Major Rumayor and Lexy

Serving Our Country at Fort Bragg

Around The Country
The Animals of Pet Partners
Xander
When I joined the Pet Partners team as President and CEO this past spring, I had no idea what a gift it would be. As a life-long animal lover, I know what a difference and comfort animals can make for those who may need a little extra support. Whether it was a caring handler, a friendly lick, a gentle paw, knowing eye contact or the ability to caress fur or feathers, seeing so many Pet Partners teams in action has been a life-changing experience.

From my first encounter with Bridget Seitzinger & Sage, Linda Wandrick & Muffin, and Rhonda Kuebler & Diesel—a trio of Pet Partners teams visiting a hospital in Virginia, to the dozens of evaluators I just met in October in Los Angeles at the Team Evaluator Symposium, the dedication and commitment I see from so many is astonishing. Our sincere thanks goes to the Mill River Foundation for generously supporting the Team Evaluator Symposium, a forum to discuss how Pet Partners maintains the gold standard when it comes to our work together.

In 2015, the board of directors, the staff and I look forward to bringing our teams the best Pet Partners possible. Our goal is not only to improve what we do every day but increase our offerings as the best in the world for Animal-Assisted Therapy. In early 2015, we look forward to introducing our new website to better serve teams, facilities and those who need our help. We plan to expand opportunities for more teams to serve in airports, increase outreach and advocacy for volunteers without animals, provide additional school campus stress reduction events and evaluate how Pet Partners teams can support individuals in the criminal justice system. We plan to expand our teams to discuss how Pet Partners maintains the gold standard when it comes to our work together.

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It was a frigid North Carolina morning when Lt. Col. Lexy joined the 82nd Airborne Division Paratroopers lining up for a four-mile run. At 6 a.m. only Lexy seemed oblivious to the chill in the air. She had an advantage: under her Army combat uniform, the German Shepherd was covered in fur.

Lexy is Fort Bragg’s first therapy dog. That morning, the four-legged officer happily greeted many of the 15,000 paratroopers as they gathered to celebrate Memorial Day.

Major Christina Rumayor, the 82nd Airborne Division’s psychiatrist and Lexy’s trainer, owner, and handler, says Animal-Assisted Therapy can play a huge role in easing the counseling process for soldiers who are experiencing stress. Rumayor and Lexy are a registered Pet Partners team.

“Therapy is a hard place to walk into,” Rumayor said. “It’s very scary a lot of times, and there’s stigma attached to it. Soldiers may initially be afraid or anxious, but when they see a therapy dog there, their first thought is, ‘Well, this can’t be such a bad place.’”

Relaxation is crucial to a soldier’s mental health, and Lexy has been trained to recognize and respond to elevated anxiety levels. When psychotherapy sessions bring out raw emotion, Lexy is able to fill a role that doctors can’t—providing physical reassurance. Lexy and other therapy dogs can offer a comforting touch, pat or hug in a completely appropriate way, which in turn, can help calm a patient and make it easier to focus during therapy sessions.

“If Lexy notices that a person is becoming more anxious or upset, she will often move to them so they can pet her, which is extremely calming for many people,” Rumayor said. “Her purpose in the therapy sessions is very specific to what the patient needs.”

Staff Sgt. Dennis Swols, Warrior Transition Unit, suffered for years with debilitating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Since joining the Army in 1998 as an infantryman, Swols deployed seven times; five of those deployments were to Iraq and Afghanistan. The team has even visited the Child Development Center on base to educate young children about responsible dog care, and also to help kids who may be afraid of dogs become more comfortable around them.

Rumayor saw the value in Animal-Assisted Therapy years ago, and wrote a policy in 2011 requesting to initiate the Animal-Assisted Therapy Program through Womack Army Medical Center at Fort Bragg. At that time, Lexy was already registered through the North Carolina branch of Pet Partners as a therapy dog. In 2013, the policy passed.

“Treatment with Lexy and other therapy dogs is a great ancillary treatment to give to soldiers as a way to get better,” she said. “The important part is giving great care to our paratroopers and soldiers.”

Despite Rumayor and Lexy’s success, Fort Bragg is hoping to expand the therapy dog program in their behavioral health clinics throughout the base. And on a broader scale, the Army is working to support and standardize therapy dog use throughout the military as it continues to gain momentum and prove beneficial in the lives of soldiers and veterans as well as their families.

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between Rumayor and Lexy spans half a decade. Lexy was one of several German Shepherd puppies Rumayor visited while stationed in Hawaii. At only eight weeks old, she was already a very curious and gentle puppy, both traits Rumayor wanted in a companion. From that day on, the pair were family.

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However, Rumayor also saw a role for Lexy within her larger family: the Army. She was convinced Lexy could help bring encouragement, joy and a sense of normalcy for soldiers.

“I think for many of them, she brings pieces of home that they miss when they live far away,” Rumayor said. “Dogs have an unconditional love of that also brings them comfort. They don’t know what your rank is, and they don’t care.”

For as hard as Lexy works to help paratroopers and soldiers cope, Rumayor makes sure she also has time to play; either with peers at a doggy daycare, or with some of the paratroopers during base visits.

“I make sure she gets time to just be a regular dog,” Rumayor said. “She loves to work, but she also loves to play tug or chase the ball.”

According to Rumayor, Lexy inspires a positive attitude both inside and outside the treatment environment; coaxing smiles out of everyone she meets. Her tail wags equally for everyone, whether a private or a general, and that alone can be a powerful tool. And since Lexy’s arrival at Fort Bragg, more soldiers have felt comfortable coming into the behavioral health clinic, and they are also more likely to continue and to comply with treatment, which is crucial for success. And Rumayor says many actually enjoy coming into the clinic, now that Lexy-the-morale-booster is on the team.

Thanks to Lexy’s success, Fort Bragg is hoping to expand the therapy dog program in their behavioral health clinics throughout the base. And on a broader scale, the Army is working to support and standardize therapy dog use throughout the military as it continues to gain momentum and prove beneficial in the lives of soldiers and veterans as well as their families.

Lexy shows her support for her fellow soldiers in countless ways, whether quiet companionship or by offering a kind face to talk to. But on that brisk spring morning earlier this year — when gearing up for a four-mile footrace required a little extra motivation — Lt. Col. Lexy was the go-to boost the troopers needed. Running at the crack of dawn is a whole lot easier with a Lexy-induced smile on your face.

Special thanks to Maj. Christina Rumayor, and SPC Taryn Hagerman for this article.
Midwest

Jennifer Smith and Mr. Mini Cooper
Deephaven, Minnesota

“arly morning light was brightening the sky. Jennifer and Mr. Mini decided to for a morning walk. Jennifer was wearing her usual pink jacket and white trousers, while Mr. Mini was donning his usual polka-dot shirt and polka-dot bow tie. They walked along the path, with Mr. Mini hopping along playfully.

Mr. Mini looked up at Jennifer, his eyes sparkling with excitement, and Jennifer smiled back at him. “Good morning, Mr. Mini,” she said.

The two continued their walk, enjoying the fresh air and the gentle breeze. Jennifer took Mr. Mini’s paws in her own, and they walked together.

Jennifer squeezed Mr. Mini’s paws, and he gave her a big smile. “Good morning, Jennifer,” he said.

They walked on, enjoying the morning together.

Northeast

Elin MacKinnon and Nemo
Steuben, Maine

Nemo is a five-year-old Golden Retriever who visits the Henry D. Moore Library in Steuben, Maine each week. He and his partner Elin are a newly registered Pet Partners team and volunteer through Silent Sidekicks, Maine’s first Animal-Assisted Therapy organization. When six-year-old Ciara comes to read to Nemo each week at the library, Nemo recognizes her as she approaches, thumping his tail loudly on the floor. Ciara spends a few minutes greeting and patting, brushing or hugging Nemo, then gets down to business and reads her book from beginning to end. Sometimes she pets Nemo as she reads. Ciara loves to tell stories about her adventures with her dog, but one day announced: “I tried to read to my dog Ariel, but no matter what I do, she will not sit still and listen – like Nemo does.” She also likes to share what she says she wants to bring him back to see me at least one more time.” Jennifer promised without hesitation.

The next time Jennifer took Mr. Mini to the home, she made sure to remind the director how important it was for them to visit with Margery. Unfortunately Margery had taken a turn for the worse, but the director said she wanted Jennifer to know how special the visit with Mr. Mini was and she spoke of it many times. Although the patient was dying, the director asked Jennifer to take Mr. Mini to her.

Margery was struggling for every breath and Jennifer worried that one of those breaths would be her last.

“Margery, it’s me and Mr. Mini,” Jennifer said. “We promised we would come back to see you one more time, and here we are.” She laid Mr. Mini on her pet bed next to Margery in her bed. Jennifer took Margery’s hand and helped her stroke Mr. Mini’s head. As if he understood his role, the rabbit moved closer so her hand could reach him more easily.

Jennifer said she stroked the woman’s beautiful red hair and said, “Goodbye, Margery. I am so thankful we came back today to see you. I am thankful this was the day we chose,” as tears ran down her face.

Margery looked very sad when the interaction had to end, but that it had been a couple of years since she had been able to spend time with a dog. Colby wanted to lie down on the floor near the woman’s bed and she said that was fine; she just enjoyed watching him. She also wanted her grandson to meet Colby, so the team returned two days later. During that visit, the patient asked that Colby be placed on the bed with her; she was thrilled and put his arms around him in a big hug. They snuggled together for quite some time. The woman made soft noises as she held him and told Jean, “I’m purring!” After visiting a few more times, Jean learned of the woman’s passing and realized that the patient’s daughter contacted her to ask the team to attend the wake. “The whole family greeted us with smiles and petted Colby, saying how much we had meant to their mom,” Jean said. On display with all of the family photos was a picture of the woman with Colby. “It was so heartwarming and satisfying to be able to fulfill this wish for this wonderful woman,” she said.

Stephanie Olson and Houdini
Pewaukee, Wisconsin

At Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, the Volunteer Services Department receives numerous patient requests for therapy dog visits. The program offers positive therapeutic experiences to help minimize stress in the hospital environment, provide distraction from illness and hospital procedures, and assist in scheduled physical therapy visits.

Pet Partners team Stephanie Olson and her therapy dog Houdini have been with the program since 2010, giving countless hours of volunteer time to help comfort patients and families at the hospital. Stephanie spoke about one particularly memorable experience.

“Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin is an amazing place to receive pediatric care, but it is not home,” she said. “If you have ever had to stay in a hospital, you know that going home is a priority.” The team had been asked to visit a young boy in a wheelchair but their schedule kept them otherwise engaged until after he was discharged. Stephanie then learned the boy had happily waited past his discharge time just to visit with Houdini. And after 30 minutes with the dog, the boy was still not interested in going home. “That says it all,” said Stephanie. “What child wouldn’t be eager to go home, see friends and family and play with their own toys?”

Jean Martell and Colby
Maple Grove, Minnesota

Jean Martell received a request to take her therapy dog Colby to see a hospice patient. The woman was so pleased and spent a lot of time petting Colby and talking to him. She shared stories about dogs she’d had in her lifetime and said she was a true dog lover, but that it had been a couple of years since she had been able to spend time with a dog. Colby wanted to lie down on the floor near the woman’s bed and she said that was fine; she just enjoyed watching him. She also wanted her grandson to meet Colby, so the team returned two days later. During that visit, the patient asked that Colby be placed on the bed with her; she was thrilled and put his arms around him in a big hug. They snuggled together for quite some time. The woman made soft noises as she held him and told Jean, “I’m purring!” After visiting a few more times, Jean learned of the woman’s passing and realized that the patient’s daughter contacted her to ask the team to attend the wake. “The whole family greeted us with smiles and petted Colby, saying how much we had meant to their mom,” Jean said. On display with all of the family photos was a picture of the woman with Colby. “It was so heartwarming and satisfying to be able to fulfill this wish for this wonderful woman,” she said.

Penny Sorenson and Auggie
Muskegon, Michigan

“It was amazing to watch Auggie and my students working together in my classroom. My students and I enjoyed Auggie’s visit very much. Thank you for all your help in making our school day so special.” This was the note Penny Sorenson received after their first visit to Sarah Voeller’s special education class for students on the autism spectrum disorder in grades K-2.

All of her students interacted with Auggie at their own pace; some were excited and all smiles when they petted Auggie, while others took their time to warm up to him.

Some of Sarah’s students have a tough time writing, sitting and listening to stories being read. However with Auggie present, everyone either sat at the table or on the floor by Auggie to listen to a story. One particular student who occasionally screams during class did not scream for the entire time Auggie was in the classroom. Another boy usually refuses to follow directions, but while holding the leash with Penny he collected his work, put it into his backpack and continued to smile while walking to and waiting for the bus. Sarah said this is not a small accomplishment for a child with his challenges, concluding, “They can be a difficult time in my classroom, but with Auggie, I saw the joy that was displayed by my students beginning to form their relationship. I’m hoping that we can continue with ‘Team Auggie’ once a week for the next school year.”
Even though Cloie, a Wirehaired Fox Terrier, does not speak English, she is helping elementary students in speech therapy articulate more clearly. Teamed with speech language pathologist Beth Eckstein and Cortney Pauly, Cloie and her owner Dina Garland get to show off their tricks and agility maneuvers each week at Black Mountain Primary School. During most sessions, the children get to choose one of a dozen tricks for Cloie to perform—such as ‘twirl’ or ‘bow’—and then have to say it in a sentence. The commands contain sounds the students are working to pronounce correctly, such as ‘s’ in sit, ‘tr’ in treat, ‘ch’ in fetch, and ‘z’ in puzzle.

Five students in kindergarten and first grade have been working with Cloie each Friday during speech therapy. At first, several of the students were difficult to understand, but after three months they have all made improvements in their speech and language. For example, Cara, a kindergartner working on her ‘t’ sound, told the speech therapist after a session, “Cloie has curvy hair like me.” Cara correctly produced three ‘ts’ without being reminded about tongue placement. Speech therapists are always looking for creative ways to get kids to practice their speech and language goals. Cara and Dina provide a fun, playful environment where the students are highly motivated to say, “Speak, Cloie, Speak!” over and over until Cloie, and they, get it right.

**Donna Lawrence and Susie Hammond, North Carolina**

The American Humane Association Hero Dog Awards honor “ordinary” dogs who do extraordinary things. Pet Partners is proud to announce that the 2014 Top Hero Dog winner is Susie, a registered Pet Partners therapy team with her handler Donna Lawrence of High Point, North Carolina. Susie was just a puppy when she endured a horrible abusive situation; she was beaten, set on fire and left for dead. Fortunately, she was rescued by a local animal shelter and treated for her wounds. Meanwhile, Donna herself was recovering from her own near-death experience from a dog attack that left her incapable of having children. After Donna adopted Susie they formed a close bond that helped them both to heal. Donna was instrumental in passing “Susie’s Law” in North Carolina, legislation which gives harsher penalties to those who are convicted of animal abuse. The team’s story inspires the people they visit to never lose hope, no matter how unbearable their current situation.

**Rebecca Davis and Oliver Hammond, Louisiana**

An endless supply of hugs and kisses awaits Oliver as he enters Maddie’s speech and language therapy session. “Hey baby!” she says to the large Golden Retriever as she leads the way to their special reading time together. Maddie participates in an Animal-Assisted Therapy program offered at the Southeastern Louisiana University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic. Oliver and his handler, Rebecca Davis, an Associate Professor/Audiologist at the university, work in collaboration with Holly Smith, Speech-Language Pathologist/Clinical instructor, and her student clinicians, to incorporate Animal-Assisted Therapy into Maddie’s speech and language intervention. Maddie, an outgoing and energetic nine-year-old, has Down syndrome which has caused her to have significant communication and literacy delays. Her speech is difficult to understand and her ability to comprehend and produce language also is affected. It is typical to utilize books and literacy activities during speech therapy sessions, as many children with communication delays are at risk for literacy disorders. Additionally, books are used to target various language skills, such as vocabulary, problem solving, and language comprehension.

Before working with Oliver, Maddie was resistant to literacy activities during her speech therapy sessions. Reading with Oliver has dramatically increased her motivation to read, leading to improved communication and literacy skills. Oliver visits her hour-long sessions for 15-20 minutes, during which Maddie reads a story to Oliver using a book that has been modified using pictures/symbols to support her reading. She associates reading with Oliver and practices the book with her clinician between his visits to her sessions. Once Maddie has finished the book, she is rewarded with an opportunity to give commands to Oliver. He gladly performs tricks for her, such as “sit,” “shake” and “high five,” in return for treats. Maddie and Oliver have developed a bond and both benefit from their time together. While Oliver helps motivate Maddie to read, she showers him with love and affection.

Pet Partners Teams at Operation Purple Camp

**Operation Purple Camp is part of a program offered by the National Military Family Association. Families of wounded military personnel enjoy free residential camps that strive to help kids deal with the stress that result from their parents’ active military duty. The camps are held in various locations across the country and Pet Partners therapy animal teams are always asked to participate. Camps were held two separate weekends in October at the YMCA Camp in Nashville and seven teams volunteered. Pictured left to right are Nicole Gallegos with Johnny (Laguna Vista, TX), Jenyfer Lindahl with Alexis (Gallatin, TN), and Dianne Klapin with Darcy (Heath, TX). Also attending were Linda Gregg & Lan, Rebecca Troutt & Jesse, Cheryl Sague & Kinsey, and Debbie Amon de Nunez & Tashi. The teams were on hand to greet families upon arrival and petting the dogs was the perfect icebreaker. One young girl was quite shy and sat apart from the other children. All the kids at camp are experiencing difficult situations with their parents’ deployment, but this girl was even more despondent because her parent had passed away. Within a short time Jenyfer’s dog Alexis had her smiling and talking about her pets. Soon, the little girl was interacting with the other teams and introducing the incoming families to the dogs. The Camp gives the children an opportunity to spend quiet, quality time with their families, but it also allows them the space to just be a kid. The Pet Partners teams helped as a soothing, comforting, non-judgmental presence.**

**David Boehner and Bear, McGregor, Texas**

The American Kennel Club has recognized AKC registered therapy dogs since 2011 (www.akc.org/akctherapydog). Titles are specific to the number of visits the team has completed. A great number of dogs registered with Pet Partners have already earned titles, but Pet Partners is very proud to announce that Bear, a Wire-haired Point Griffon teamed with David Boehner, became the very first to win the highest level of honor with a gold medal on July 1—AKC Therapy Dog Distinguished (THDD). To earn the title, the team must have completed a minimum of 400 visits. David and Bear have visiting access to virtually all departments in Baylor Scott & White Hospital, including the emergency room and all children’s areas. They also visit the rehabilitation department where Bear demonstrates the use of the treadmill, inspiring many patients to “give it a try.” During one visit when Bear was on the treadmill, David heard an elderly woman nursing a broken hip remark, “If he can do it, so can I.” The next morning, with assistance, the patient took her first steps on the treadmill. Pet Partners congratulates David and Bear for this high honor and their dedication!
On October 11 – 12, 2014 Pet Partners hosted a Team Evaluator Symposium in San Pedro, California to collaborate with licensed evaluators across the country, sharing ideas and input that identified common best practices and challenges. The recommendations for strategic action will help guide Pet Partners’ direction for the upcoming year, refining and enhancing our procedures, and enthusiasm for plans to encourage and enable more frequent communication between all volunteer groups. The productive meeting resulted in many ideas from our hard-working licensed evaluators across the country, sharing ideas and input that identified common best practices and challenges. The productive meeting resulted in many ideas from our hard-working licensed evaluators across the country, sharing ideas and input that identified common best practices and challenges. The recommendations for strategic action will help guide Pet Partners’ direction for the upcoming year, refining and enhancing our currently recognized gold standard Therapy Animal Program. The productive meeting resulted in many ideas from our hard-working evaluators in the field, including recommendations for additional continuing education, suggestions for improvements in evaluation procedures, and enthusiasm for plans to encourage and enable more frequent communication between all volunteer groups. The event was generously underwritten by the Mill River Foundation.

Phyllis O’Boyle and Kaylee Waldport, Oregon
Kaylee the Havanese has been working with her handler Phyllis O’Boyle for three years. They regularly visit an assisted living home, spending time with residents. One charming lady in her late 90s had always been fond of cuddling with the dog, but was too ill to do so. Phyllis thought they would not be seeing her again. But following the week, the staff brought her down in a wheelchair. The woman did not look or act the same, but Kaylee recognized her and coaxed Phyllis to take her over to her friend. She sniffed her and then settled down in her lap. The woman no longer was able to cuddle with the dog, but did some rough petting. Kaylee sat quietly and then reached up and gave the woman a sweet kiss on the cheek. The woman then smiled for the first time and spoke the name of a dog she had owned in her past. In broken language, the woman told Kaylee how much she had missed her all these years. “It touched my heart how much she missed her dog and how calm she became with Kaylee’s response,” Phyllis said. “It also touched my heart that Kaylee knew her even though she had changed in appearance and demeanor. Kaylee knew her friend.”

Sue Grundfest began visiting Casa del Sol two years ago with her poodle Kirby (now deceased). This group home for multiply challenged youth now has several therapy animal teams visiting the home regularly. Sue manages Love Dog Adventures, a Pet Partners Community Partner in Las Vegas, Nevada.

One young girl at Casa del Sol at first stayed in her room on a mattress on the floor. She did not want to be touched and every aspect of her life depended upon people touching her — to eat, bathe and dress. Through great patience and identifying the right dogs and handlers, this young girl has learned to “be gentle.” She has learned the

joy of a soft caress not only of a furry friend but a human friend. She has learned to look into a person’s eyes with clarity and understanding. She has learned how to laugh and communicate through her body what she is feeling. She has learned to be calm and patient and loving. She has learned to love.
Animal-assisted interventions and more specifically animal-assisted activities have seen a tremendous growth in the past couple of decades. Public interest in animal-assisted interactions seems to have been an additional impetus for the growth that is being witnessed. Personally (Aubrey) my early involvement in the field began using a variety of species of animals including small and large birds in my work with children. That was actually about 40 years ago when these animals were my pet partners even before I began incorporating dogs. Today we see close to 10,000 registered Pet Partners teams that utilize dogs. On the other hand all of the other species registered by Pet Partners don’t account for even one tenth of that total. That doesn’t imply that dogs are better therapy animals, but only that they are the most widely employed. We both appreciate the position that many species could be utilized in therapeutic interactions, if they possess certain traits that make them desirable and safe to interact with humans. It is ironic that different people seem to not only be attracted to certain animals, but they also seem more curious in interacting with specific species. Irv Robbins was correct in saying that “Not everyone likes all our flavors, but each flavor is someone’s favorite.” The same is true about our therapy animals.

In discussing how to select various therapy animals, it is critical to point out that there are certain expectations that all therapy animals need to demonstrate in general. There are three variables that we strongly suggest for all of the species that we will be discussing. They are as follows:

1. Without question, the most important behavior in a good therapy animal is based on a personality trait that we could call being affiliative to people. In essence, these are animals that when they see a person are extremely receptive and responsive.

2. The animals must have early socialization with humans. These early experiences will help them become very comfortable with human interaction.

3. The animals must demonstrate consistent behavior that will allow the handler to feel confident about the animal’s interaction with people.

All therapy animals should also be screened periodically by a veterinarian for health checks.

The following briefly describes and orients you to what traits you should expect to see in any of the nine species of therapy animals that Pet Partners registers.

**DOGS** 9,912 in service

As noted earlier, dogs are the most utilized therapy animals. There are numerous behaviors that would be expected from a dog who was part of a therapy team. In general these dogs need to have a good temperament style and enjoy human interaction and touch. They need to be extremely social and friendly but need to respond in a gentle and calm manner. Therapy dogs who visit a variety of settings must be able to handle unusual sights, sounds, and smells. The dogs need to be obedient and be able to regain self-control after being excited. They also need to be able to be attentive to their handler and not demonstrate anxiety in novel situations. Like other animals used in therapy, these dogs need to be able to feel comfortable being petted, and interacted with.

**CATS** 198 in service

Cats can be tremendous visiting therapy animals. There are several variables that should be considered. Cats should be comfortable with being handled and held. Some of the desired behaviors should be the cat appears relaxed with body handling and being appropriately touched all over. The cat should be comfortable being groomed, pet, picked up, and gently held. The cat should be relaxed wearing a harness and leash. Since these cats will be transported to various locations they need to be comfortable and relaxed during car rides and at ease in new environments (when visiting new locations). The following behaviors identify what individuals should expect to see in a relaxed cat: slow blinks or closed eyes, slow, gentle tail sway or the tail may be still, relaxed ears, positioned forward, relaxed body, good appetite, and relaxed and comfortable meeting other cats, dogs, and strangers.

**EQUINES** 202 in service

Horses are gorgeous, graceful and loving beings that can be wonderful registered therapy animals. It is suggested that horses used in therapy should be between 6-15 years of age. Older horses typically have been exposed to things that younger horses may not have experienced. Unfortunately younger horses may be more guarded to the uncertain behaviors found within the human world. For children, miniature horses or ponies are better choices because they are less threatening in size. Miniature horses make great therapy companions and are often used on hospital visits. Horses should possess a certain temperament style to be a selected for therapy. Overall, they must be calm, stand quietly when being groomed, and react positively to human interaction. A viable horse must be trustworthy while being lead through novel environments. They must not bite, kick, buck, pace, or crib. A horse that is used in therapy should accept hands around their mouth as well as being touched all over the body.
Young Pet Partners handler Lillian Pringle shares the affection of her rabbit Peanut with Levert Avery at the Breath of Life Adult Day Service in Brainerd, MN.

Rabbits have long been a favorite pet due to their soft fur, big eyes, and enchanting hop. They are very similar to guinea pigs in terms of their diet and care requirements. One notable difference is that rabbits have long been a favorite pet due to their soft fur, big eyes, and enchanting hop. They are very similar to guinea pigs in terms of their diet and care requirements. One notable difference is that they usually eat from the hand of a human. Early socialization with different humans can enhance suitability to therapy. Rabbits with a fear of humans are not suitable as therapy animals. One sign of a rabbit that may be well suited to therapy is that they approach and will eat from the hand of a human. Early socialization with different humans can enhance suitability to therapy.

BIRDS

78 in service

Birds are beautiful creatures and can make wonderful therapy companions. I (Aubrey) began using birds in therapy sessions about 30 years ago. Birds that are young and socialized early may make strong candidates as therapy birds. Birds that are hand fed seem to be more comfortable interacting with individuals. An ideal bird would be one that doesn’t startle easily and appears to enjoy human companionship. The selected bird has to be pretty steady and will not likely get startled. Introduce the bird slowly to therapy, and make sure that bird doesn’t seem to experience anxiety. Birds that like to be handled are preferable but it is suggested that the handler be in control of all interactions for the safety of the bird and the client. Those individuals that are considering birds need to appreciate that birds who get a great deal of attention early in their lives will expect and need to receive similar attention as they age. Cockatiels, small parrots, and lovebirds make good candidates (e.g. dusky conures). Some cockatoos make viable candidates but one needs to be cautious of excessive screeching. Strong training is necessary for birds to work in therapeutic settings especially because they have to wear a harness and a leash.

GUINEA PIGS

22 in service

Guinea pigs are small, furry critters from the rodent family. They are commonly confused with hamsters, but are differentiated by the fact that they do not have a tail and they are diurnal (waking during the day). They are a popular choice for children and school classrooms due to their small size and endearing demeanor. They make adorable companions. I (Aubrey) began using birds in therapy sessions about 30 years ago. Birds that are young and socialized early may make strong candidates as therapy birds. Birds that are hand fed seem to be more comfortable interacting with individuals. An ideal bird would be one that doesn’t startle easily and appears to enjoy human companionship. The selected bird has to be pretty steady and will not likely get startled. Introduce the bird slowly to therapy, and make sure that bird doesn’t seem to experience anxiety. Birds that like to be handled are preferable but it is suggested that the handler be in control of all interactions for the safety of the bird and the client. Those individuals that are considering birds need to appreciate that birds who get a great deal of attention early in their lives will expect and need to receive similar attention as they age. Cockatiels, small parrots, and lovebirds make good candidates (e.g. dusky conures). Some cockatoos make viable candidates but one needs to be cautious of excessive screeching. Strong training is necessary for birds to work in therapeutic settings especially because they have to wear a harness and a leash.

Pigs

6 in service

There has been a proliferation of pot-bellied pigs as companion animals in recent years. If cared for appropriately, a pig can provide a wonderful therapy animal partner. They are smart, trainable, clean, and affectionate. They may be a suitable choice for clients who are allergic to cats and dogs. However, pigs require specialized enrichment and care. Without appropriate space and activities, pigs may become food aggressive or destructive. These behaviors can be minimized by ensuring appropriate spaces for digging and natural behavior outdoors, as well as positive reinforcement for desired behaviors indoors. The choice to include a pig should be approached with careful consideration of these needs as well as their size (average 125 pounds) and lifespan (roughly 12-18 years). They are a rewarding commitment for those who can provide appropriate care.
The efficacy of animal-assisted interventions is very
dependent on the partnership between the handler and
the therapy animal. Decisions need to be made on how
to select the most viable candidates for involvement. It is
also critical that the animal’s welfare is strongly taken
into consideration, so that the experience is equally
beneficial and safe. When all of these factors are taken
into consideration, the outcomes can enrich the lives of
many who are touched.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank Katsena Jones and Robin Kilcoyn for their assistance in gathering
information about horses and cats.

Dr. Aubrey Fine is on the faculty of California State Polytechnic
University where he is a professor in the College of Education and
Integrative Studies and is a member of the Pet Partners board. His
newest book, “Our Faithful Companions” has just been published
by Alpine Publications.

Dr. Marguerite O’Haire is an Assistant Professor of Human-Animal
Interaction at Purdue University.

The efficacy of animal-assisted interventions is very
in Bellevue, WA, photo by Dani Weiss
safety and security of the animal is essential to preventing fearful
visits. Integrated food rewards allow clients to experience positive
settings. The use of a halter and lead will enable smooth facility
interactions with these unique creatures. Carefully monitoring the
security and the safety of the animal is essential to preventing fearful
behaviors such as spitting. Common therapy activities include
feeding, grooming, leading, and engaged observation.

Llamas and alpacas are unconventional therapy animal choices, but
tones that have brought joy and comfort to many individuals. Llamas
loom large at nearly six feet tall and between 300 and 450 pounds. Alpacas
grow to roughly half that size. Training and socialization are
essential to facilitate successful interactions in therapeutic
settings. The use of a halter and lead will enable smooth facility
visits. Integrated food rewards allow clients to experience positive
interactions with these unique creatures. Carefully monitoring the

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WHAT’S NEW
Volunteering With Your Pet Webinar
Tuesday, January 20, 6:00 p.m. PST
Have you ever considered volunteering as a therapy animal team? Pet Partners invites prospective volunteers to attend a one-hour informational webinar (online interactive presentation) to learn
about our Therapy Animal Program. Led by experienced volunteer
Susan Tiss with the assistance of Pet Partners staff, this session
will cover the process for becoming a registered therapy animal
team with your pet. Registration information: www.petpartners.
org/VolunteeringWebinar

A second webinar will be held Thursday,
July 23, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. PST

Coming in 2015
Volunteering with Your Pet (Jan/Feb and fall)
Volunteering with Your Llama (spring)

And many more to come. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter or
visit our website, www.petpartners.org

You can also help by conducting your own grassroots fundraising event or ask about our Peer-to-Peer online fundraising opportunity. You
may also become a member of our Caring Community, a national group of supporters who have made provisions in their estate planning
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We thank our therapy animals who have lived many lives during their years of service.

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**ALUMNI**

**Retired between April 16, 2014 - September 15, 2014**

**Many lives during their years of service.**

**Alumni**

**PASSED AWAY**

**AMIGO, Labrador Retriever, Suzanne St. LA**
**ALICE, Labrador Retriever, Kathy Keuning, AZ**
**ALFIE, Labrador Retriever, Suzanne Cusco, OH**
**ANGUS, English Shepherd, Pat M. Draper, CA**
**ANNA, Australian Shepherd, Anita L. Zwingel, WI**
**ANNIE, Golden Retriever, Paula K. Fazio, NE**
**ANNE, Golden Retriever, Marcia J. Smith, PA**
**ARENA, Australian Shepherd, Linda L. Pinnock, CA**
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**ATHENA, Poodle, Joanne J. Klaber, PA**
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**BADGER, German Shepherd, Karen A. Gehrig, WA**
**BANDY, Golden Retriever, Susan Cusco, OH**
**BANDIT, Golden Retriever, Marcia L. Smith, OH**
**BARNEY, Golden Retriever, Trista K. Janczak, WI**
**BARRY, Golden Retriever, Karen A. Gehrig, WA**
**BART, Golden Retriever, Patricia J. Draper, CA**

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**Divinity lived in a cage for her first nine years, working as a puppy-mill breeder, having countless litters of puppies. Divinity was 9-1/2 years old when Richard Richardson retired in 2012, and a life of being spoiled by her dad.**

After her retirement, Divinity, through her blog, became a champion for senior pet adoption, campaigned for discounts for senior pets and became an advocate for handicapped pets. Sadly, five months after her 14th birthday, Divinity’s experience as a Pet Partners handler proved to her the power of animal-assisted interactions to assist with healings. Her mother and Jackson’s memories gave her the strength to continue her volunteer service — she has completed the requirements to become a licensed team evaluator.

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**Saying Goodbye**

**We thank our therapy animals who have lived many lives during their years of service.**

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Chuck Granoski

"I have always had a commitment to social responsibility and have chosen to do so in the human-animal bond field to assist those who do the important day-to-day work in this field. The positive health benefits people and their pets receive from the human-animal interaction is invaluable to a society and there remains a significant unmet need for additional such services in the world. These are just two of the reasons I decided to become involved with the work of Pet Partners.

Because of my 30-plus years of experience in the animal and children’s welfare fields as a board member for local, regional, and national organizations, I was recruited to serve on the Pet Partners board. I have been and continue to be very impressed with Pet Partners’ commitment to the highest standards for education and training of teams across the country, the work done by the nearly 11,000 teams in coordination with the Veterans Administration, UCLA Medical Center, Tufts University, the Mayo Clinic and many more speaks to the high caliber of our teams, training and talent. I am very proud to support the current work of Pet Partners and am providing for their future through my estate planning and the Caring Community program."

Chuck Granoski was born, raised and resides in Tacoma with his life partner Candace Cragg. They have three grown children. He has been with the Law Office of Betzendofer & Granoski since 1974 and has been active in nonprofit all his life including the boards of the American Humane Association in Denver, The Humane Society for Tacoma and Pierce County in Washington State and as both board member and interim CEO for Pet Partners in 2014.

If you are interested in learning how you can provide for Pet Partners’ future by leaving a gift through the Caring Community, contact Julie Delano, National Director of Development, 425.679.5502 or julied@petpartners.org

In 1977, a group of visionaries led by veterinarians Dr. Leo K. Bustad and Dr. William “Bill” McCulloch along with his brother, psychiatrist Dr. Michael J. McCulloch, and a quartet of other veterinarians came to know one another as they shared their observations that pets were having a positive impact on their human clients’ health and happiness. They formed the Delta Foundation and planted the seed that would grow exponentially over nearly four decades to become Pet Partners, the nation’s largest and most prestigious nonprofit training handlers and evaluating multiple species for Animal-Assisted Interactions.

Today, we are proud to introduce The Delta Giving Society. It honors Pet Partners’ heritage and founding in 1977 as a leader in demonstrating and promoting positive human-animal interactions while paving a healthy road to the future. Forty years later, the science behind the benefits of Animal-Assisted Interactions has become indisputable. From students and seniors to veterans and the disabled, as well as patients in recovery and those approaching end of life, the impact of these interactions is felt one million times a year. In 2014, interest in Animal-Assisted Interactions is exploding; the importance of maintaining a quality approach with rigor that supports the human-animal bond is perhaps more important than ever. To honor our visionary roots and to meet the challenges of today, we have created the Delta Giving Society to recognize those supporters who understand our work and consistently demonstrate generous support.

For information contact Julie Delano, National Director of Development, 425.679.5502 or julied@petpartners.org
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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.

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Nancy Stone

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INTERACTION WITH ANIMALS
reduces
blood pressure

INTERACTION WITH ANIMALS
lowers anxiety and stress levels
Dr. Mary Craig has risen from Vice Chair to succeed Brenda Bax as Pet Partners Chairperson. Ms. Bax will transition into her new role as Ex-officio. She is joined by four new board members:

- Chad Bagini, Managing Director at Harvard International
- Ryan Granard, Vice President of Cloud Operations at Adobe
- Michael Sapp, Vice President of Merchandising Solutions at PetSmart
- Diana Kirikides, Vice President of Talent Acquisition at Expelion
Marcie and Rodney Beedy were not looking for another dog on the day Xander found them. The Oregon couple already had six Pugs and a Lab at home when Rodney came across a new resident at the Klamath Animal Shelter early last year. Up for adoption was a young furred ball of a Pug, the soft tan color of tea with milk, with a dark nose and plenty of wrinkles.

But there was something different about Xander. Pugs typically have large, sensitive, expressive eyes that seem to telegraph emotion. Xander was blind, having suffered a head injury when he was younger that caused him to lose both eyes. Rodney didn’t see the dog’s limitations. What he saw instead was a loving puppy with a strong and gentle heart; a “wonder dog” destined for greatness.

“Right after we brought Xander home, we noticed the other dogs would take turns outside with him, helping him through the doggie door until he could handle it on his own,” Marcie said. “It didn’t take long for the couple to realize Xander had a special calling. Unlike some more spirited Pugs, Xander is even-tempered and gentle. The couple knew he was a perfect candidate to be a therapy dog.”

They enrolled him at Double-C Dog Training (where Rodney is a certified trainer) and he passed with flying colors. Marcie says Xander was a natural at training, and performed better than most of the sighted dogs. Rodney started taking Xander to work with him, where he settled in as the school’s official greeter.

Diploma in hand (or paw), Xander then aced the Pet Partners therapy dog test, and Marcie and Xander became a registered therapy animal team. Xander was about to turn tragedy into triumph. The gentle, lovable Xander – who sees with his heart if not his eyes – also carries an unspoken message: What does it mean to be different? In Xander’s case, “different” means destined for greatness.

Marcie says that after a visit with Xander, a woman, gently resting his head in her hands for as long as she needed him to be there, said, “This is his calling. People love him.”

Marcie says some of Xander’s visits bring her to tears, as she watches people melt at his nuzzling touch. “There’s something here you need to see,” he told her.

Xander also will sometimes sit right next to a child who is struggling to focus at school – quietly offering a reason to engage in class, and patiently listening as the child reads aloud to him.

And his uncanny ability to connect with children may pay off in another way, with vulnerable kids who struggle to fit in with their peers. The gentle, lovable Xander – who sees with his heart if not his eyes – also carries an unspoken message: What does it mean to be different? In Xander’s case, “different” means destined for greatness.

There will never be another one like him,” Marcie says. “He is just an amazing dog.”

Contributed by Kris Betker
Founded in 1977, Pet Partners is the leader in demonstrating and promoting positive human-animal interactions. With the highest quality training available for visiting teams, Pet Partners is the largest national nonprofit evaluating multiple species for field work. Our nearly 11,000 teams are comprised of nine different species of animals that have been studied and researched for their temperament and effectiveness in providing support to people.