever, Robin D. Lammers, California
MISS MUFFETT, King Charles Spaniel, Molly Breidenberg, OR
MISSI, I, Samoyed, Elaina E. Goodrich, OH
MU, boxer, Mary-Beth Jendrzejewski, LA
MOLLY BROWN, Chocolate Lab Mix, Doris Pulus, OR
MOOSE, Lab Mix, Elaine Smethurst, OR
MORGAN, Golden Retriever, Cynthia Obev, FL
MUSSIS, Labrador, Magpie A. Mann, IN
MUFFIN, Shetland Sheepdog, Bonnie Corbett, ME
NALANI, C KC Spaniel, Alissa Nudi, MN
OLLIVER, Great Dane, Marilyn Swan, ID
PAYSUN, Labrador Retriever, Sandra L. Panicali, CA
PEACHES, Yellow Lab, Elizabeth C. Thomson, VA
PEEDEE, Lab Mix, Norma (Snaque) Rolo, AZ
PHENIX, Mixed Breed, Lois Stashbush Tolley, CT
PHYDEAUX, Husky Mix, Robert G. Davidson, IL
POGO, Cocker Spaniel, Kathie A. Panaios, CO
PUPS, Pug, Peggy Mattingly, AZ
PORTER, Golden Retriever, Karen S. Zale, WI
PUNKIN, Boxer, Maureen Knapp, OH
RALPH, Golden Retriever, Joyce Liden, OR
RAQUEL, Golden Retriever, Karen A. Murphy, FL
RILEY, Shetland Sheepdog, Gail Y. Dobber, CA
ROSIE, Mini Labradoodle, Kelly J. Pierce, WA
ROXIE, Schipperke Mix, Marilyn Harker, NE
RUDY, Black Lab, Jeanne Whitlow, WA
SADIE, Doberman, Kathleen Kistler, CA
SAUND, Springer Spaniel, Margaret L. Nielsen, WA
SADIE, Golden Retriever, Nancy Lefkowitz, CA
SADIE, Labrador, Patricia F. Gow, WA
SADIE, Australian Cattle Dog Mix, Dori Mohr, CO
SAIUM, Golden Retriever Mix, Fran M. Stanley, WA
SAGE, Yellow Lab, Kathy Keller Jones, OR
SAM, Cocker Mix, Joyce Ballet, OH
SAMMY, Golden Retriever, Barbara Toth, NC
SASHA, Belgium Malinois Husky, Lynda Prejna, WI
SCALA, Labrador, Nancy Vye, LA
SENTA, Lab Mix, Martha McGurik, OR
SHANE, Collie, James Bialosky, OH
SHEBA, Black Lab, Joyce Dattalo, IL
SHENII, Aussie, Sterling H. Cone, IL
SIMON, Australian Shepherd, Kimberly Davidson, TN
SIMON, Golden Retriever, Kathy McDonald, OH
SINA, Golden Lab Mix, Diane L. Beach, NM
SINUEN, Chihuahua, Irevor L. Crounder, WI
SNOW, Lab Mix, Kitty K. Case, TX
SPECIAL, Ragdoll Cat, Sue Drouin, NH
SUSIE O, Jack Russell, Sharon L. Mansker, CA
TARA, Shih Tzu, Susan C. Gilberty, NY
IAHA-LUCIA, Mastiff Mix, Maria M. M. Sans, AZ
THUMPER, Chihuahua, Ursula Freitas, WA
TINKERBELL, Chihuahua, Braydon and Kristin Ludwig, IL
TIPPER, Lab Mix, Dianne Heller, OH
HODY, Aussie Mix, Marlene Lothman, IA
TUCKER, Lab Mix, Yvonne M. Gobis, MA
WILLOW, Collie, Judith Jaffe, IL
ZAP, Border Collie, Lynne Green, WA
ZOE, Blue Lacy, Kristy Schneider, IA

PASSED AWAY

ABBY, Cocker Mix, Jane A. Klipp, AZ
AIKU, Japanese Chin, Donna Butler, NY
ALBERT EINSTEIN, Pitbull, Deassa Binstock, CA
ALEX, Chinese Crested, Marsha Bedford, FL
ARCHIE, Airedale Terrier, Amy Williams, WI
AR HUH, Poodle, Deborah Joyce, VA
ASHLYN, Black Lab, Elaine Wilderman, OH
ASTORIA, Yellow Lab, Claire Benson, CO
BACCHUS, Standard Poodle, Catherine L. Congleton, CO
BAILEY, Golden Retriever, Kelly Learman, NV
BAILEY, Golden Retriever, Julie Palais, LA
BAILEY, Maltese, Linda Robbins, NY
BANDIT, Labrador Retriever, Louise Thorne, TX
BANDIT, Pitbull Mix, Harriet Ashley, CA
BANJO, Border Collie, Carol A. Soeldner, MA
BAXTER, Golden Retriever, Therese Dolan, CA
BAYLEY, Portuguese Water Dog, Marsha Bedford, FL
In 2001, Maggie was delivered to a Bridgeport, Connecticut animal shelter after being struck by a car. The abandoned and injured two-year-old girl was on the list of dogs to be euthanized. Maggie was meant for bigger things. She was adopted by Albert Emond and survived two life-threatening surgeries to correct injuries she sustained after being struck. Maggie recovered and she and Albert became Pet Partners. Over the next 12 years they served more than 5,000 people in schools, convalescent homes, hospitals and homes. Maggie passed away in September but Albert, alongside Maggie’s canine companion Daisy, continues to serve people in need in New England.
Dr. Marty Becker, “America’s Veterinarian,” has spent his life working toward better health for pets and the people who love them. For close to 20 years, Dr. Becker has been the popular veterinary contributor on ABC’s Good Morning America. He is a founding member of The Dr. Oz Show’s Core Team Oz and a member of the Dr. Oz Medical Advisory Panel. In April 2012, the World Small Animal Veterinary Association named him the recipient of their annual WSAVA Hill’s Excellence in Veterinary Healthcare Award (also known as the Global Companion Animal Veterinarian of the Year) and he is the Chief Veterinary Correspondent for the American Humane Association. Becker has written 22 books that have sold more than 7 million copies, including three New York Times best-sellers.

Dr. Becker was the celebrity host of the Pet Partners’ Fall Gala held in Portland, Oregon September 28. Top sponsors included Boehringer Ingelheim, Kyjen and Cambia/Regence. Additionally, Dr. Becker donated his appearance fee.
Is the concept of animal-assisted therapy taught in Veterinary schools?

Not that I know of. Let’s change that!

In what ways can veterinarians encourage closer relationships between their patients and clients?

Research in animal sheltering has found that people who take their pets to the veterinarian tend to relinquish them (or return, if a recent adoption) to shelters less frequently, which is evidence of a stronger bond.

So one of the best ways that people and pets can experience closer relationships is for the owner to make sure their pet is as healthy as possible as well as clean, groomed, and with a healthy, sweet-smelling mouth. By focusing on this basic preventive care, owners won’t be turning away from their pet’s kisses, or not wanting to pet and cuddle them, or feeling guilty at how overweight or arthritic the pet is.

So building a good relationship with your pet’s veterinarian, keeping your pet trim and clean, and keeping that mouth kissing fresh, is a great first step.

Beyond that, the more activities you share with your pet, the tighter the bond. Turn mealtime into a bonding activity by using toys and games to feed your pet, rather than free-feeding or just plunking down the bowl.

Take your dog for walks and get him panting, and tired every single day. He’ll love you for it, and you’ll have a greater appreciation both for the fun of walking the dog, and his better behavior after he’s had more exercise.

Play with your cat in the same way—you want them to be climbing and jumping and playing into old age.

Finally, clicker train your dogs and yes, your cats, to do tricks. This fun and easy method of teaching pets specific behaviors is a great way to build and strengthen a bond.

Can you share a story of a personal experience that demonstrates the power of animal-assisted interactions?

For this one, I am going to share a very personal story. My mother, Virginia Becker, just passed away earlier this year. She was a lifelong animal lover, and had a few years ago adopted a little dog she named Sugar Babe.

Not only did my mother keep her independence longer because of little Sugar, once she had gone into a care facility and hospice, it was the visits from Sugar that brought her out of her silence and withdrawal to laugh, talk, and interact not just with her dog but with people, too.

Photos of Sugar were in her room at the end, and we had both a photo collage of Sugar at her memorial, and the “real thing” too—Sugar was the guest of honor!

What qualities make for good therapy animals?

I’m going to return to clean, well-groomed, with a fresh mouth and clean teeth, and in good health. Of course, some health challenges don’t make a pet any less appealing as a therapy animal. In fact, often sharing a health condition with a person they are visiting creates a special form of bonding, such as a three-legged pet, a pet who had survived cancer, or a pet that is blind. But pets need to be free of parasites, and have a good smell. While each situation and species has some specific qualities that others are more qualified than I to list, I would say that patience, a high degree of socialization and tolerance of new experiences, and a genuine sense of curiosity toward new people and situations would be very helpful for any therapy animal.

How can a pet guardian maximize their animal’s potential as a therapy animal?

The exact same things I listed in how to have a tighter bond with the pet, and beyond that, getting involved with Pet Partners and learning from the true experts.

What advice would you give to someone looking to adopt a pet as a potential Pet Partners therapy animal teammate?

Some of the things that therapy animals will need to do are things you’ll teach them or accustom them to accept. However, the more such things the pet likes or accepts when you adopt him or her, the better. There is an illustrated guide to those qualities on the Pet Partner website at www.petpartners.org/aptitude_exercises

There are many adoptable animals in shelters and rescue groups that would be wonderful therapy animals. Tell the adoption counselors or rescue volunteers you want a pet to do therapy work with—they’ll probably be excited to help you with selecting a suitable animal.
Pet Partners Caring Community

Pet Partners wishes to thank the following families who have made provisions in their estate planning for Pet Partners. We appreciate their support that will make their love last forever.

Willmetta & Charles Allen *
Dr. Robert Anderson Anonymous
Dr. Donna Baer Grace & Larry Ballentine
Bernard Baron *
Valerie & Richard Beck Sally Becker *
Barbara & David Bell Donna Berrier
Marie Bickel *
Nancy & William Biery Frances Bleek *
Margaret Bott *
Helen Boyd Florence Burkholder
Dr. Leo Bustad *
Mante Butners Helen Caradonna *
Dr. Betty Carmack Dr. Craig & Honda Carter
Dr. Gary & Mary Lynn Champion
Dr. Aphrodite Clamar Cohen
Sheila Cohen Fred Cole II *
Eugenia Colman *
Melody Cook Deborah Morgan Couples *
Sophie & Derek Craighead
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Stephanie Dennis *
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The Dogfather (James Schwartz)
Virginia Louis Doris *
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Dr. James Harris Todd Hendricks
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Joan & Bill Jensen Jacqueline Joseph
George Keely *
Marion Kline *
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Susan Liley Barbara Litwack
Carolynn Loacker
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Dr. Bill & Janice McCulloch
Dr. Michael McCulloch *
Marilyn McDaniel *
Dr. Mary-Margaret Shoat
Mal Schwartz
Dr. William Warley
Linda & Craig Wescoatt
Julianne Whitecomb
Woodside Estate *
Dorothy Wynn *
* Bequest received.

Dr. Bill McCulloch, one of the founders of Pet Partners, chaired my graduate committee at Texas A&M University in the early 1980’s. This provided me with the unique honor to experience his heroic efforts to alter Texas laws enabling the over 1,000 nursing homes to have pet visitation and mascots. McCulloch and so many of those early visionaries understood the importance of human-animal bond. Their work has improved the quality of life for untold millions across the globe. Rhonda and I think that it is vital for that work to continue and it is why we are honored to make provisions for Pet Partners in our estate.

Pet Partners Caring Community

Pet Partners wishes to thank the following families who have made provisions in their estate planning for Pet Partners. We appreciate their support that will make their love last forever.

Willmetta & Charles Allen *
Dr. Robert Anderson Anonymous
Dr. Donna Baer Grace & Larry Ballentine
Bernard Baron *
Valerie & Richard Beck Sally Becker *
Barbara & David Bell Donna Berrier
Marie Bickel *
Nancy & William Biery Frances Bleek *
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THINGS WE LIKE

TRUPANION
We like Trupanion medical pet insurance. This is not the sort of thing you want to use but the sort of thing you want to have when you need it. Trupanion has been insuring pets for over a decade, offering fair and affordable pet insurance for dogs and cats, covering illnesses, diagnostic testing, surgeries, medications and lab work. They also understand the importance of keeping service and therapy dogs healthy and are happy to provide all of our supporters a 6% monthly premium discount and a discounted enrollment fee depending on in what state you reside. And because they love animals, they will make a donation to Pet Partners. Find out more at www.trupanion.com/petpartners or call 855-482-0156.

PARTNERS
We like Partners—Everyday Working Dogs Being Heroes Every Day. The new book was written and edited by Nan Walton with her dog Lex. She includes an entire section of stories that illustrate the positive effects therapy animals can have on people in need of comfort. Nan has a unique perspective on the experiences of a handler. She was a Pet Partner volunteer for four years. You can find her book on Amazon among many other places.

ROVER.COM
We like to travel with our dogs but they cannot go everywhere with us. Sometimes you might want a spa day, go out for a dinner at a nice restaurant or hit the town with friends. Or maybe you want a weekend getaway and leave your furry friend at home. If you need a safe and reliable place for your canine companion to “sit” for awhile, Rover.com is a great option. Think of it like VRBO but for dogs. Search by city, dates and learn about the people who provide care across the country. www.rover.com

KYJEN
We like cool things and we like getting a good deal on them which is why we like Kyjen. They make fun and interactive toys and games for dogs, many of which may also be enjoyed by other pets. Their most innovative products are challenging puzzle toys that stimulate a pet’s senses and prevent boredom. They also carry a wide variety of plush & rubber toys and lots of very useful accessories. Kyjen recognizes the great work of our therapy animal teams and in appreciation offers Pet Partners volunteers a 40% discount of all products. To take advantage of this offer, visit www.kyjenPRO.com and complete the form at the bottom of the page. As an added bonus for signing up for KyjenPRO, you’ll receive a one-time welcome code that is good for an additional 10% off on all Kyjen products.
Honor and Memorial Donations

Special thanks to the following donors who, by contributing to Pet Partners, remember the special spirit of an animal or person that touched their lives.

In Honor of

All No-Kill shelters
Richard Debenedicts
Tammy, Cliff & Sadie Allen
Richard Wilke
Kenneth Ard Sr.
Teressa Ard
Rebecca & Ralph Bach
Elizabeth Lindsay
Randi Barrow
Victoria, Howard & Matthew Choy
Andrew Bauman & Vanny Him
Benjamin Bauman
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Wendy Luker
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Linda Lyman
Betty Magee
Teressa Ard
Arnie & Jo Martin
Tarra Oppewall
Pat & Bentley Miya
Don O’Leary
Jayne Morin
Juli Turner
Dr. Daniel Negola & staff
Huth hi scher
Joni Neibert
Laura Imbach-Mills
Victoria & Pearl Netanel
Dr. Susan Hardie
Nitrous Oxide’s Epic Journey
Charles DeVilbiss
Caleb O’Leary
Gwendumelyn O’Leary
Janie Owen
Travis & Missy West
Nancy Randa
Kathryn Randa
Leonora Rianda
Jill Zahnner
Lincea Ruth
Hodercic Hall
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Sami Stoner
Dr. Aubrey Fine
Gary Strickfaden & Sandy Zeigler
Paula Simon
Professor Sharon Thompson & student nurses
Kathryn Strick
Jeremy Todd & Catherine Ford
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Brandon Tsujimoto
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Don O’Leary
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Deborah Weiss
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Elaine Yakel
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Pat Barton
Maggie Batten
Jean Batten
Josie Behnke
Teressa Behnke
Maddie Bershof
Dr. John Bershrot
Raizel, Ketzel & Shepzel Bin-Nun
Dr. Judith Bin-Nun
Lady Bott
Dr. Suzanne Bott
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Nancy Jo Connell
Bear-Bear Cook
Molly Cook
Bo “Hero Kitty” Crouse
Dawn Crouse
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Kim Dancer
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Sally Sue Davis
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Michelle Dore
Dexter Foster
brook foster
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Donna Lawrence
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Lori Lindman
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Charles Shoop
Spackles Lupient
Barbara Lupient
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Madison Avenue’s
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Faith Martin
Sophie Mason
Whitney Mason
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Kathryn McCall
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Susan Morton
Kramer & Pilot
Nelepovitz
Paul Nelepovitz
Ronnie Newell
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Dusty Nishinaga
Anne Kiyomi Nishinaga
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Lana Parsons
Rusty Peters
Hal Peters
Jasper Pine
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Misha Pletz
Andy Pletz
Gracie Porter
Karen & Rudy Lucia
Silent Bob & Shorty Quinn
Brian Quinn
Harlow Richardson
Sylvia Lindman
Barnum Saper
Ronald Saper
Bonnie Brynn Saunders
Cary Saunders
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PET PARTNERS ON THE GROUND AFTER HURRICANE SANDY

In October 2012 Hurricane Sandy landed on the eastern seaboard of the United States. The storm severely damaged communities in New Jersey and New York. Pet Partners therapy dog teams were called upon to visit families in need at FEMA Disaster Relief Centers in Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, New York City and Long Island. Pet Partners’ teams were placed at FEMA branch offices visiting with staff members from all over the country sharing therapy dog support.

Pet Partners team Donna Austin with her Greyhound, Dizzy relayed their experience: “One gentleman we visited was initially so overwhelmed he was unable to speak to us. When Dizzy approached him and put his head in his lap, the man just leaned over, wrapped his arms around Dizzy, and began to cry. Some of the stress and homesickness of the past months were spilling out in those tears and there was really no need for anyone to say anything. It was a very moving moment.”

FEMA made a formal presentation to Pet Partners therapy dog teams thanking them with a certificate of appreciation signed by the State and Federal Coordinating Officers. “When disaster strikes, lives are shattered and hearts may be breaking. A furry friend to hug brings hope, smiles and things seem better even if just for a little while.” Pet Partners teams were honored to have been of service.

Pet Partners is currently working on a Crisis Response continuing education course. William Benn, FEMA Safety Officer, offered his time to review our learning objectives.
WHAT’S NEW

• The Therapy Animal Program Handler Guide has been updated with an entirely new look and feel, with some content updates. A webinar was held to introduce the updates to our licensed instructors and evaluators. The recorded version is available now for public view through our website free of charge.

• Our first continuing education webinar for handlers is available on our website free of charge. Created in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Association, Meaningful Activities for People Living with Dementia, is a 75-minute presentation designed to give visiting teams information to lead successful visits with clients who have memory loss or confusion.

• Considering volunteering with Pet Partners or know someone who is? Volunteering with your Pet is an informational webinar currently available on our website designed to answer questions about the process of registering with Pet Partners. It is available for free to anyone in the community.

• We launched our professional development webinar series for team evaluators on August 14th. To date we have completed three webinars in 2013, all led by seasoned Pet Partners evaluators. The goal of these webinars is to increase the excellence in evaluations which, in turn, increases the excellence of our handlers.

• Two new online continuing education courses are currently being developed. The topics are Working with Veterans and Animal Assisted Crisis Response. We anticipate course will be released in early 2014. Special thanks to the Curriculum Development Committee (CDT) for their work in shaping the direction of these courses. Continuing education courses are free of charge to all currently registered volunteers.

• We are working toward adding more team evaluators nationally. Through generous grants from The Frank M and Gertrude R. Doyle Foundation and The Cross Charitable Foundation, we have scheduled several practicums through December 2013, but we are already planning more sessions for 2014.

• Pet Partners is now a collaborative partner of the Human Animal Bond Research Initiative Foundation (HABRI). HABRI is a national non-profit organization with a similar mission to Pet Partners — to promote the positive benefits of the human-animal bond. HABRI is a broad coalition of companies, organizations, entities and individuals who work to achieve formal, widespread scientific recognition that validates and supports the advantages of pets and animals in the integrated health of families and communities, leading to informed decisions in human health. HABRI, in partnership with Purdue University, has also created an extensive online research center, HABRI Central. This is a comprehensive bibliography and repository of scholarly material, an online publishing platform for peer-reviewed content, and a virtual collaborative community for those involved in human-animal studies. To access this resource visit www.HABRICentral.org

COMING UP

Animal-Assisted Therapy: University of New Hampshire Online Noncredit Course Monday, February 17 — Friday, March 7, 2014

This noncredit course is offered in collaboration with Pet Partners. You will get comprehensive knowledge necessary to begin using Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) in your practice, as well as exposure to client assessment and treatment skills. Registration deadline: January 28, 2014. NOTE: This course sells out quickly, so register early. Fee: $120. For more information call 603.862.1739
Pet Partners is the leader in demonstrating and promoting positive human-animal interaction to improve the physical, emotional and psychological lives of those we serve. Pet Partners, founded in 1977, is a pioneer in the field of researching and promoting the health benefits of the human-animal bond. Over the last 36 years:

- The prevalence of this field of study has grown dramatically over the past 36 years. Academic research continues through many prestigious organizations.

- Animal-Assisted Therapy is now widely recognized and respected as an adjunct treatment modality in many professions.

- Pet Partners has increased our presence as the Gold Standard for visiting animal programs across North America.