

“Paws & Hearts”

Animal Assisted Therapy

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WINTER 2022

NEWSLETTER

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Early January in the desert, and we are experiencing our version of winter. And can any of us who live in the desert complain?

Let me start off by sincerely thanking each and every one of you who contributed to our on-line Fall Fundraiser. We exceeded our goals, and your donations greatly contributed to our bottom line!

We have a lot of good news to share with this newsletter. We have six volunteer teams back out there on weekly visits, and more will follow. If you aren't a regular reader to our weekly Facebook updates, please check it out because we run a new volunteer story each and every Monday.

Our best news is that after 21 years of having two offices on the second floor, we are relocating to a beautiful ground floor office in May. More on this in the newsletter.

And it looks like my newest edition “Terry” while not on visits yet, is going to be at the helm of “Maddie’s Views.” Terry will share his thoughts of being a new pup in the household and being trained for his career as a Canine Ambassador.

Enjoy the Winter Newsletter!

Richard Waxman

Upcoming Events to Put on Your Calendars!

Pet Bereavement Support Group

Monthly Meetings

Second Wednesday of the month, 1 pm

22nd Annual Dog Walk/Fundraiser

Saturday, November 26th, 2022

**“Paws & Hearts” 74-133 El Paseo, Ste. 7
Palm Desert, CA 92260**

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“Terry’s” Views

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

Oy, this being the new pup in the household is tough! What’s with all the rules here? I mean the guy who refers to himself as Dad is very generous with the food, the treats, the hugs and kisses, but I was used to pishing wherever and whenever I felt like it in the joint I came from. What’s with this having to ask him to let me outside?

I will admit that all the walks I get every day are great. And that noon drive over to the greenbelt where I get to hang my head out the window is a rush, but how come I get scolded every time I chase the big cat around the house? Talk about a big cat.....Toby is bigger than I am!

And while Dad tells me I am learning the household rules pretty well, my puppy-like charms have ceased to please him. Who knew that chewing on the furniture, or chewing up sections of the carpeting were not permitted? OY!!!

And all I’ve heard about is some presentation we have to make to a noon Rotary in April.....like he thinks I’ll be trained and well-behaved by then?! Anyone want to wager a bet on this?

“Terry” Waxman

"Dunkin" turned 10 years old in December

One of our very best Canine Ambassadors had his 10th birthday in December. His Mom, Suze, sent in Dunkin's life story and here it is!

Dunkin turned 10 years old on December 5th, and March 3rd is the day we rescued one another. I had been living with and taking care of my ailing 95-year-old father who had recently entered a nursing home. For years we had tried to get Dad to get another dog but to no avail, so Dunkin was going to be a surprise for Dad. Finally the day came when I could bring Dunkin home from the PS Animal Shelter (he was a 3-month-old stray and we had to wait to see if someone claimed him.) Oh that was an exciting day as I had been visiting him every day and got there 4 hours before they opened on March 3. After leaving the animal shelter we went straight to the vet where he got a clean bill of health and then we headed to surprise Dad.

I knew from the minute I met Dunkin that there was something special about him. Being half Australian Shepherd and half Border Collie, he definitely had that herding instinct down. Off we went to see Dad and when we got to his room, Dad was in bed and looked at me as if to say "whose dog is that?" and before I could say anything, Dunkin answered him by hopping up on the bed and settling himself as close to Dad as he could with his head just under Dad's hand so Dad could pet him. They both settled back and smiled as I said "he's our dog, Daddy." It was such a beautiful moment.

When we left Dad's room that day several other residents asked to pet him and one young man asked if we wouldn't mind spending a moment with his grandfather. Naturally, we stopped and spoke with everyone who asked. We did that every day for a week. Then, sadly, Dad went in to hospice and passed on March 12th.

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next page.....



Volunteer Stories

As of this writing we have six volunteer teams making visits and while we've shared these stories on our Face-book page, they are very much worth reprinting in this newsletter!

Karen & "Emerson" – Rancho Mirage Healthcare-- Outside the facility was a family and their mother who just wanted to squeeze Emerson from his stroller. She misses her dog. The regular manager came out to pet Emerson saying how much they had all missed us and welcome back. This continued as we walked down the hall. Delighted to find Estelle making a necklace with Jeannie in the dining/game room. She had been asleep during our last visit. She was thrilled that I had brought her homemade brussel sprouts and pumpkin soup, her favorite and our tradition over many holidays. More whoops of delight from Nancy in room 316 who just loved Emerson as he was so good on her bed. We met several new patients in wheel chairs etc. all with such a warm welcome. It was another great day, and outstanding visit!

Tate & "Daisy" – Palm Springs Pointe Senior Apartments-- Daisy had her first visit to a senior housing apartment. She greeted a few residents in the social room with her usual calm and extended paw. She let a few ladies pet her gently and was patient and kind to all. The highlight of the visit was an in-room meeting with a lady who clearly was in distress. She'd had some bad news that day and her sister was visiting. She used to have a Golden Retriever like Daisy and recalled taking her to Ocean Beach and SF, and what a great dog she was. This woman talked with Daisy, pet her extensively, shook her paw and in-turn Daisy gave her attention and eventually laid at her feet. When leaving, the lady said "this was the best thing that could have happened to me today." She definitely wants to see Daisy on a regular basis.

This one interaction was priceless and what the work is all about.

Dunkin' cont'd.....

About a year and a half later I got sick, deathly ill and hospitalized for 10 days as I recovered from emergency life-saving surgery. An abscess had formed and burst on my C2 and C3 vertebrae and the poison was headed to both my brain and my heart. I was one of the lucky ones who survived and I came home and called my friend who had Dunkin and said "bring me my dog!" And that boy - as well as my cat, Hootie Wilson- did not leave my side for the next 4 months as I recuperated. Truly I don't know what I would've done without either of them. Dunkin showed special talents. He really seemed to understand that I needed the medical equipment in the house and he was somewhat better behaved when we went for walks, walking more calmly as I was in a brace from chin to waist. And he stuck his nose in the visiting nurse's business every day as if to say "that's my job!"

During the entire time of my convalescence, I was thinking of how I could give back to the universe for allowing me to survive. Looking at volunteer opportunities, I didn't find anything suitable until I learned about "**Paws & Hearts**". Instantly I knew that this was something I could do - and with Dunkin - because he and Hootie Wilson really were the best medicine for me. I contacted Richard right away who invited us to come in for a temperament test. I wasn't sure what that meant, but I knew he would have no issues with wheelchairs or walkers as he had already been exposed to them. Well, he passed with flying colors and I was so proud of him. And then we got our first assignment at a nursing home and every week for the next 6 years I got to watch Dunkin work his magic. It amazes me to watch him work.

Now, after the long Covid break, we are so happy to be able to start visiting again. Every week I am humbled watching him take a little sadness, a little pain, and a little loneliness from "his people" and on to himself. Is it any wonder he's exhausted at the end of each visit?

I know we have helped raise the spirits of many residents over the years. But I'm pretty sure I'm the one who gets the most benefit.

Later this Spring we will be relocating our office to the Berger Foundation building at the corner of Cook & Merle.



After 21 years of having to schlep upstairs to a second floor office, we will have a beautiful, newly remodeled ground-floor office, with covered parking right at the door! We are so excited about this move.

Later this summer we will definitely have an Open House for all of our volunteers, donors, and friends from the valley.