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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope I am not speaking too soon, but it feels like spring is trying to show itself. Kooper has spent the last few days sleeping outside on the deck for hours, at times I find him lying in the small remaining snow pile because he is getting hot!

As the days are getting longer, I feel more like getting out of the house. For me, that means more time spent visiting people that love to see my two therapy animals. If you have spend the winter “hibernating” in the warmth of your home, maybe now is the time to get back out and make visiting part of your normal routine.

If you are not sure of where to visit, please contact a Board member and we will be happy to get you started. If your therapy animal needs a change, talk to one of us, we will help you find a different place that makes both of you happy.

Our summer events will be here soon; watch for emails to volunteer at a few of them. They are a nice place to spend some time with other DOC members.

Keep up the great work!

Laura Kooper and Oliver

2015 MEMBERSHIP FORMS

2015 Membership forms were emailed to all current members recently. Please fill them out ASAP and mail them to: Dogs On Call, Inc. PO Box 284, Baraboo, WI 53913

The password for the members-only section of the Dogs On Call website will be changing once our 2015 membership sign-up is complete. Please watch for that email the end of March. Remember, the members only section is where you can find copies of the DOC handbook and bylaws, copies of the minutes from our Board meetings, membership forms and photo releases forms, as well as ordering information for book marks, baseball cards, DOC clothing and vests.

HOSPITAL NEWS

First of all, Meriter and UW Hospital are always looking for more DOC teams! I'll be glad to tell you all about the programs, but be prepared for my gushing about the good experiences our teams have had.

Contact Karen at karenp@dogsoncall.org

Meriter Hospital – Another Option

Visits at Meriter are not just at the main hospital – we also have teams visiting the Child and Adolescent Psych Hospital (CAP) on the far west side of Madison. If your dog likes kids, this could be for you!

Visits are once a month in the well-supervised dayrooms of the facility, on a Saturday or Sunday. Thirty minutes with teens, thirty minutes with younger children. The interactions with the teens (usually no more than 10) range from quiet petting to lively conversation. Everyone is glad to share stories about the animals they have at home. The younger children (about 4 or fewer) can be much more active – some calmly pet or brush the dog and talk about their pets, but we've also had the children take turns walking the dog up and down the hall (on a double leash, with the handler holding one!), or hide a dog toy in the room for a fun game of "find it." There's always interesting conversation. In nice weather, we can be outside in the courtyard. The dogs don't mind lying in the cool grass for petting!

To volunteer at this facility, you have to be a Meriter Hospital volunteer and go through the shadowing process at the hospital. It's a fun option for visiting and was always one of my dog's favorite places to go.



Welcome to our newest CAP volunteer, Janet and Sadie!

Contact Karen at karenp@dogsoncall.org for more information.

HOSPITAL NEWS

UW Hospital's Therapy Dog Day

The UW Hospital will hold a special event in March – Health & Healing Week – from March 9-13. Each day will focus on complementary therapies such as music, art, massage, and our favorite – therapy dog visits!

On Wednesday, March 11 from 11:30-1:00, seven UW Hospital DOC teams will be stationed in the public areas of the hospital to meet visitors and staff, explain what we do, and tell how to get involved with Pet Partners and Dogs On Call. It's a fun, exhausting day for the dogs and great PR for our teams at the hospital.

Karen Peckham

DORM VISITS ARE A GREAT EXPERIENCE

Leia had a great experience doing dorm visits this year, of all things. She and I got to do a few this fall/winter, and Leia LOVED the college students.

She would get settled and get very relaxed, and when the students would come visit, they would inevitably be pretty stressed (finals will do that!). But when they sat with her, they would get very relaxed, a big grin would come over everyone's face, and she was apparently a BIG help for them.

She was usually one of the smaller dogs there, but some kids really liked that. Including some who warmed to Leia and her gentle style, even though they were initially afraid of the dogs.

More than once, a student would sit down very obviously having a rough time, and after a couple of minutes of quietly sitting with Leia, I would hear them whispering to her... saying how nice she was to help them settle their fears, calling her the nicknames they call their pets from home, just saying "I love you" or "thank you..." whatever. It was all very natural and sweet, and Leia did so well. She is a total rock star.

Ben and Leia



PRISON = FUN?

It's not often you think if the words "fun" and "prison" in the same thought, but that's the comment I received from a team after their first visit at the Columbia Correctional Institution in Portage:

"We sure enjoyed the visit and I consider it the most fun I have had as a DOC volunteer. Our dogs were so relaxed and comfortable I must conclude they had a great time too."

The prison visits are going well. The staff tells us every visit what a positive difference we are making with the inmates. Men who rarely speak are regular chatterboxes when petting the dogs. The emotional good feelings stay with them a long time and, if they are happier, life is easier for the prison staff.

It's not just the visit with the dogs that makes an impression. The inmates value the human conversation, too. Another CCI volunteer relates: I had not met this inmate before, so when I gave him my dog's business card with her photo on it, he said " Thank you. I like to have these pictures. I put them up on my wall and then I can look up at them and think back about the time I got to spend with the dog. It gives me something special to think about." He also said later, "I don't know if the others thank you for coming, but I want to tell you how much it means to me to have you bring your dog to share with me and for you to talk with me. I know I have only myself to blame for being here, but this means a lot to me."

Our once-a-month visits expanded into another prison unit starting in February.

My thanks to the participating teams and their commitment:

Marie & Dora (Whippet)

JoAnn & Molly (Golden Retriever)

Faye & Gandhi (Labrador Retriever)

Dan & Buddha (Labrador Retriever)

Gina & Bella (Rough Collie)

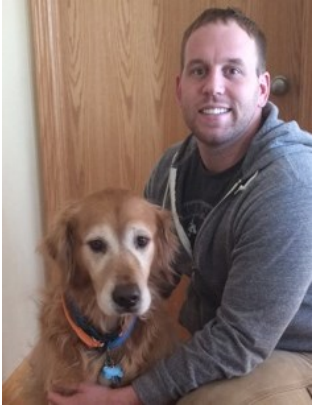
Kay & Daisy (Golden Retriever)

Liz & Lovey (Collie/Shepherd mix)

It is a significant drive to and from Portage, but all the teams involved (who are driving at least one hour, one way) think it's well worth the trip.

Karen Peckham

MEMBER PROFILES



Kyle M. lives in Evansville with Louie, his seven-year-old Golden Retriever. It was an easy choice for Kyle to decide which one to take home from the litter of eight puppies. Kyle says, “We immediately bonded, he really did pick me, not the other way around.”

Louie shares the house with Molly (aka Monkey), an energetic two-year-old Golden. Kyle and Louie have recently finished their mentoring and with DOC would like to visit at the VA Hospital and Fort Health Hospital, as that’s where Louie’s Grandma works. He would also like to join the American Family Children’s Hospital Pet Pals program.

As a Retriever, Louie’s hobbies are long walks, playing fetch, and swimming in any body of water. Kyle spends his free time working with wood, fishing, finding new projects to complete around the house, and sometimes napping.



Priya H. has a seven-year-old Golden Retriever, named Maxwell. Max is from a breeder in Menomonee Falls; he shares Priya’s attention with two mixed-breed cat brothers named Berlioz and Toulouse. Priya is active in sports, likes art, and being with her family and friends. She and Max just finished mentoring and are ready to visit nursing homes, dorms, hospitals, schools, or “wherever we’re needed”!

If you’re a new Dogs On Call member, consider filling out a Member Profile form. We’ll introduce you and your Pet Partner to the rest of the DOC membership in an upcoming newsletter. We’d love to meet you! Contact karenp@dogsoncall.org for a form.

Karen Peckham

HIPAA REMINDER

When getting together with other DOC members, especially those that visit the same facilities, it's easy to start comparing experiences. Remember that we're always responsible for following HIPAA privacy rules: Basically, do not reveal to anyone any identifying information about a client you've visited. That includes any information about the client's condition, physical characteristics, or any personal information.

Also, if you are out in your community and happen to see someone you visited (and even Madison can be a small town sometimes!), always let them start any conversation about your visit or the facility where you met.

PET PARTNERS NAME BADGES

When ordering your Pet Partners badge, please remember that you don't have to put your full name (first and last) on your badge. There is a line on the registration paperwork that asks what name would you like on your badge? If you put just your first name on that line, that is all they will print on your badge.

This is not something that I was too concerned about, until I received a phone call from a patient that I had visited. They were able to remember my last name from my Pet Partner badge, and then look me up in the phone book. Since that incident I personally go with only my first name. Since Pet Partners has made the badges bigger, I feel this is something all of our members need to think about as you renew and receive the new larger badge.

Laura, Kooper and Oliver

HOW DO THEY KNOW?

Colleen and I visit at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital about four times a month and yesterday, when we were on our way to work in adult rehab, we passed by the Emergency Room on our way upstairs. There was a woman outside the ER on her phone obviously under a lot of stress and looked like she had been crying. Colleen walked over to her and gently touched her hand, without any prompting from me. The woman looked down and smiled and then she gave me a grateful smile as well. It just amazes me how dogs seem to sense when someone needs some comfort.

Pat and Colleen

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SAFETY NIGHT!

DOC again participated in the Madison Children's Museum Safety Night. Four teams – (Left to Right) Karen & Zombie, Lynn & Gypsy, Nancy & Buddy, and Nancy & Eva, – did a great job giving tips on how to safely greet a dog, all while making sure their dogs were protected from over-enthusiastic petting. It was a high-stress environment, but the dogs still had wagging tails for every person that approached them. Thank you to all the teams and dogs!

Karen Peckham



WHAT AN OLD DOG CAN TEACH YOU



I'm a guy who lived with dogs for 35 years, spent five years in a dog daycare, and started my own dog training business. You might think I know a lot about dogs.

You've likely heard the old saw, "You can't teach old dogs new tricks." Humans are the teachers and dogs are the students. They just need to stop what they are doing and pay attention so they can learn something.

Well, I prefer to imagine what might happen if we stopped to pay attention to what our dogs are trying to teach us.

On May 29th, my wife and I lost Jake at 16 years, four and one-half months of life. He was a spunky, or *crazy*, young black Labrador. His youth was spent in typical Labbie enthusiasm.

Jake joyfully pursued Frisbees and balls, splashed in pools...and ran off whenever he escaped his leash, which was often. Once he chased a snowmobile for a quarter-mile. "Whee!"

Usually he romped around neighboring farms chasing deer, or livestock. Jake would not come when called and seemed to delight all the more when I chased after him. "Whee! Whee!"

In frustration I found myself waving my arms like a monkey chasing the other monkey who had just stolen his banana. Jake loved a great game of chase even more than catching Frisbees.

I wondered what I was going to do with this dog.

His recklessness led to accidents and injuries, as when Jake walked across the path of our 1,100 pound horse while she passed through a gate. He sprawled across the ground, twice.

Once I cleaned the horse stall and Jake scooted past me to salvage the rest of the horse apples before I could hog them all...and was kicked in the head.

Thanks to Jake, our veterinarian and I became closely acquainted. By age 12, Jake developed spinal arthritis and I came to know another vet who practiced acupuncture.

We took him to several training courses that left us with all of our original problems and frustrations. Then there was the agility class in which he kept getting into dog fights.

At times, I was quite sure he was beyond training. I scratched my head and wondered what I could teach such a crazy dog, but the real issue was what he could teach me.

As he aged, Jake settled into a calm snuggle bunny, still eager to play but slowing in step, and no longer inclined to pursue adventures off our property.

WHAT AN OLD DOG CAN TEACH YOU—CONTINUED

In his final minutes, he settled against me as I sat on the floor, his head resting in my hands as we exchanged glances and shared long heartfelt embraces.

I gently stroked his gray face and serenaded him with loving words, softly spoken as I massaged him into a relaxed and peaceful state. I held his cloudy brown eyes in mine as he quietly slipped away.

My tears washed away all lingering doubt and fear. Jake knew he was well-loved and that I would take care of him to the final breath, whether his or mine.

Jake found safe haven in my heart, far from want and worry, secure in my love. I took away the pain that debilitated him and now I carry that burden for him.

It was my privilege, and my enduring sorrow, to perform a final duty for such a loving soul. Jake taught me much about patience, empathy, and compassion.

He taught me how to love, and how to lose those I love. We Americans don't seem to deal well with death and loss and too often live in denial.

Jake lived joyfully in the moment. He forgave past wrongs and my human failings. Perhaps an old man can learn new tricks after all.

Dogs comfort us as we lose friends and family. They help us find courage to go calmly to the end our own Earth Walk, which surely comes to us all.

My dog was showing me the way all along, but being human, it was hard for me to just stop what I was doing and pay attention. On May 29th I paid attention.

Jake was a good teacher.

Dogs joined us 30,000 years ago. Perhaps they came to teach the most valuable lesson in life: How to become a Human Being. Please honor your dogs; they earned it.



Dan and Buddha

Daniel H. A., CPDT-KA is the owner of Happy Buddha Dog Training. He has membership in Pet Professional Guild, Force-Free Trainers of Wisconsin, Association of Professional Dog Trainers, Association of Professional Humane Educators and American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

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December 2015

Articles written by members of DOC on any topic/subject that may be of interest to DOC members are welcome.

Non-copyrighted articles or those that can be reprinted with permission are welcome as well.

Any article that is submitted may be edited for proper grammar or clarity.

Send all to: Laura K at:

Laurak@dogsoncall.org