

# **“Paws & Hearts”**

**Animal Assisted Therapy**

Fed. Tax ID #91-2096569

**SPRING 2018**

**NEWSLETTER**

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As I compose the Spring Newsletter it is late January and very spring-like in the desert. By the time this newsletter is mailed out, the high summer temps will have already been flirting with us. Oy!

“Maddie” is going to introduce her new brother “Bingo” in her report, and I am going to talk about an important issue that comes up every month in our Bereavement Support Group—long-term planning for your companion animal.

This is such an important subject that I have reprinted an article featured previously in our newsletter. If you haven’t made plans for your dog or cat, you truly need to update your final wishes and make sure they will be taken care of. I can’t stress the importance of this.

We are in the first quarter of our 18<sup>th</sup> year, happy in our new office, and busy all the time!

*Richard Waxman*

## **Upcoming Events to Put on Your Calendars!**

### ***Pet Bereavement Support Group***

#### ***Monthly Meetings***

***Second Wednesday of the month, 1 pm***

### ***18<sup>th</sup> Annual Dog Walk-Fundraiser***

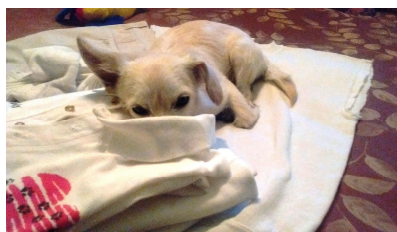
***Saturday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018***

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

It looks like my months of *kvetching* about an assistant have come to an end. Horror upon horrors, Dad went and adopted a new pup! “Bingo,” an 8-month old Terrier mix came home last September, and this little squirt is a ball of energy. He has even started to go on visits with me!

That’s right, Christmas Day Dad put Bingo in a little elf costume, and he came along to Desert Regional with us. Actually, for a first visit he did pretty well and for the pistol he is at home, he was very calm and well-mannered with the patients and staff.

So now Bingo has been coming on visits with me, to the office with me, and he is *always* around. If Dad thinks I’m changing the name to ***“Maddie & Bingo’s Views”*** he has another thing coming!



*(Maybe if I hide I won’t have to go on a hospital visit.)*

***“Maddie” Waxman***

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**Website: [www.pawsandhearts.org](http://www.pawsandhearts.org)**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pawsandheartsorg](http://www.facebook.com/pawsandheartsorg)**

In all of our *Bereavement Support Groups* the subject of providing for our companion animals comes up. In past issues we have run articles on the subject of Pet Trusts, and it is important to run them again. Providing for our dogs, cats, birds, whatever we treasure— plans should be put in place in the event that they outlive us. This is an important subject to discuss and to plan for.

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Trusts are a common way to provide for a spouse, children or other family members after you're gone, and they even can be used for family members that have fur, fins or feathers.

Though less widespread than trusts drafted for human beneficiaries, pet trusts serve many of the same functions. They can provide legal instructions and protections for the care and placement of animals when an owner dies or becomes incapacitated.

It's hard to estimate how many people have trusts to benefit pets, though probably not many, as the concept is fairly new. "It's a matter of getting people to know that you can and should include pets in estate planning," said Lisa Kiser, an attorney in Mesa, Ariz., who drafts trusts for pets.

Some ardent pet enthusiasts might find a trust appealing and worth the cost. Americans spent an estimated \$62.8 billion on their pets in 2016, primarily for food, veterinary care and supplies, according to the American Pet Products Association. That's \$787 a year on average for the nearly 80 million pet-owning households.

To understand why a pet trust might make sense, it helps to review a few general basics about trusts. Among their main uses, trusts allow for assets to be transferred to others without going through the probate process. They also can provide ongoing financial support for beneficiaries who might squander a lump sum, including children or people with special needs.

One popular variety, revocable living trusts, can be changed, dissolved or rewritten while you're still alive and competent. These trusts often are packaged with complementary documents such as a pour-over will (to handle assets that weren't titled into the trust) and financial and health-care powers of attorney, which empower others to act on your behalf in case of incapacity. Living trusts also can minimize estate taxes, though only the wealthiest Americans are subject to this tax.

Pet trusts focus around some of the same concepts. The key aim is to name a trusted person or organization to provide ongoing care for your animals, while providing funds to do so. Many people instead make informal arrangements, asking friends or relatives to take in their animals. But without a trust or other legal document, there's no assurance your wishes will be fulfilled.

"The last thing you want is for your pet to go to a shelter, get traumatized there and possibly get euthanized," said Jodi Polanski, executive director of Lost Our Home Pet Rescue in Tempe, Ariz., one of various animal-adoption groups that encourage people to consider trusts. If requested, Lost Our Home will serve as trustee, overseeing an animal's care and living arrangements. For example, a pet parent could specify a desire to have an animal placed with a retiree who stays home all day, she said.

Similarly, an owner could spell out how much medical care should be given to a pet, especially an older one, and when euthanasia might become the preferred option, said Kiser, who works with Lost Our Home. Trusts can plan for those and other contingencies. "At least you would have some control over what happens to your pet," she said.

*Pet Trust article cont'd pg. 3*

*Be sure to go to check out our website, [www.pawsandhearts.org](http://www.pawsandhearts.org) for the rest of this article & our Spring Newsletter.*

*Pet Trust article cont'd*

You also could specify many other details, such as that your cat be fed grain-free kibble or that your dog be exercised regularly at dog parks. A key decision is naming the right trustee — the person or organization entrusted with carrying out your wishes.

The costs to have an attorney draft a trust vary and are somewhat negotiable. As a general guide, living-trust packages for human beneficiaries typically start around \$1,000 but can rise to several thousand dollars or more, depending on the attorney, the complexities and the assets involved. Pet trusts, which are simpler, should cost less. If you already have a living trust, you might be able to include an addendum rather than draft a separate pet trust.

As with trusts for humans, pet trusts can involve an investment-management component, especially if several animals are involved or they are long-lived, as with some birds. Kiser suggests funding a pet trust with at least \$10,000. Any money left after the animal dies can be donated to a non-profit group.

If you don't establish a pet trust, consider spelling out your pet-care wishes in a letter given to a trusted relative or friend, though these instructions wouldn't be legally binding, wrote Brad Wiewel, a Texas estate-planning attorney, in a commentary. While you might think of your pets as family, they're considered property in the eyes of the law, he noted.

Similarly, you could leave funds with a friend or family member, with care instructions. But without a trust, "Nothing will prevent (the person) from using the money for some other purpose and/or giving your pets away," he wrote.

Reach the reporter at [russ.wiles@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:russ.wiles@arizonarepublic.com) or 602-444-8616.

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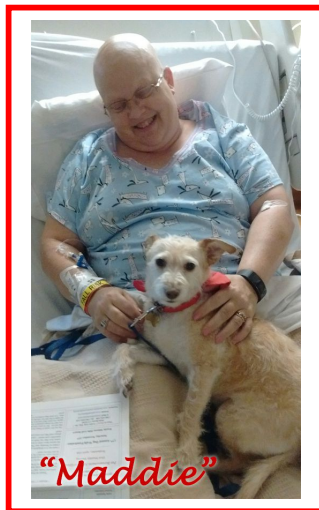
### **Pet Bereavement Support Group**

*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](http://www.pawsandhearts.org) and to bring a photograph of their beloved dog or cat, (not on a cell phone.) In our first year we have seen many faces from the valley come into the office and share love-stories of their beloved 4-legged companions.*

*It is our deepest wish that this support group is really helping those individuals who have recently lost their companion animal. We are here to help. Just give us a call.*



## *Our Canine Ambassadors at Work!*



### 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.

## 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.*

*(Pictures from these volunteer stories to the left!)*

California Nursing & Rehabilitation—Risa & "Shaina" Shaina could hardly wait to get inside the facility today. Our day followed the usual routine and we made our loop around the facility, but it was the following visit that was the most special.

I carried Shaina into a room where an elderly woman was waiting. While I was asking her if she would like a visit from Shaina I realized that Shaina had already taken matters into her own hands (or paws!) Shaina had reached out her paw to the woman and the woman was gently stroking it. With tears in her eyes the patients told me that she wanted to thank me, and that she appreciated me for driving Shaina to see her. Her words were so heartfelt that the connection between the therapy dog and the patient were most tangible. The patient went on to say that there was nothing that could mean more to her than to feel the fur of a little dog, and that she could not express the right words about how much Shaina's visit meant to her.

I was so glad that she found us today and that "Paws & Hearts" was able to give her some comfort. There is nothing like the support and love that comes from Animal Assisted Therapy.

Desert Regional Medical Center—Richard, "Maddie" & "Bingo" Today was probably the sixth or seventh visit that Bingo came along and acted as Maddie's assistant. For just a one-year old dog, Bingo sure does understand why he is being placed on a hospital bed. He is very calm and gentle with the patients, and follows Maddie's lead as far as looking where to stand and what to do. His natural charm, to say nothing of that one-ear up and one-ear down, makes him as adorable as they come. All the patients and the staff in the Sinatra Tower were quite touched by both dogs who look very much like twins. Both guys (as I call them) made about 45 rooms incredibly happy with their visits, full of kisses, and cold noses!

Premier Health Care & Rehabilitation—Suze & "Dunkin" We lost Virginia this week. After last Saturday when she was pretty much unresponsive to our visit, I decided I would visit her again on Sunday which I did without Dunkin. Again she was unresponsive to my visit but at night I spoke with her and rubbed her arm and just talked to her for a while. Dunkin was very confused when she wasn't in her bed today. I had seen that her nameplate was removed from the doorway and I just started to cry. I had a lovely chat with one of the caregivers who was there and she told me that Virginia went very peacefully. She thanked me for being such a good friend and bringing Dunkin to see her every week for the last three years. We are going to miss her so much. At least she's at peace now with her husband David and their dog Sparkplug.

Rancho Mirage Health & Rehabilitation Center—Dannie & "Tino" (the cat!) Tino and I experienced the life struggles of two residents during our visit. One of Tino's favorites is Beverly and she is always our first visit of the day. Tino loves curling up, purring and giving his best Happy Feet massage. She loves his visits and looks forward to seeing us Tuesday mornings. Unfortunately, she was having a bad morning so Tino missed her cheerful smile and loving snuggles. Staff asked us to visit a new resident being evaluated after a fall. She was so delighted to see us because she was feeling scared and lonely. She shared with us her fears of losing her memory and possibly not returning to her home. She talked about having no family and felt so isolated. Tino and I felt very blessed we were able to listen and provide some comfort. A lovely lady and a lovely visit!

*Pet Bereavement Support Group at "Paws & Hearts"*



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