

RANCHO MIRAGE

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"Paws & Hearts"
Animal Assisted Therapy



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Photos with Santa to Benefit Animal Assisted Therapy

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NOVEMBER 2024

THESUNCITYINSIDER.COM

Santa Paws at “Paws & Hearts!”

Written By Richard Waxman, Founder & Executive Director

Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 7th! We’re excited to introduce a brand-new event for the fall—Santa Paws—which takes the place of our beloved Dog Walk Fundraiser after a fantastic twenty-year run. This adorable event gives our volunteers and the community a chance to bring their dogs to our office for festive holiday photos with Santa!

We’re thrilled to have the same Santa from all those years of Dog Walks back in his suit, ready for the occasion. This year, we’ve gone all out, with a beautifully designed Santa set to make your photos really pop. Just bring your furry friend on a short leash (no retractable leashes, please), along with your phone, and we’ll take the photos for you. There’s no charge for this event, though donations are always appreciated as we continue our mission as a non-profit organization.

Our friends at Loving All Animals will also be there with a holiday-themed booth—and who knows, they might even have some adorable cats and dogs available for adoption!

For those who fondly remember our Dog Walks, you’ll recognize our welcoming balloon arch at the entrance. And while we’re skipping the continental breakfast this time, we’ll have plenty of water, hot chocolate, and treats for both humans and pups.



Phillip Valdez

This event is particularly meaningful to us because, as of December 1st, we are celebrating 25 years of service to the Coachella Valley! A whole quarter century! That’s quite the milestone for our little non-profit that just kept pushing forward.



Valerie Zugates

Our volunteers and donors, both past and present, know our story well. It all started with Lucky, a found dog, and together we began making presentations at local long-term care facilities, asking if they would like weekly therapy dog visits. The response was overwhelming, and from there, we grew. We got our first office, became a 501(c)(3), assembled a board of directors, and continued testing and training new volunteers. The growth never stopped—and here we are, on the brink of that magical 25-year mark.

I have to take a moment to acknowledge the amazing people who helped us along the way. In the beginning, my boyfriend at the time, Phillip Valdez, was instrumental. He was the one who urged me to find office space in Palm Desert, and even convinced our board members to contribute \$100 per month so we could cover overhead costs. He worked tirelessly in those early years to make “Paws & Hearts” a reality.



Drew Marefos

A few years later, Valerie Zugates walked into our office and said, “I hear you need some bookkeeping help?” She graciously offered to do our books for free, and after a few months, she also took over our website. She was a dear friend and a valued part of our team for 16 years.

Around the same time, Drew Marefos came into the picture, and we became fast friends. Drew adored Lucky and Scruffy, and when I brought him along on a visit to Eisenhower, he was moved to tears watching them interact with patients. He jumped in to help in every way possible—visits, training, board meetings, and presentations—for 16 years. There wasn’t anything Drew wouldn’t do to support us.



Karen Gebala

Karen Gebala joined us about 20 years ago with her dog, Felicia. Though she only stayed in the desert for a year before moving back to San Francisco, Karen has been my proofreader and editor ever since. She’s always been a trusted advisor, and today she serves as our board’s Vice President!

Sadly, both Valerie and Drew have passed away, and while I still find joy in this work, the office just isn’t the same without them.



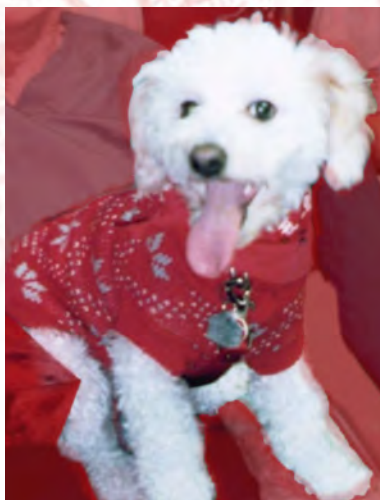
Ginny Tillmannshofer

I’d also like to give a special mention to Virginia “Ginny” Tillmannshofer. Ginny joined our board nearly 20 years ago and was our Board President for many of those years. She was the mastermind behind the incredible gift baskets for our Dog Walk Raffles for two decades! Now serving as our President Emeritus, Ginny’s contributions over the years have been invaluable.

COVER STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 22...



"Paws & Hearts"



"Lucky" (Left) and "Scruffy" (Right) the Founding Canine Ambassadors!



Richard Waxman (Left) is the founder of Paws n Hearts with Randy Miller (Right) of Modern Woodmen, long time supporter and sponsor

We're always looking for new volunteers! If you're a full-time resident and have a friendly, outgoing dog, you can find our volunteer guidelines on our website: www.pawsandhearts.org. Our office is located in The Berger Charitable Building, 42-600 Cook Street, Suite 138, Palm Desert, CA 92211. Feel free to call us at (760) 836-1406.

This event is sponsored in part by The Comprehensive Cancer Center at Desert Regional and Modern Woodmen. A big thank you to both organizations for their support!

We can't wait to see you and your pups at Santa Paws on December 7th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.!



“Paws & Hearts”

Animal Assisted Therapy



PRESENTS

Santa Paws!!

This year we are going to host a little event in our new office, Santa Paws!! Think Santa in his chair, a holiday themed back-drop, hot chocolate, treats for the dogs and the humans... and dogs for adoption from Loving All Animals!

Saturday, December 7th
10am – 1pm

We are inviting our volunteers and the community to come and join us! Our resident Santa from our past Dog Walks will be on hand to pose with your dog for your holiday photo!

Mark the date down on your calendar!

Cost: Gee, looks like this one is on the house!

But donations are always appreciated!

Sorry, no retractable leashes allowed. Your pup must be on a short leash!

“Paws & Hearts”

42-600 Cook Street, Ste. 138 • Palm Desert, CA 92211
The Berger Foundation Building

☎ (760) 836-1406

✉ Pawsandhearts@aol.com

🌐 www.pawsandhearts.org

Please call or email with any questions

This event has been graciously sponsored by:
**The Comprehensive Cancer Center
at Desert Regional
& Modern Woodmen**

