

“Paws & Hearts”

Animal Assisted Therapy

Fed. Tax ID #91-2096569



SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Spring in the desert has finally arrived after a somewhat cool and wet winter in So. Cal! We needed the rain, but this much?! At least we are out of our drought!

We have been going gangbusters these last few months from planning and hosting our Valentine's Day Open House on February 13th, to interviewing many new potential volunteer teams, to doing a bit of grant writing. Who knew an old guy could put in so many hours during the week?!

Probably the best news is that my sidekick, “Terry,” the barking terrier, has found a new calling at “Paws & Hearts.” He has added Therapy Dog/Canine Ambassador to his title! More on how this came about in the Newsletter.

If you've checked out our Calendar, you will see that we have increased our Monthly Pet Loss Bereavement Groups to twice per month. It seemed as though people were calling right after a monthly meeting, and I didn't feel right making them wait a month to attend.

We are part way through our 26th year, and thank God for that huh?!

- Richard Waxman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Add to your calendar!

PET BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

Monthly Meetings
1st & 3rd Wednesday
of the Month

VOLUNTEER BOOK CLUB

Last Wednesday of the Month 1:00pm

“TERRY'S” VIEWS

(“Lucky”, “Scruffy”, “Maddie” & “Bingo”
in thought)



Seems as though I have a new title on my business card—Therapy Dog/Canine Ambassador. Really? I've gone on a handful of visits with Dad, showed a couple of new volunteers how the visits are to be conducted, and already I'm a Canine Ambassador? Sheesh....we'd better not be making these visits a weekly thing!

I guess it was inevitable that I start helping out a bit more at the office, seeing as how I am maturing and behaving myself better. Abril left to start her family and Dad wanted to start training the new volunteers himself, so obviously I was his choice of partner—like he had much choice. It was either me, or a stuffed toy!

I have been on my best behavior on these visits, and as long as Dad holds me in his arms all the time, I'm okay with having patients pet me and make a fuss over me. Listen, constantly hearing how cute and adorable I am and what a great smile I have goes a very long way!

Pictures of me on the 'new' job on the next page! Cheers!

 “Terry” Waxman

“Paws & Hearts”

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"Terry" our Newest Canine Ambassador!



What it takes to become a Volunteer Team

Over the last few months we have received many calls from potential volunteers. It seems as though whenever an article or story features our program, we are called. While I truly appreciate the inquiries, I can't stress enough that the potential volunteers need to do a bit of homework prior to calling. I think that people look at the adorable pictures, see the heading Animal Assisted Therapy, and think to themselves.....this is so 'cute.' My dog and I could easily do that.

Before exploring any volunteer opportunity with any Non-Profit, it is important for the caller to do a little homework. They need to review the agency's website, Facebook page, and social media. They should read over the Mission Statement to make sure that the non-profit's agenda fits with their wishes. In addition, when volunteering for something where you are using your 4-legged pup in public, you really need to understand what is required before that initial call; i.e. is insurance provided for you and your precious pup?

I fear that I've grown somewhat frustrated with callers that haven't 'done their homework' prior to picking up the phone. It becomes very obvious after the first few minutes that Pet Therapy Visitations are a lot more involved than was originally thought. This type of volunteering takes a very special human and an incredible dog. So please, if you are considering volunteering, spend some time reviewing our public information and watching our YouTube videos of past visits. You'll determine soon enough if this type of volunteering is for you! And if it truly is, we'd be delighted to hear from you!



~ Volunteer Stories ~

This Newsletter's Volunteer Report will be dedicated to Abril Garcia and her amazing Canine Ambassador "Oliver." These two have been volunteers with us for six years now, and in addition to their weekly visits they have been responsible for the training of the new volunteers that come on to our program. However, life changes, and Abril is starting a family and will be close to changing diapers by the time this Newsletter comes out. We want to wish Abril much, much happiness and success as a young mother. And I personally hope she knows how many thousands of patients she and Oliver made feel better with their visits! All the very best to you Abril. Think back on this time fondly! Here is their final report.....

NARRATED BY "OLIVER"

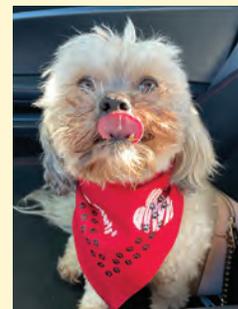
Life surprised us with a bittersweet moment for Maw Abril, for me, and for our Rancho Mirage Health and Rehab facility family. We're retiring! On a joyful note, I'm being promoted to big brother. Maw shared that we're welcoming a baby girl this July. A little background—Maw rescued me from the East Valley Animal Shelter 10 years ago. But looking back, the real question is, who rescued who? We've been together through thick and thin, and I've been her support through her most difficult and personal challenges. Today, we couldn't be happier to be able to share one of her life's most beautiful experiences together.

Maw discovered I was meant to be a therapy dog about six years ago which led us to "Paws & Hearts." We've been serving the elderly community ever since. We've called Rancho Mirage Health and Rehabilitation Center our second home for the past five years, where we've met truly unique and unforgettable people—and sadly, we've lost many friends along the way without having the chance to say goodbye.

Everyone at the facility is thrilled to see our little family growing, though they've shared how much they'll miss maw and me. They say they'll never forget my little wagging tail and happy smile as I stopped to greet every nurse, visitor, and patient in the halls. All those moments spent curled up on countless laps, taking naps while I enjoyed belly rubs and maw did all the chatting.

There is no doubt that we will both miss that chapter, so we'll definitely pop in to say hello, and when the baby arrives, they can all meet her! For now mommy needs every bit of rest and all the therapy I can give her--as dad, cat Duke, maw and I impatiently await the arrival of our little baby girl.

The End! Abril & "Oliver" Garcia



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. 207
The Berger Foundation Building
Palm Desert, CA 92211

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Volunteer Open House on February 13th

Our office was all spruced up for an early Valentine's Day Open House, and by the looks of things everyone had a very good time!

