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 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

“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

Board of Directors
President
Virginia Tillmannshofer
Vice President
Richard Waxman
Executive Director
“Paws & Hearts”
Founders
“Lucky” & “Scruffy” Waxman
Secretary/Treasurer
Valerie Zugates
Members at Large
Drew Marefos
Karen Gebala

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

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!”

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

Introducing Our New Pet Bereavement Support Group