

"Paws & Hearts"

Animal Assisted Therapy

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SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

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"Paws & Hearts"

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

We celebrated our **25th Anniversary** in April with a wonderful luncheon and it was a blast! It was truly a lovely celebration with all of our current volunteers, a few past volunteers, and a few special friends who have been with us on our journey.

Pretty much everything I have to say about the twenty-five years I said in a short speech at the start of the luncheon, and that speech and all the pictures can be viewed on our website.

As we go forward into the remainder of the year, I am going to take some much-needed reflection time and spend part of the summer in my hometown in Ontario Canada. Truth be told, the older I get the more that little town of Dundas, Ontario, and its residents mean to me.

Fast forward to December and thinking about Santa Paws. Our beloved Santa has relocated with his husband to Florida, so if we do this again, we'll have to find another Santa. I'll update you all on this in our Fall Newsletter.

To all of our volunteers—stay cool this summer!

- Richard Waxman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Add to your calendar!

PET BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

Monthly Meetings

Second Wednesday of the Month 1:00pm

VOLUNTEER BOOK CLUB

Last Wednesday of the Month 1:00pm

Santa Paws ?? Early December

"TERRY'S" VIEWS

("Lucky", "Scruffy", "Maddie" & "Bingo"
in thought)



It is a rather warm late April day, and I am in the office with Dad and boy oh boy have I been busy barking at passers-by! This is what my official job is here at the office—to bark and greet people who walk by. Such fun!

Dad is typing away and telling me for the umpteenth time about that Anniversary Luncheon from last week. Honest-to-God he called Phillip and told him all about it, he called friends in Canada to tell them about it. He just won't stop. Okay, let him have his moment of glory so we can move on!

Not sure how busy we are going to be this summer because Dad told me that my favorite dog sitter Debbi will be staying with Toby and me a couple of times this summer. I wonder if Debbi will let me bark at passers-by from my favorite arm of the sofa!?

 "Terry" Waxman

"Paws & Hearts"

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OUR 25th ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON

What an incredible affair!



~ Volunteer Stories ~

As this Newsletter is all about our 25th Anniversary, I am going to provide two more Volunteer Stories that have stuck with me all of these years. The first one is actually a continuation from the Spring Newsletter and the story of 'Edith.'

VALENCIA PALMS, INDIO

There was one patient who stands out in my memory, Edith. She would wait for us out front in her wheelchair puffing on a cigarette. We would say hello to her first, and then finished up our visit sitting chatting with her for the longest time, with Lucky firmly planted on her lap. I remember being heart-sick when Edith passed away because she was just so lovely to visit with every Wednesday. (reprint from Spring)

Every week when Lucky and I would visit with Edith she always asked for one of Lucky's goldfish treats. She'd put the treat in her mouth and she would motion Lucky to stand up on her chest and take it for himself. We did this every week for a couple of years! On our last visit with Edith I could tell she wasn't going to be with us for much longer. Lucky kept looking at her and finally I put the cookie in my mouth for him to take. He took it, but then he crawled up on Edith's chest and tried to give her the cookie! I started to cry and still remember this visit very clearly because Lucky just didn't want to change his routine of taking that cookie from Edith, who'd originally taught him this trick!



EISENHOWER MEDICAL CENTER

After Lucky passed away, Scruffy and I visited for about a year until Maddie came along. We visited three mornings per week and on Tuesday mornings we started off in the small mental health department. This was a locked section that had anywhere from twelve to twenty-five patients. Once we entered, Scruffy was allowed off leash, and he would bolt right into the little dining room where the patients would be finishing breakfast. The staff would tell everyone that Scruffy was about to visit and that if they dropped any scrambled eggs on the floor, he'd be right over to clean them up!

Every so often the breakfast menu consisted of pancakes and I would tell the patients that if they dipped their finger in the syrup and put their hand down at their side Scruffy would lick it up!

One Friday afternoon I stopped in at Vons and there was a little old man at the entrance with a stand selling The Desert Sun. As I always wear my "Paw & Hearts" shirt the gentleman recognized me and he asked, "Where is Scruffy?" I told him that Scruffy was home and that his work week was over. I then asked him how he knew Scruffy. He told me that he'd been a patient at Eisenhower in the Mental Health Department a few months ago—his wife of many many years had passed away and he just couldn't move on and that his kids thought the department would help. He told me that nothing helped... not the counseling, not the medication, not the group sessions, nothing until Scruffy came along. He recounted the morning when Scruffy visited and stood up on the arm of his chair and smiled at him for the syrup on the finger! The man said that smile was all he needed to feel better, and that every time he starts to get a bit blue, he thinks back to Scruffy's smile and he is okay. With that he put his arms around me and gave me the biggest hug and told me that it was for Scruffy! I cried then, and I still cry every time I tell this story. This is the power of Animal Assisted Therapy and the magic it performs on people! God love ya' Scruffy!!

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.



"Paws & Hearts"

42-600 Cook Street, Ste. 138
The Berger Foundation Building
Palm Desert, CA 92211

PLACE
STAMP
HERE



A Very Special Friend and Lifetime Donor, Rita Steffen

A few years into "*Paws & Hearts*" a local promoter had an idea to copy the then fledgling 'Dancing with the Stars' hit TV show by hosting a non-profit fundraiser which she titled, 'Dancing with our Stars.' The premise was quite simple: eight non-profit Executive Directors paired with professional dancers. The instructor had six weeks to teach the director a dance routine which would be performed at a black-tie dinner. I had the incredible good fortune of being paired with Rita!

Rita and I hit it off immediately! It helped that I schlepped her on a visit to Eisenhower so she could really understand what our little non-profit was all about. She was in the hall crying between rooms just from watching Lucky and Scruffy work their magic with the patients.

That's all it took for Rita to get on board. We perfected a foxtrot with the help of choreographer Duane DeHart, who worked up the most beautiful number for us. Rita and I rehearsed every other day for six weeks. I rented tails, and she had a beautiful skirt that just twirled on the dance floor! Happy to say we raised the most money of any non-profit and we won as the best couple! What a hell of an evening that was! It truly was one of the happiest chapters of my life, spending all of that time with Rita, and learning that number.

Rita and I were dear friends for the next 20 years! She also became our single biggest donor. God love her! Rita just sent cheques all the time! Sadly, she passed away last summer, and I lost a great supporter who so loved our little organization and could never say enough wonderful things about us. Rita, like the last line of our song went, "What a dandy time we'll have tonight!" And we sure did! I miss you dearly Rita! You were very good to me and a lot of fun to be with! Rest in peace.....