

“Paws & Hearts”

Animal Assisted Therapy

Fed. Tax ID #91-2096569

WINTER 2020

NEWSLETTER

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“Paws & Hearts”

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“Lucky” & “Scruffy”

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As I write this, our first newsletter of our 20th year, it is with great pride and a huge sense of accomplishment that I take pen to paper.....okay fingers to keyboard. But pen to paper just sounds so much nicer.

We just completed up our **19th Annual Dog Walk**, and in my mind we all have an entire year to celebrate how far we’ve come as a non-profit in the Coachella Valley. Who’d have ever dreamed that today **“Paws & Hearts”** would have exceeded my expectations and continues to make an indelible mark on the community? At the outset I just thought this would make a nice little hobby.

So, with this in mind, this newsletter and the following three newsletters this year will be a celebration of 20 years, with a look back, much reminiscing, and plans for the next 20 years!

Richard Waxman

Upcoming Events to Put on Your Calendars!

Pet Bereavement Support Group

Monthly Meetings

Second Wednesday of the month, 1 pm

20th Annual Dog Walk/Fundraiser

Pancake Breakfast!

Saturday November 28th

Registration begins at 9 am, Walk at 10 am

Westin Mission Hills Golf Resort & Spa

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“Maddie’s” Views (“Lucky” & “Scruffy” in thought)

Okay, Dad, Bingo and I have a bit of a beef with you, and it’s time we talked about it. Perhaps *barked* about it might be a bit more appropriate!

We know that this is the start of Year #20, and I well remember my buddy Scruffy, and God knows you’ve talked about Lucky the Star many times, but showing Bingo and me all those old pictures and videos is a bit much! (Were you really that slim, and was your hair really that red? Boy, aging has been tough on you!)

So, here is our suggestion to you—While a celebration of 20 years is not to be sneezed at, we’d just like you to keep in mind the present and think of how grateful you are for the two of us on a day-to-day basis!

We are happy to hear about the past, but as you always say, ‘the Reader’s Digest version’ please! Despite our grumbling, Bingo and I are really proud of you and all the years of sweat you’ve put into building **“Paws & Hearts”**, so go for it. Shout it from the rooftops this entire year!

“Maddie” Waxman

And it all began.....how??

Picture it, Sicily 1934, a young peasant girl.....oh wait, wrong script.....Let’s try that again! Picture it, Palm Springs, CA, 1999, a 40-year old guy (yours truly) has just moved here, is out looking at condos, and finds this little white poodle-something at a pool. The dog jumps in my arms, as if to say, “I’m yours, take me home,” which I do.

A few months later the dog, who has been named “Lucky” because I was so lucky to have found him, is accompanying me to work. At the time, I was renting apartments and Lucky came to the building with me every day. Lo and behold a gentleman came to see a unit, and he was the Director of Nursing at the old Valencia Palms Rehabilitation in Indio. He took a liking to Lucky and suggested that we make a visit to the patients in his facility. Little did this gentleman know that for years I had been doing Animal Assisted Therapy visits. I asked him if tomorrow was too soon to stop by!

Lucky and I went the very next day, and Lucky was an instant hit with the patients and staff. It was as though he was born to do this type of work! Being the marketer that I am, I called the Desert Sun and asked if they were interested in a cute story. As fate would have it, the cover story for the Desert People section for that weekend was pulled, and they were scrambling for a story. They asked if they could come out the next day, so back we went for a second visit. The article is across the page, and it is the one that launched us!

I assumed we’d get a few phone calls and maybe I’d have a nice little hobby to keep me busy. Well, the phone started to ring, and within a year I had turned my little hobby into a 501C3 non-profit, had an office and a board of directors. At this point a lot of the credit goes to Elizabeth Gobble CPA. Oddly enough she had sent out a flier and in it stated that she worked exclusively with non-profits. I went to see her and her husband Jeff, and inquired how to go about turning my growing group of volunteers into a non-profit. A few months later “Paws & Hearts” was granted its 501C3 status, and Tish & Jeff still do our taxes!

This is how it really all began. There is one other person we need to acknowledge here—Phillip Valdez. Phillip and I were buddies as this whole thing was happening, and it was Phillip who insisted I find an office and suggested that each of the board members contribute \$100.00 per month to the rent and utilities. That \$100.00 per month for board members is still in place, and we have Phillip to thank for that. He also came on many of the original visits, he trained that hoodlum “Scruffy” into becoming a crackerjack therapy dog and he donated countless hours and dollars to our little growing organization.

We have many other people to thank and we will get to them as this story unfolds over the year-----



Phillip and “Lucky”

This was the very first article and the one that launched us!

The Desert Sun Sunday, September 17, 2000
Desert Score: E3
Ranavavavav: E3
The Lighter Side: E3
Desert Score: E3
Ranavavavav: E3
The Lighter Side: E3
Desert Score: E3
Ranavavavav: E3
The Lighter Side: E3

Desert People

Exit exam

Cuddles and kisses upon request

Program brings loving pets into nursing homes

By SEKAI K. MUTUNSHU

When Lucky Waxman strolls down the halls of the Valencia Palms Nursing Center, he seems right at home. Employees pushing linen carts greet him by name and bedridden residents beckon through open doors as if saying hello to a long lost friend.

"It was love at first sight," said 74-year-old Pearl Davis. "We just hit it off right away."

Davis, a resident of Valencia Palms since May, was referring to the pint-size terrier mix who makes his rounds once a week.

Lucky is one of six dogs in the Paws and Hearts pet-therapy program that visits retirement homes throughout the Coachella Valley. Interaction between pets and people has long been known to have the power to heal, and the 3-month-old program aims to alleviate some of the depression and loneliness that tends to accompany old age.

After volunteering in a similar program in Maryland, Richard Waxman has been a firsthand witness to the many benefits of pet therapy.

"For the few moments, they are petting him and playing with him, they don't have a care in the world," he said. "The wonderful thing that these visits do, besides having contact with animals, is that it takes (the residents) from what they've become to a time in their lives when they were younger, when they had a dog or a cat and they start to reminisce."

People become more responsive after visiting with animals, said Waxman, who recalls an elderly woman who moved her atrophied hand to stroke Lucky during a recent morning visit.

"It's miraculous," said Maureen Sanderson, a former nurse and self-described animal advocate who sponsors the Paws and Hearts program. "We see people who don't talk who will suddenly start talking. It's almost a spiritual thing."

Sanderson and Waxman are looking to expand the recently formed program but please see CUDDELES, E3

To volunteer

For more information or to volunteer in the Paws and Hearts pet-therapy program, please call Richard Waxman at 778-5306.

Bonding: Richard Waxman lifts Lucky for Virginia Bustamant. Waxman says, "The wonderful thing that these visits do... is that it takes (the residents) from what they've become to a time in their lives when they were younger."

Almost a spiritual thing: Valencia Palms Nursing Center resident Edith Neal bonds with Lucky.

Over the coming year there will be more articles from our 20-year archives to share!

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 frail and special care cases that require the loving attention and affection that only a "four-legged" healer can provide.



"Lucky" the dog who started the whole thing!



"Scruffy" & "Lucky" at Eisenhower Hospital



"Lucky" & Dad in our old Velie Way office



*Receiving a donation from The Cancer Center at
Desert Regional Medical Center--2006*



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.

Let's go back in time and share some amazing Volunteer Reports from the past!

Richard & "Lucky": April 2000--Valencia Palms, Indio—"So, this is what Luck, the fourth or fifth visit we've had here? We are scheduled for Wednesday afternoons and you are quite the trooper to do this with me. Did you know when you found me that you'd be working for those milk-bones? We sure seem to be making these patients happy with our visits, although I wish they were all wearing name tags so we could remember them by name, but we'll get the hang of this. You just keep cuddling up with these patients and snuggle in even closer when I say it's time for the next bed."

Richard & "Lucky": Desert Regional Medical Center, Hospice Floor, Christmas Day 2001—Christmas morning found Lucky and I visiting the Hospice Floor. We saw many patients, many of whom were gay men with AIDS. The one that resonated with us the most was the man who at first was not very receptive in our visit. He tried to brush us off immediately upon entering his room. However, a second look at Lucky in my arms must have done the trick because he invited us to visit with him. I can still remember what he said to me; "I don't know what you hoped to accomplish today by visiting, but you sure are making a huge difference in my day!"



"Lucky" & Edith at Valencia Palms

The patients in these two pictures were some of the very first visits that "Lucky" made in his amazing career!



"Lucky" & James at Valencia Palms

Pet Bereavement Support Group

Our group meets the second Wednesday of every month, 1pm, at our office in Palm Desert. Each participant is asked to register on our website, www.pawsandhearts.org, and to bring a photograph of their beloved dog or cat (not on a cell phone). The group is now in its third year, and we have seen many faces from the valley come into the office and share love stories of their beloved 4-legged companions who have passed away.

