

# **“Paws & Hearts”**

**Animal Assisted Therapy**

Fed. Tax ID #91-2096569

**SPRING 2021**

**NEWSLETTER**

## 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

This is usually one of the two Newsletters that we mail out during the year, but I want to really stretch the funds we have for now, so just an emailed version which is also posted on our website. If we are fortunate enough to be back on visits later this year and can somehow hold our Annual Dog Walk/Fundraiser, I'll mail out the Fall Newsletter.

I have reached out to a few of the facilities, and it is anyone's guess when it will be safe for us to resume visits. In the meantime, let's continue to get vaccinated when our turn comes up so that if and when we get the green light, we are all set.

In speaking to the facilities they all expressed how very much they miss our **Canine Ambassadors** and handlers visiting the patients each and every week. One of the facilities actually reached out to one of our volunteers and asked if she and her dog could have a Zoom visit with a patient who had been put on hospice care. Her only request was to see “Shaina” again. Their volunteer story follows!

*What amazing memories we have all made over the years.*

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

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

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

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

### **21 Annual Dog Walk/Fundraiser**

***(We sincerely hope!)***

**Saturday, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**“Paws & Hearts” 74-133 El Paseo, Ste. 7**

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

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

### ***“Maddie’s” Views***

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

So I'm sure that all of you know that shelters have done a bang-up business since the pandemic started, adopting out dogs and cats.

I think Dad was thinking I was unhappy being the solo dog on call here. Little did he know that I loved not having to share the limelight with “Bingo,” even though I really miss him. So, what does Dad do? He went to the Palm Springs Shelter last month and adopted a cat. A cat? Really?

Dad brought home this big Orange Tabby by the name of Toby, who is 5 years old and was turned in because his owner died. Okay, boo hoo, boo hoo—this cat is bigger than I am, he weighs 15 lbs!

To tell you the truth, he is a great cat! He doesn't push me out of the way like Samantha used to, and he is really respectful of my place beside Dad. It is actually kinda' nice having someone to pal around with who has four-paws like I do. Maybe I'll train him to be our second therapy cat on the program!!!

*Okay, so when do I get to go back on visits with Drew?*

***“Maddie” Waxman***

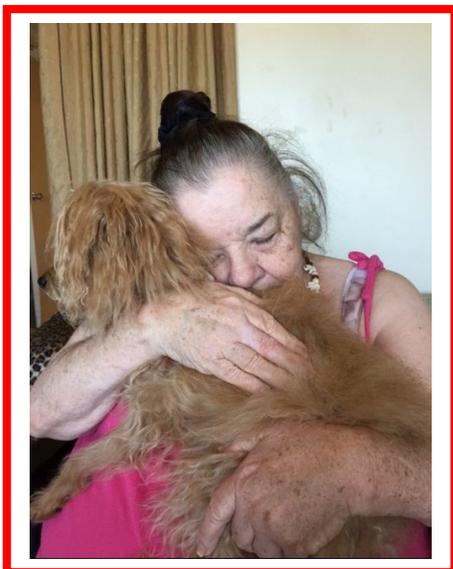
### *How our office is functioning second year into the pandemic*

For those of you who are curious about how we are doing, we are keeping busy. Maddie and I go into the office three mornings a week to take in the mail and return phone calls and emails. We are keeping in touch with all of our volunteers and surprisingly we have a growing list of volunteers who want to get started with us when the timing allows. And the donations continue to come in, and for that I am very grateful!

I have made it a priority to keep the organizations that fund us in the loop so that they know we are still around. We've been very lucky that so far this year the H. N. and Frances C. Berger Foundation out of Palm Desert has given us a grant.

Our monthly Pet Loss Bereavement Groups are meeting again in the office with safe protocols in place. This time has been challenging for everyone and for every non-profit in the valley. I think if we just hang on a little longer, maybe by the end of the year we'll be back in operation!

### *On the job with "Shaina!"*



### *Risa & "Shaina's" Zoom visit Volunteer Report*

In Normal Times Risa & "Shaina" visit California Nursing & Rehabilitation every Wednesday

This is not an easy entry to write and I have been procrastinating putting my emotions into words. This week I had a phone call from one of the skilled facilities that Shaina and I have visited for the past five years. Seeing my cellphone light up with the caller identification of the Activities Director made my stomach twist and then dive. If the pandemic has taught us all one thing, it is that life is precious and so very fragile.

I have been sending a card to this facility every week with an update on Shaina's activities. To be honest it gave me a sense of still being able to give back to the residents whom we are no longer able to visit. I wasn't even sure if the cards were being read, but in the spirit of Paws & Hearts I wanted the residents to know that Shaina was doing well and that eventually our weekly visits will resume. There is no timetable for when their isolation will end, but the least I could do is send them some hope. The message of "You are not forgotten," was embedded between the lines.

With a shaking hand I answered the phone and was told that one of the residents that Shaina saw every week was being moved to hospice. The voice at the other end of the phone continued to discuss some details that my sadness tuned out until I was told that the resident had been crying out Shaina's name. The staff had been unable to comfort the resident whose only wish was to see her little Paws & Hearts dog again. It's been a year since our last visit. The realization that Shaina had that much of an impact on this resident quickly brought me back to reality. I was told that every week the cards from Shaina had been read and appreciated. It was then that the request for a video chat was made. I immediately went into volunteer mode and scooped Shaina up into my arms.

A few seconds later we were transported back to the room that we had visited so often. There in her bed was a woman who was crying out for Shaina. I calmly spoke to the resident and told her that Shaina was eager for a visit. With tearful eyes that resident looked into the screen and reached her hand out to pet Shaina on the head. Multiple strokes have made this patient's words very difficult to understand, but over the years her anxiety about her speech decreased with each of our visits. Her words became coherent sentences when she had Shaina near. Soon her sobbing ceased and she began to smile. No words. I could see the love and relief in her eyes. Shaina gently pawed at the screen. Not sure how, but Shaina knew what to do. This is what our dogs do, and we don't question their abilities to give comfort. Shaina locked eyes with her long-time friend and that was the support that was needed.

After a few moments the resident began to cry again, and I was told that the call was coming to an end. I gave Shaina a hug for the resident, and I told her that she should bring our visits to mind when she feels the need to see Shaina the most. I told her to remember all the wheelchair rides she gave Shaina over the years and all the kisses that Shaina lavished on her each week. Shaina and I had time to see one last smile through the tears on this resident's face before the video ended.

One year later and we are all still waiting to begin our visits again. The loving comfort that our *Canine* (and cat) *Ambassadors* give has not been forgotten. Time cannot erase the love or impression that only Animal Assisted Therapy can bring.