

“Paws & Hearts”

Animal Assisted Therapy

Fed. Tax ID #91-2096569

WINTER-SPRING 2015

NEWSLETTER

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Executive Director's Message

As I write this Newsletter on Wednesday January 7, 2015, it is a lovely 79 degrees, and the door of the office is wide open. Our version of winter in the desert...gotta' love it!

As I mentioned in the cover letter, this will be our last mailed newsletter. The response to our first on-line newsletter was so overwhelming that we are going to omit the newsletter from mailings and just do a Summer and Fall mailer.

This is the start of our 15th year of service---where have the past 14 years gone! When I think of all the visits I've done around the valley with Lucky and Scruffy, and now Maddie, and all the 100's of volunteers I've trained I am a little overwhelmed. It is just going too fast for me.

In the coming newsletters we'll go back and talk about the beginnings and perhaps even show some of the original pictures from the first couple of years.

Let me take a moment to thank each and every volunteer and donor who took the time to raise donations for the last walk. Each one of you gave us our best year to date, and we couldn't do it without your support!

Here's to year number 15!

Richard Waxman

Upcoming Events to Put on Your Calendars!

“Take Your Dog to the Movies”
Cinemas Palme D'Or
Thursday, April 9th—6:00 pm
“Hotel for Dogs”

Annual Volunteer Meeting
Saturday, October 10th, 9:00 am
Joslyn Center

**15th Annual Dog Walk/
Fundraiser**
Saturday November 28th
Westin Mission Hills Resort

“Paws & Hearts” 74-854 Velie Way, Ste. 7
Palm Desert, CA 92260
(760) 836-1406 fax (760) 836-1426
E-Mail: Pawsandhearts@aol.com
Website: www.pawsandhearts.org

“Scruffy & Maddie's” Views

I am so glad that Dad took most of December off so that Maddie and I could take a break from our weekly visits at Eisenhower. We love our visits but sometimes we just need a nap. Hearing the words, “our 14th annual dog walk” over and over, we were ready to take a bite out of the hand that feeds us! Thankfully, we have the better part of a year where we don't have to hear about the next one; although reading this newsletter, I can see he is doing just that. There goes our rest!

Even with all the promoting and interviews, the three of us managed to have some really lovely visits at the hospital this past fall. As always, our favorite days to visit where Thanksgiving and Christmas. Both days “Andy” helped out taking charge of half the hospital.

We really did enjoy visiting the patients and their family members. Maddie and I even managed to snag a bit of turkey in two rooms! Next year my sister and I plan to strike if Dad dresses us up in holiday costumes again. I had to wear this Santa suit, complete with a hat, and while I looked adorable, the damned hat would not stay on my head and just about choked me as it kept sliding around my neck.

It was Maddie who had the worst of it, Dad had her dressed up as a Chanukah dreidel! Poor thing, if she had to hum “Oh Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel” one more time, we were going to jump ship!

“Scruffy & Maddie” Waxman

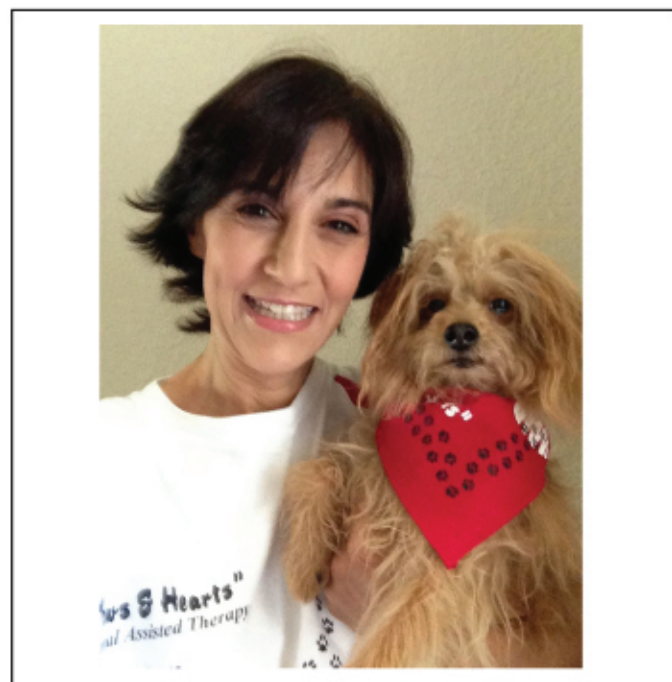
A Family Tradition Carries on.....

Early last year Megan a college student came into the office with her dog "Lug Nut" for the temperament test. Megan explained that she was going back east in the fall and could only volunteer until then. I'd already fallen for "Lug Nut", and it didn't take too long to figure out that Megan is a brilliant young woman.

Her months visiting California Nursing and Rehab were incredibly rewarding to both her and "Lug", and prior to her heading east she trained her Mother Risa and her poodle "Shaina" to carry on with the visits.

Megan wrote us recently and I share her note:

Dear Richard: It is with much excitement that I share with you the great news that I was accepted into the University of Pittsburgh's Master of Social Work program. The work "Lug" and I did at CNR really inspired me to pursue aiding the elderly community as a profession and I cannot thank you enough for all you have done to help me on my journey. I have so much gratitude for what I learned as a volunteer both from the residents and from you. The passion you have for the organization and its cause are very evident and it is my hope that in due time I will be able to spend my days in a similar fashion (maybe even making a push for wider acceptance of Animal Assisted Therapy.)



Risa and "Shaina" have carried on with the Wednesday morning visits and at lunch the other day Risa shared with me how wonderful it is that so many of the residents ask her every week how Megan and "Lug Nut" are doing back east in the cold. Risa and "Shaina" are naturals at the visits and Risa can best describe a typical visit with this volunteer report.

"Shaina's" fan club was waiting for her at the front door! She walked in and was immediately given a warm embrace by one of the patients. One of the residents told me hearing about Shaina's week and adventures gives her a good laugh!

A lot of patients held Shaina and were very tearful. They really appreciate her visits and look forward to seeing her each week. It is hard to describe how much this furry little dog means to them. I always enjoy the look on the faces of the new patients who see Shaina for the first time when we enter their rooms and come over to their beds. They always smile and laugh! One woman told me that she will look forward to Shaina's visit next Wednesday because it is her birthday.

.....for the rest of our Winter-Spring 2015 Newsletter, be sure to visit our website at www.pawsandhearts.org

Please don't forget to email us your email addresses so that we can include you in our data base. Thanks to everyone for your support of our on-line Newsletter.

Below is a reprint of a Letter to the Editor that appeared in the Desert Sun on Thanksgiving Day 2014.

VALLEY VOICE

Therapy dogs bring comfort in labor of love

The desert is home to more long-term care facilities than any other city except Miami.

There are thousands of seniors residing in these facilities, and so many of them had dogs and cats when they lived independently. Now think about how much your dog means to you, the comfort and companionship he or she shares with you 24/7. Think ahead to the time when perhaps you are a resident of a long-term care facility and unable to take care of a dog or a cat, and all you want is the chance to visit with a four-legged friend? Enter the Canine Ambassadors from Paws & Hearts Animal Assisted Therapy.

Our 501 C3 nonprofit organization has been in operation for 14 years and has been serving Desert Regional Medical Center, Eisenhower Medical Center, the cancer centers at both hospitals, and all the long-term care facilities from Palm Springs to Indio. At these facilities a team of two — a trained therapy dog wearing their signature red bandana, and his or her handler, make weekly visits. The teams spend an average of two hours spreading a lot of goodwill to the residents and patients who are missing the unconditional love that only a four-legged healer can provide.

The Canine Ambassadors with Paws & Hearts have all been temperament tested and their handlers trained in how to perform a pet therapy visit — how to approach a patient in bed, how to ask if a visit is required, if the dog (depending on size) is requested on the bed. For the dogs who do this work, this is really a labor of love. Patients address the dogs by name treating them as a treasured member of their family.

The organization has dogs of all sizes and breeds, with the exception of chows and pit bulls. And it is the dogs' weekly mission to make the patients they visit feel just a little better whether that entails having a golden retriever slide its whole head on the bed, or a small terrier-mix up on the bed for a few big hugs.

When the volunteers hear things like, "You've made my day," "I waited all week to see you," "Can you just leave the dog here and come back in an hour?" they



Richard Waxman

know they've hit a good nerve. So many of the patients visited have a chance to reminisce about the dogs they had.

For the patients in a hospital setting, it is proven that a visit from a therapy dog lowers blood pressure, reduces the feeling of isolation, and just brings a sense of calm and enjoyment into the hospital room. We've received hundreds of thank you cards and notes over the 14 years thanking us — actually thanking the dogs by name — for making a visit. This sounds like such a simple thing, but it is so much more than that!

And for the cancer patients awaiting treatments at the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Desert Regional Medical Center, Bob and Zoso are just what the doctor ordered. Both of these standard poodles have been visiting for years now, and having the two dogs to interact with make waiting for appointments and treatments just little less unpleasant. There are also Canine Ambassadors who visit the Lucy Curci Cancer Center radiation waiting room. Having a dog to focus on prior to the treatments has proven over and over how petting a dog can make even the most stressful situation tolerable.

All of this is done on a very modest budget with local support from the community. The Paws & Hearts 14th annual Dog Walk-Fundraiser is coming up on Saturday and is the one time of the year local residents are asked to come out and support our work. You don't have to have a dog to attend the walk, but if you do, even better. All donations raised go directly to the services provided. Information about the walk and the organization can be obtained by visiting our website, www.pawsandhearts.org.

Richard Waxman is the executive director of Paws & Hearts. His beloved dog Lucky was the founder. Email him at pawsandhearts@aol.com



"As Good As New" Official Thrift Store for "Paws & Hearts"

Please be sure to visit our thrift shop, **As Good As New** located at 44 855 San Pablo Ave. #3, Palm Desert, behind the Angel View Thrift Shop, (760) 341-4660. The store is full of great items, and the merchandise changes daily.

As Good As New is a terrific way to generate donations for our organization. A whopping 50% of all sales are a donation to us, so your purchases are very important, and your donations of household goods keeps a customer coming back.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO SEE GARAGE SALES IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, PLEASE CONSIDER ASKING THE SELLER IF THEY WOULD DONATE THEIR UNSOLD GOODS TO US. WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO ARRANGE PICK UP.

Keep in mind that we are able to pick up all of your large donations. Items such as furniture, televisions, even computers can benefit us. Please keep in mind that all items must be in *working* and *saleable* condition. So next time you are cleaning out the house, please give us a call and we will be only too happy to schedule a pick up!

Hours of Operation: Monday – Saturday 9 – 4 (760) 341-4660

Volunteer Stories

Many of our readers have asked where our Volunteer Stories come from. Our volunteer teams visit their assigned facility each and every week and part of their commitment is to email into our office a weekly report, complete with their visitation story. Some day, these stories along with photographs will be turned into a book because the stories are heart-warming and the patients/clients we visit truly treasure their weekly visit.

Manor Care, Gayle & "Toby": I carried Toby into one of the rooms to see a patient we had not met, and as we were talking, the patient shouted, "My gosh, it's real, I thought the dog was a stuffed toy!" I took Toby to her, he got on her bed, and climbed up on her tummy and curled up. He laid there until I had to actually make him get off. He just knew how happy the patient was with him. She told me that she would just keep Toby because he was so content! She begged us to visit again next week, and we promised we would!

Sharing my dog, and giving my time is truly what the holidays are about! Gayle

Windsor Court, Kim & "Zoey": People are calling Zoey by name a lot, and some of them are making it into a competition to see who Zoey will go to first! Jean in the Alzheimer's section just loves Zoey and his companionship as she sits by her chair. Another Alzheimer's resident Ray clearly has had experience with dogs because Zoey gravitates towards him. Ray just rubs her back for the longest time, saying how great and honest dogs are. One of the daughters of an Alzheimer's resident told me how important Zoey's visits are to her Mom, especially now with how hard things are for her, but that Zoey is a good thing for her!

Premier Health Care, Suze & "Dunkin": The whole visit was a highlight for me! It was Dunkin's first visit and although he pulled a lot in excitement, I know that this will change as he gets used to all the sights and smells of his new environment. We visited about 30 residents—one gentleman in a wheelchair out on the patio for the longest visit, and then a lovely gentleman named Wayne who gave Dunkin a stuffed teddy bear for Christmas. Dunk made people smile and that's why we are doing this. I can't wait to go back next week!

Eisenhower Medical Center, Ann & "Andy": One lady in extreme pain held on to Andy for dear life and said he helped. A 91 year-old lady who was going home wanted to get a few kisses to hold her over until she got back to her own dog. Another lady saw us in the hall and just held out her arms for us to come in, major tear-time, but also a big smile. Great couple, man was the patient, his wife was visiting. They had had a Cairn-Terrier. Andy sat on his feet and that man said to his wife that they had to get another dog. Wonderful visit in Physical Therapy with a lady we saw last week—she held out her arms for Andy and cuddled him like a stuffed bear! Her speech is impaired, but we had a good talk about dog love. Met a staff member who usually works evenings and was thrilled to meet one of the therapy dogs and said that everyone talks about them!

Our Mission Statement

"Paws & Hearts" is a leader in the field of "Animal Assisted Therapy" (AAT) and it is our mission to enrich the lives of the frail and special care cases that require the loving attention and affection that only a 'four-legged' healer can provide.

IT IS NEVER TOO EARLY TO

START PROMOTING OUR

15th ANNUAL DOG WALK-FUNDRAISER

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 28, 2015

*MARK THE DATE ON YOUR CALENDARS
FOR THIS EVENT. IT TRULY WILL BE A
CELEBRATION OF 15 YEARS OF WORK!*

