

"Paws & Hearts"

Animal Assisted Therapy

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WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we close out the year and I work on this Winter's Newsletter, I am thinking about the few months "Terry" and I have been in our new office. It took a bit to get this place finished and moved in, but once we got settled (and got the TV hooked up—thanks Jeff!), we were really back in business!

From the first week we were meeting new pups and their handlers and conducting temperament tests, and we now have a few new Canine Ambassadors out there in the field making weekly visits! That has always been the bottom line for us--- training and getting new dogs out there to make people a little happier from a Pet Therapy Visit!

We've been very lucky to have some very special editorial coverage this fall that we want to share with all of you, and it can be found on the next page.

Who'd have ever thought we'd be in year 26? But here we are, so let me close by thanking each and every one of you who was kind enough to make a donation to our Fall On-Line Fundraiser. The donations sure helped a lot! Thank you!

- Richard Waxman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Add to your calendar!

PET BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

Monthly Meetings
1st & 3rd Wednesday of the Month

VOLUNTEER BOOK CLUB

Last Wednesday of the Month 1:00pm

OPEN HOUSE

in our new office in the Berger Building
Friday, February 13th 1-3pm

"TERRY'S" VIEWS


("Lucky", "Scruffy", "Maddie" & "Bingo"
in thought)



So here I am in my new office with Dad. He bought me a brand new bed, but he kept moving it from one space to another to another as he re-arranged the furniture umpteen times. Damn that decorating gene that old Queen has! Finally I couldn't stand it any longer, and I chose a very quiet spot right behind his desk where I'm quite comfortable curling up while Dad works.

I'll say one thing for him; he has trained our visitors to quietly call out our names as they are walking down the private hall to our door so that we aren't scared when someone just appears in the office. You see Dad leaves the door open all the time with a baby-gate so I won't run down the hall. Like I'd ever leave this cushy job!

Actually, this space is nicer than the one downstairs, and this time around we have office neighbors to say hello to which is really sweet. I've been a good boy in our new space. None of that bugging Dad every 5 minutes to take me outside for a pish like I used to downstairs. Stop by and say hello if you are in the area!

 "Terry" Waxman

"Paws & Hearts"

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Headlines from the last few months!



Mid October saw us with a little article in my hometown newspaper, The Hamilton Spectator. Jon Wells, a feature writer, was very kind to do an update on our 25 years!

A3 | THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2025

EDITOR: TERI PECOSKIE
news@thespec.com

LOCAL 'Paws & Hearts' at 25



JON WELLS
OPINION

Good news, for life in narrow focus: the weekend is here.

Broader focus: 65 days of autumn remain to be savoured.

Existentially broad (as in, Earth is a speck in the cosmos so don't sweat the small things): a new discovery reveals that grains of ice found in a geyser on a moon of Saturn, originating in an underground ocean, contain organic material, and thus the prospect for "more complex organics essential for life," 12 billion kilometres away.

This moon is named Enceladus, after a giant in Greek mythology, and discovered 236 years ago, by an astronomer using the world's most powerful telescope at the time.

Four-legged healers

I once wrote about Richard (Ricky) Waxman, and how he had searched for answers surrounding the 1977 unsolved assault of Jack Waxman, at his father's Hamilton Auto Supply business downtown.

Jack, a Second World War veteran, had managed, while tied-up and badly injured, to dial 911 with his tongue on a rotary phone.

It's a scene long ago and far away, from the dreamily named Rancho Mirage, Calif., where Jack and Pearl Waxman's son has lived the last 27 years.

And it's where, Ricky happily reports, he marks the start of the 25th year of "Paws & Hearts," a dog therapy program he founded and directs.

Trained volunteers and dogs visit patients in long-term-care facilities, and cancer and Alzheimer's centres, "similar to programs I'm happy to see take place in Hamilton hospitals," says affable Ricky, who daily follows news in his hometown.

Its genesis goes back to Ricky in his 20s, living in Toronto, when he volunteered to take his first dog, mixed terrier Trumper, to Sunnybrook hospital. Ricky had no idea what to do, but a female patient asked him to put Trumper on her bed so she could pet him. She encouraged him to take the dog room to room.



"She said I was doing the best thing, by bringing my dog to visit people. I've never forgotten her."

Paws & Hearts' mission statement: "To enrich the lives of seniors and children that need a little one-on-one attention that only a 'four-legged' healer can provide."

The organization fields 25 teams of volunteers and dogs. Ricky publishes a newsletter, and for a light touch, offers a column "written" by his dog, Terry, a Westie (West Highland Terrier mix), signed by a paw print.

Ricky says Terry doesn't have the disposition to be a therapy dog, but he does accompany his owner to interview volunteers, and to service club presentations.

"As long as Terry is in my arms, he is comfortable," Ricky tells me. Sometimes the four-legged creatures need therapy, too.

Richard Waxman, who grew up in Hamilton, with his dog Terry, in Rancho Mirage, Calif., where Waxman founded an animal assisted therapy organization called Paws & Hearts 25 years ago. Terry "writes" a column in the newsletter, and signs off with a paw print.

RICHARD WAXMAN



Richard and his two founding dogs, "Scruffy" & "Lucky"

Sandie Young, our Tuesday Volunteer at the Comprehensive Cancer Center, was featured on the cover of the Sun City Insider with her two Ambassadors, "Shelby" & "Hudson"



The Desert Sun ran this article last fall in its Sunday Charity Giving Section for us, and we were lucky enough to get quite a few inquiries from potential volunteers!

NONPROFIT CELEBRATION

Paws & Hearts celebrates the start of year 26

Richard Waxman
Special to The Desert Sun

Based in Palm Desert, Paws & Hearts is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides animal-assisted therapy seven days a week throughout the Coachella Valley. Our therapy dogs, or "canine ambassadors" as we call them, and their human handlers visit local hospitals, long-term care facilities and Alzheimer's and cancer centers to visit the patients—and in many cases, the staff—in order to lift their spirits.

Mid-April saw us celebrating our 25th anniversary with a beautiful luncheon at the Classic Club in Palm Desert. Current and past volunteers and many of our long-time donors and supporters were in attendance. It truly was a lovely celebration, full of wonderful memories.

After the luncheon I had decided to close the office, take the summer off and



Chloe is ready for her weekly visit!

spend some time in my hometown in Ontario, Canada. (All the volunteers were still making their weekly visits.)

See PAWS & HEARTS, Page 11D



Paws & Hearts held its anniversary luncheon at The Classic Club on April 15, 2025. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY PAWS & HEARTS

~ Volunteer Stories ~

This to me is always the highlight of our quarterly Newsletters, sharing Volunteer Stories so that everyone gets to read the volunteers' reports of what they and their Canine Ambassador experience while on their weekly visit. These reports amazingly express why "Paws & Hearts" provides the services that it does!

"STARRY" & DAVID & STEPHEN

Comprehensive Cancer Center in Palm Springs

David & Stephen have moved out of the valley and Friday's at the Cancer Center won't quite be the same without Starry after 2 ½ years. Here is their last Volunteer Report—

Our final visit to the Cancer Center was so nice. People really appreciated all of Starry's visits that she has made over the last 2+ years.

On the first floor, we met a man who adored Starry and plied her with affection after she jumped up on the chair next to him. He has always had dogs and showed us photos of his two current dogs, 19-month-old Frenchies. They both had beautiful but unusual wavy brown and white coats and these piercing blue eyes a la Paul Newman. He gave Starry lots of attention even though she's just a run-of-the-mill Schnauzer.

Also on the first floor, we met an elderly woman who has had dogs all her life and even volunteered for Paws & Hearts in the past. Her name is Shirley Mueller, and she said she used to take turns visiting Eisenhower Hospital with her friend named Jill. As she was petting Starry, we told her we would mention to you that we had met her.

Besides seeing those patients, Starry bid farewell to all the employees at the Cancer Center who have showered her with love ever since she began working there. It was sad for all three of us to say goodbye to these people we've seen every Friday for almost 3 years, but we'll come back to visit from time to time. Thank you, Richard, for giving us this opportunity to provide a wonderful service to the folks at the Cancer Center. I know I speak for Stephen and Starry when I say that our hearts have grown because of this work.



"ERNIE BANKS" & WINSTON

Comprehensive Cancer Center in Palm Springs

These two took a bit of time off this summer and returned to visits early fall. Here is their first report back!

Ernie Banks went absolutely NUTS with excitement when I brought out her red Paws & Hearts bandana this morning. She dragged me to the car, and once we were in the Cancer Center parking lot, she dragged me inside. Today's theme was "slow." The center overall was very slow — we only saw 13 patients while we were there. Ernie had a great time sniffing everything in sight, re-familiarizing herself with the smells of the center. We got to see all of Ernie's favorites: Tanya, Jen, Candi, and Connie. Of the patients we did see, everyone was super friendly. I even encountered two parties that seemed to know no English. It always amazes me how people who don't speak each other's languages can still bond over animals. It's truly magical. It was a good visit and Ernie has already told me that she can't wait for next Thursday's visit to start!



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 the frail and special care cases that require the loving attention and affection that only a 'four-legged' healer can provide.



"Paws & Hearts"

42-600 Cook Street, Ste. 207
The Berger Foundation Building
Palm Desert, CA 92211

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WINTER 2026

Volunteer Open House

Friday February 13th 1 – 3 pm Drop In

What better way to show off our new office than by inviting our Volunteers and local friends to stop by and see the new place!

This will be our version of a little Valentine's Day party! Join us a cup of coffee or tea and a Valentine's Day treat and check out the new office.

Please give a call or send a quick email if you plan to attend!

Hope to see you all!

The Berger Charitable Foundation Building - 42-600 Cook Street, (corner of Merle) Suite 207.
Park at the front of the building, enter through the main doors, elevators to the right. Take the elevator to the second floor, and then turn right and walk all the way to the end of the hall and you'll find us!



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