

“Paws & Hearts”

Animal Assisted Therapy

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SPRING 2017

NEWSLETTER

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Here we are in the first quarter of 2017 and we are as busy as ever at **“Paws & Hearts,”** and we are very proud to announce our new **Pet Bereavement Support Group** that will meet monthly at our office in Palm Desert.

Since the passing of “Scruffy” last June, I have wanted to follow through on a goal I have had for some time, and that is to offer a place for valley residents who are grieving the loss of a beloved dog or cat to find comfort and support. Now it will be a reality! There is much more information on the group in the newsletter.

In other news one of our longest **Canine Ambassadors** has retired after almost eleven years of visits to the Lucy Curci Cancer Center. After all those years of jumping on and off that ottoman, “Sammi”, who is almost 15, is happily at home resting.

And another one of our favorite Ambassadors, “Andy” of Ann & Andy has gone to the Rainbow Bridge all too early. Both Sammi and Andy are featured in this newsletter.

As always I thank all of our readers and donors for their continued support.

Richard Waxman

Upcoming Events to Put on Your Calendars!

Pet Bereavement Support Group

First Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, April 12th

17th Annual Dog Walk/Fundraiser

Saturday November 25th

Westin Mission Hills Golf Resort

**“Paws & Hearts” 74-854 Velie Way, Ste. 7
Palm Desert, CA 92260**

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

“Maddie’s” Views

Seems as though I’m still working solo, doing four visits per week, and I’m about to go on strike. I know that secretly Dad thinks that one day “Scruffy” will just appear at the door, and he’ll be back on visits with me.

Dad, just in case that isn’t the case, I’m thinking it is time you started looking for an assistant for yours truly. Trust me, I love all the visits, but don’t the rest of the **Canine Ambassadors** only do one visit per week?

I must say it is delightful going to Desert Regional Medical Center on Monday and Thursday afternoons. So many of the nurses have come to know me by name, and do you notice how they say hello to me first? They don’t even remember your name! I guess you are right--you’ve always said that you were just the guy at the end of the leash!

The last few weeks at Desert have been particularly touching for Dad and me. We’ve seen a few patients two or three weeks in a row, and I’m always amazed at how they remember my name (again, not yours Dad!) and how they light up when we enter. I am made to feel that my visit has meaning, and I guess it really does. It is more than evident by all the hugs and kisses I am given!

“Maddie” Waxman

Pet Bereavement Support Group

We are very pleased to announce the start of a new program, our ***Pet Bereavement Support Group***. What follows are the highlights from the information posted on our website. Please visit us at www.pawsandhearts.org for all the information and the registration form to attend our first Support Group on Wednesday, April 12, at 1:00 pm.

It is our hope that this new group will be of benefit to residents of the Coachella Valley in their time of need.

For most of us the loss of our companion animal is a uniquely private and painful experience. We lose a bond that comes with 100% unconditional love--something we don't always attain in human relationships. We often do not want to burden friends or family with our feelings, but talking about our pain and sharing memories allows us to put into words--sometimes for the first time--what we have lost. There is no easy way around loss and grief, but when we accept our sadness, acknowledge the irreplaceability of our pet, and share our feelings with others who understand, healing can begin.

Your pet was never "just" a dog or "just" a cat, and no one is foolish for grieving. He or she was an integral part of your life, helping teach you the value of sharing love, support, comfort, and that amazing unconditional acceptance of one another without asking for very much in return. When one loses a beloved companion animal, grief can be insurmountable. When well-meaning friends suggest you can get another pet, and your heart is breaking, you may need the support of a group who understands exactly the grieving process you are experiencing.

There is no absolute pattern for grief. The length of time it takes to begin accepting the loss of your beloved pet will vary. For most of us this is not the first time we've gone through this, and it certainly doesn't get any easier. You may also mourn the death of a particular pet companion more strongly than you mourned a pet or pets in the past due to some special qualities that that pet brought to your relationship. Grief is normal, inevitable, and unavoidable. Expect that it will come, accept it, embrace it, and allow it to run its course so that you can begin to heal.

One of the most difficult aspects of bereavement is the sense of hopelessness it causes. It is very easy to believe that this highly emotional state will last forever, especially if this is your first time experiencing the loss of a pet. What happens to us when we have to say good-bye for the last time? How do you say thank-you for being in my life? How do you sum up 14 or 15 years of walks, baths, treats, cuddling in bed, and good-night kisses? How do you cope with those first few mornings when he or she isn't there for breakfast or their walk? How do we accept that this loss is forever? How do we go on?

The adjustment period after we have said good-bye can be heart-breaking. It seems to take forever for us to get back in step when all we want to do is turn the clock back and start all over again from the very first day we brought the new addition home. It has always been acceptable to turn to a support group when a human loved-one passes away. The loss of a beloved pet, a true member of the family, should be no different.

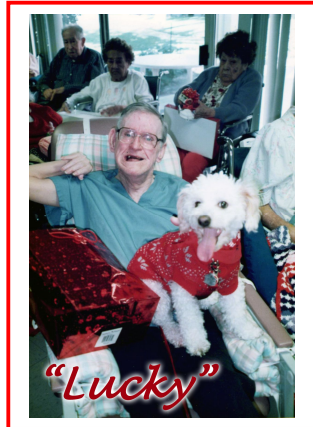
After 35 years of visiting hospitals and long-term care facilities, 16 of them as Director of "Paws & Hearts," Richard Waxman has lent hours of support, listening to hundreds of stories about good-byes and grieving for companion animals. He has also counseled many volunteers through "Paws & Hearts" who have had to say good-bye to their Canine Ambassador.

Having facilitated an Alzheimer's Support Group, and having talked with bereavement counselors, done extensive reading and attended seminars on the subject, Richard is happy to offer a place to come, share, and hear what others have experienced. Our Pet Bereavement Support Group will be a safe environment to openly share your feelings of loss as well as share the joys your precious dog or cat brought into your life.

Our first meeting will be on Wednesday, April 12, at 1PM in our Palm Desert office. The number of sign-ups will determine the length of the meeting. We have a short questionnaire which we ask you to complete and submit online along with a photograph of your dog or cat. We also ask that you bring a photograph of your pet (not your cell phone photos) to the first meeting to share with the group. All your information will be kept confidential.

To register for our support group please visit our website: www.pawsandhearts.org

Some of our Canine Ambassadors who are at the Rainbow Bridge



Introducing Our New Pet Bereavement Support Group

First meeting will be Wednesday April 12th at 1:00 pm

“Sammi” Retires after Eleven Years of Visits!

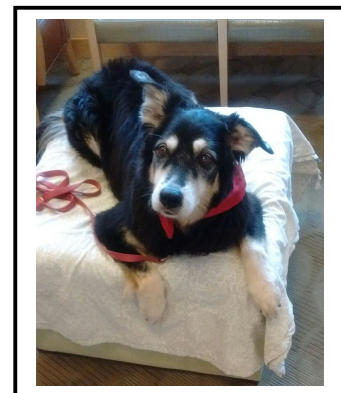
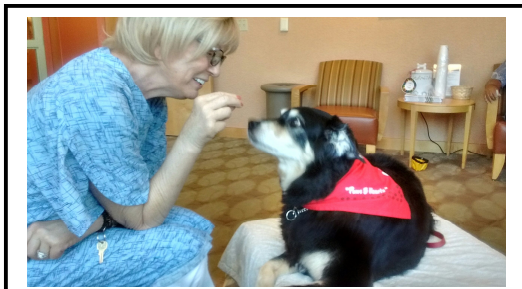
One of the most faithful ***Canine Ambassadors*** “Sammi” has retired from her weekly Monday morning visits at the Lucy Curci Cancer Center. Sammi’s Mom, Rose Ann, shared her observations from the eleven years of visits in her final/farewell Volunteer Report--

Monday began like it had each Monday for over eleven years. Sammi had her much loved early morning walk, breakfast, and obligatory “going to the hospital” bath which she never is enthusiastic about. With her ***“Paws & Hearts”*** red bandana around her neck, we headed to Lucy Curci. This Monday would be different though--at age 15, with arthritic legs which make walking difficult, it is time for Sam to retire as a ***Canine Ambassador Therapy Dog***.

With tail wagging, Sam greeted her first patient of the morning. The lady was having an initial radiation treatment and indicated she was an employee who had observed therapy dogs doing their magic work at the hospital over the years. As she played with Sam, she thanked us for volunteering. As the morning progressed, Sammi got lots of pets, hugs, and doggy treats from the hospital staff and a few good-bye photos were taken. All very nice!!

I will remember the way people’s faces would light up when they first saw a dog in the waiting room, and the calming effect Sam’s presence could have on a patient in pain or stressed. It has been a privilege to volunteer at LC--with the touching and often humorous memories of our visits with patients, caregivers, and staff will always remain.

Next Monday Sammi will get to sleep late, but she will still get her Monday morning bath!



We have to bid farewell to “Andy” of Ann & Andy

Many of the volunteers will remember Andy the Westie because whenever we did the library reading program or some special event, Andy was always happy to put best paw forward.

Andy was the second Westie that Ann had with us. She started with Gus almost at the beginning of ***“Paws & Hearts.”*** Ann and Gus and then Andy, would go on any additional visits that were offered. Before Ann stayed full-time in Idaho two-years ago, Andy was a regular at Eisenhower and the Lucy Curci Cancer Center every week.

Both Gus and Andy worked with many of our ***Canine Ambassadors***. Both boys did special holiday visits on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day for years at Eisenhower. Lucky and Scruffy got to work with both Gus and Andy, and Maddie got to work with Andy at the Palm Springs Library. I could never figure out who got to the bag of Charlie Bears first, Andy or Scruffy!

Although Andy hadn’t volunteered for us for two years, he was certainly kept busy up in Idaho making hospice visits, still wearing his ***“Paws & Hearts”*** bandana. Andy was only 10 years old, and certainly too young to go to the Rainbow Bridge. If it is any consolation, Lucky and Scruffy were there to greet him, and they are young again and having a good time!



You’ll be missed very much Andy by all those whose lives you made better with your amazing therapy visits.



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.

Atria—Palm Desert -- Katie & "Breezy" Breezy made her dramatic entrance to everyone's delight! She just gets so many pets and loves that it exhausts her, but she lets all the residents show her much love. We visited with those residents who had been assembled in the living room that we visit every week, and then we went upstairs to visit with three residents in their rooms. Breezy saw one of her favorites Marie, and Marie laughed when she saw Breezy. Breezy brings the residents such great joy, it is a true pleasure for me to witness. Thank you for letting us visit every week!

Comprehensive Cancer Center at Desert Regional Medical Center -- Joanne & "Bailey" It was picture day at the CCC! So many people want their picture taken with Bailey and, of course, they all love getting his business card! One of the highlights of the day: for the second week we saw a man and his elderly father who is receiving radiation therapy. They are from Romania and the father doesn't speak English. But Bailey bridged that barrier easily, recognized him from last week and rushed to nuzzle him in his wheelchair. The elderly man teared up and his son was profuse in thanking Bailey and me. Such a wonderful meeting!

The Fountains at the Carlotta -- Cathy & "Zoey" Great visit today in the activity rooms, therapy room, and individual rooms. Our first visit was to Zoey's favorite patient, Nita. We opened her door and Nita was sitting in her recliner. Zoey ran to her and Nita buried her head in Zoey's fur and talked to her and rubbed her. Zoey put her paw up to shake and gave Nita lots of kisses. We sat and chatted for a while and the entire time Nita petted Zoey. Zoey stopped in the doorway of a room and a lady was visiting the patient. She told us to come in and was the daughter of the patient. Zoey really liked the daughter because she has 4 dogs and had lots of doggy smells. Zoey went over to the patient and put her paws on the bed. The lady was thrilled to meet Zoey and said she really misses her dogs. We visited a man in his room and he looked sad when we entered. At first he just saw me, but when he saw Zoey, he got a big smile on his face. He gave Zoey a couple of treats and said *we really made his day*. There were lots of patients in the activity rooms, and Zoey made her rounds, got her back rubs, gave kisses, and got lots of treats!

Mission Hills at Rancho Mirage -- Fran & "Cinnamon" Several of our regular residents have left Mission Hills but there are many who comment each week how much they love seeing Cinnamon. She clearly has her favorites (and it has nothing to do with treats). Two ladies today were especially pleased that they remembered her name!

Brookdale-Rancho Mirage -- Drew & "Maddie" Our visit to Memory Care was short. The majority of the patients were going on another bus outing. But they all had a smile and pets for Maddie!! We had a good number of patients in rehab and Maddie felt like joining them in their workout. She thought the treadmill was great fun!! A very pleasant visit was had by all!

Desert Regional Medical Center -- Richard & "Maddie" A very long 2+ hour visit at Desert this afternoon. Poor Maddie is home and sound asleep already. She was petted, and kissed, and hugged and a very old woman offered me half her tuna sandwich in exchange for her! Really?? We visited some really lovely patients and met some very grateful family members. One young Hispanic man who has 3 children and is thinking of getting his kids a dog had never seen anything like Maddie. He couldn't get over how well behaved she was, and when she turned around to give him a kiss he just about melted. I took a picture of him and Maddie with his phone so he could show it to his kids!

Pet Bereavement Support Group at "Paws & Hearts"



We are here to help you get through this.....