

Spring 2017

Dogs On Call Inc.

Letter From the President

As my flowers start to bloom with the warmer weather, it reminds me that yet another year has passed. Spring is my favorite time of year, everything is so green, flowers are springing from once-frozen ground and will be in full bloom soon, the trees have buds that seem to open into large leaves in just a few days. What does spring mean for you in your life? Is this a time for "spring cleaning," figuring out what you need and what you don't? I know my home could use some of this!

Maybe spring is a good time for each of us to look at the visits that we have been doing. Are we doing what makes us happy? Could we be doing more? Would we like the reading program? Would we like to try visiting a hospital? How about the Dog Bite Prevention program that is so popular in the summer?

Enjoy the great spring weather, take a walk, go on a picnic, watch the sunset.

Thank you all for everything you do for Dogs On Call and Pet Partners. We would not be the group we are without each of you.

Laura, Kooper, Oliver, & Shadow

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Suggestion Box

Do you have a question, comment, or suggestion for the DOC Board? You can use the Suggestion Box on the DOC website's Members' Page. Your comment or question can be anonymous and we'll post the response in the next DOC newsletter. If you want a personal response, there is an option to leave your contact info. We welcome your suggestions! We're counting on YOU to help make this a better organization!

The DOC Board of Directors



Literacy Week at Sauk Trail Elementary

Farch. It's a word that feels much like it sounds. Farch is the long, cold, gray period of time between February and March. Fewer hours of daylight and less playtime outdoors in Farch often leads to more coughs, colds, and flu bugs indoors. Some say Farch is the armpit of the school year, but it's not all bad... really.

It is during this dreary time of year that we celebrate Literacy Week at Sauk Trail Elementary School! This year's Literacy Week was different in more ways than one. All of the students at Sauk Trail read a common book called "Last Stop on Market Street," by Matt de la Pena. It is a powerful and touching story about a young boy who learns some important character lessons, such as gratitude and finding beauty in unexpected places, while on a bus ride with his grandma. And this year, those themes were given special emphasis as a result of our honorary guests from Dogs On Call.

When the sign-up sheets for the dog visits went up in the teacher's lounge, the excitement among staff was palpable. There was a mad scramble to get permission slips signed and arrangements made for students with allergies. Meanwhile, the anticipation throughout the school was contagious. Mr. Todd, our school custodian, asked more than once if a dog could come and visit him during the day. Ms. Shelia, our school secretary, was hoping for an extra set of paws in the office as well.

It was a gray morning when Andrea arrived with Samantha and announced "It's a Golden morning!" And sure enough, another Golden Retriever named Daisy walked in the door with Kay. This was no ordinary day– there were dogs at school!!

The number of smiles and "awwws" anytime a dog was spotted in the hallway or entered a classroom was immeasurable. Thanks to the generous and patient handlers, Kay, Karen, Chelsea, Andrea, and Todd, many students and staff were able to meet and greet more than one dog while passing in the hallway. All of the handlers did an excellent job of sharing information about their dogs and graciously answering ANY question that came up. One kindergartner had a burning question, "When is Daisy's birthday?"– because when you're five years old that is THE most important day of the year. There were, of course, countless stories shared by students about their own pets. Addison, a first grader, was beyond thrilled to learn that Izzy shared the same exact name as her dog! And just like the students, many staff shared their love and interest of dogs with one another. Thanks to the inspiration, Sauk Trail's librarian, Mrs. O'Rourke, has even decided to train her dog, Dewy, to be a "Dog On Call" this summer.

There were several students that opted to initially keep some space between themselves and the dogs due to uncertainty or fear. However, the calm and peaceful energy of these dogs and the comfort level of the handlers had most of these students inching closer throughout the visit. Zombie handled Karen's visit to a fourth grade classroom like a champ. He had no fewer than 18 hands on him for the entire visit. There was so much love and affection exchanged, it was beyond heartwarming. Thanks to Karen for sharing her amazing book about Zombie. What a full and exciting life for a dog!

Literacy Week at Sauk Trail Elementary - Continued

It did not take long for Mrs. Hustad's 3rd grade class to decide on their Persuasive Writing topic after the dogs showed up. Mrs. Dahlk, our principal, can expect 18 essays on "Why Dogs On Call should come back next year" to arrive upon her desk any day now. All of the feedback received from staff about the visit echoed the same sentiment- "We should do this again next year!" These visits were a super introduction to the important jobs of these dogs. Next year Sauk Trail hopes to incorporate Dogs On Call in other ways, too. We would love to give kids time to read to dogs! Chelsea, Captain's handler, suggested a dog safety course for our younger students during summer school, and someone on our Literacy Action Team suggested that the dogs come back for career week.

One 2nd grader in Mrs. Bilak's room was inspired to write an impromptu poem to mark the special occasion.



Doggy in the Room
By: Isabella

Doggy
Doggy
Doggy
Come right
inside
the room.
Doggy
Doggy
Doggy
are you ready
For
the Bloom!



Thanks to Dogs On Call for helping us explore themes of gratitude and beauty. There were many feelings of gratitude circling around Sauk Trail during Dog Week, er... rather, Literacy Week. Many of us felt gratitude for our own dogs and for the positive experience that Dogs On Call provided for our students. And there was beauty. There was beauty in seeing gestures of kindness and gentleness and patience and wonder between the children and the dogs which are important character traits for all ages.

Sauk Trail sends love and gratitude to Izzy, Zombie, Captain, Daisy, and Samantha for the beautiful memories and warm feelings during those cold Farch days. We hope to see you again next year!

Melissa—Sauk Trail Elementary

Hospital News

How about visiting with bored, lonely, and stressed people and turn them in to happy, friendly, relaxed people? You won't be able to keep track of how many times you'll hear, "You made my day!" What more could you want? That and free, covered parking! We **always** need new teams at Meriter and the UW Hospitals. Contact Karen Peckham at karenp@dogsoncall.org.

Welcome to these new teams!

Meriter:

Courtney & Chopper (German Shepherd)

Mimi & Nemo (Lab mix)

UW Health – The American Center and UW Health Rehab:

Pam & TJ (Chocolate Lab)



Hospital Events, Past and Future

Meriter Volunteer Luncheon, March 7 – The Meriter Volunteer Services Department treated their volunteers to another delicious lunch at the Sheraton Hotel in Madison. The theme this year was "Oscar Night" and the décor and games were focused on movies. Many people got in the spirit, wearing gold, sequins, and even long dresses and tuxedos. The red carpet was rolled out, along with big gold stars with each volunteer's name and their years of service. Even the therapy dogs got their own stars!

UW Hospital Volunteer Brunch, April 22 – This event will be held at the UW Hospital and Clinics'. The theme is "Camping" and promises to be fun and full of awful theme-related puns from the Volunteer Services Manager. Dogs On Call handlers and their dogs are always invited and no one ever goes away hungry. There will be an extensive buffet for the humans and big bowls of dog treats and water for the dogs.

Take Our Children to Work at UW Hospital and Clinics, April 27 – UW Health is hosting this event for their employees and their children and invited the UWHC Dogs On Call teams to meet the children. Four teams will do a meet-and-greet in the afternoon.

Nurses' Week at UW Hospital and Clinics, May 11 – For the fourth time, the UWHC Dogs On Call teams were requested to visit with just nursing staff (but probably a few doctors will sneak in) during the Nurses' Appreciation Week. Several teams will be touring hospital units during each shift providing much-needed stress relief for the nursing staff.

Hospital News - Continued

Hospital Programs

Therapy dog visits at hospitals aren't all visits with recovering patients in their rooms. Here are some out-of-the-ordinary programs offered at UW Health Hospitals and UPH-Meriter:

UW Hospital and Clinics "Lite" – This "lightened" version of UW Hospital visits involves visiting in just the Surgical Waiting Area and Towne Square, the main floor public areas of the hospital. You'll be greeting family members, friends, and visitors; there are no in-room patient visits, though you might meet a few patients as they are out for a change-of-scenery walk. The hospital is very busy during the daytime and your dog will get a LOT of petting! You do NOT have to be a regular UWHC DOC team and you do NOT have to go through the UWHC volunteer process, though you DO have to sign up with the UW Hospitals program coordinator.

UW Health Rehabilitation Hospital AAT Visits – When Meriter hospital had a rehab unit, several DOC teams performed animal-assisted therapy (AAT) visits with patients. That unit closed and moved to the new UW Health Rehabilitation Hospital on the far east side of Madison. They are now ready to start AAT visits again, with goal-oriented tasks such as a team walking along with a patient who is using a walker, patients brushing the dog, throwing a toy for the dog to catch, etc. These visits would be during daytime hours on a weekday.

UPH-Meriter Birthing Center – Talk about bored patients! There are many antepartum patients here, on bedrest for weeks at a time. They are missing being at home and really missing their pets. DOC teams can cheer up patients and greet family members (from toddlers to grandparents) in this unit. In the postpartum units, your dog may get to hear a newborn cry. That has generated some curious looks from the dogs!

For information any of these programs, contact Karen Peckham at karenp@dogsoncall.org

Karen & Pete

Literacy Week at Sunset Ridge

Each year during our district wide literacy week, Sunset Ridge Elementary in Middleton LOVES to invite your volunteers and their dogs to be guest readers in our classroom! Staff, teachers, and students all comment about how this is the highlight of the week, how much they love the visits and how we wish we could have the dogs in the school every day! These are the experiences that leave lasting memories with students. Thank you Dogs on Call! We love you!

Jessica at Sunset Ridge

This Is Why We Do This!

Ginger (Shih Tzu) and I recently made our first visit to Four Winds Nursing Home in Verona. They had specifically requested a visit for a handful of hospice patients but we were welcomed to walk the halls and visit others as well.

As we made our rounds, several staff members would mention one particular man that we MUST see. His door was closed when we passed by, so we continued with our visits and would check back periodically. Towards the end of our visit, the door was finally open. We were greeted by the man's daughter who was so afraid that they had missed us.

The man was seated in a wheel chair, eyes closed, and appeared to be sleeping. His daughter spoke to him, as if he was awake, and talked about her childhood dog. I sat next to him holding Ginger so he could reach her, but his hands did not seem to work. His daughter took his hands and began to rub them through Ginger's fur as she spoke about their long-ago pet. The man never spoke, he never opened his eyes and appeared unresponsive...except for one lone tear that ran down his face. I don't know what that man was feeling, but I think his daughter did because she was also tearing up.

This is why we do this. Ginger helped facilitate a deep connection between a dying man and his daughter. Maybe that was about a long-lost pet, or youth, or happy memories, but it was made possible by a dog.



Lisa & Ginger

New Facility Visit Request Post

The new Dogs On Call Facility Visit Request system is online and showing early success! We've placed teams at three different facilities requesting visits with children and adults with disabilities or undergoing rehabilitation.

For facilities that contact Dogs On Call and want teams to visit, we direct them to an online form that will give us details about their facility and their goals for therapy animal visits. Information from these applications is condensed into a monthly email to all DOC members. New requests for the month will be highlighted, but previous requests will remain on the list for up to a year. Watch for these emails around the first of the month and see what new facilities want visits or maybe find new visit opportunities to keep your visits fresh.

Karen & Pete

Interdependence

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. – John Muir

In a country that celebrates Independence Day, Superman, and the strong, stoic hero, it's hard to remember the cold, hard truth that we are all dependent on someone, and they on us. Interdependence. Think about your therapy animal. Sure they depend on us for food, shelter, and safety but we depend on them for unconditional love and support. DOC members share their animals with people who need that love and support, but the team (human and therapy animal) gets something back. That warm, fuzzy feeling (probably driven by oxytocin) makes us feel GOOD! That's interdependence.

Think about all the volunteers required to coordinate events, schedule recurring visits, hold classes and evaluations, keep the organization functioning. The volunteers have families, jobs, and hobbies just like you, yet they carve out time to provide you with opportunities to do what you and your therapy animal love. More interdependence.

DOC NEEDS HELP. Time marches on for our pets and their handlers. Illness, changes in home life, and just plain exhaustion take a toll. But never fear, just like Superman you can save the day. All DOC needs is a little more of your time and talent. You don't need to commit to being Vice President (but we do need one!) as well as three Directors-at- Large.

It's as simple as:

- Making a suggestion to the anonymous Suggestion Box on the DOC website. Let the Board know what your concerns are. Let them know what you love.
- Participating in the annual picnic.
- Coming to a board meeting. They're open to the membership. See what really happens and eat some healthy bar food. (next meeting is May 24, 6:30 pm, Hody Bar, Middleton)
- Volunteering to help out at evaluations. It's easy to be part of the crowd! We promise that no one is hurt during the testing.
- Chairing an event (sounds grown-up doesn't it!). It's fun to meet other teams and I bet you can find a co-chair.
- Becoming an instructor and/or learning to evaluate. Love to educate? Here's your chance.
- Serving on the Board. It's a relatively painless 2 years, with on-the-job training.

Just a reminder, you don't have to be a really, really, really, really, really, really experienced team to help out. If you've done two visits you're an experienced team and probably have some great ideas and talents.

Take a chance, declare your interdependence!

Thank you for all that you and your Pet Partner do! We couldn't do this without you!

Joan & Shelby

Dog Bite Experience In A Store

The other day, I was in a store with my little Poodle and this woman started talking “dog” with me. She told me about her rescue Jack Russell that was about two years old. She had rescued him at one year old and he had come with many issues...a crazy dog that was not well behaved. She loved him, of course, regardless. She went on to tell me that the dog and her one-year-old granddaughter did not get along. She had to keep them separate when they were in the same house. She was hopeful that now that the baby and dog were older they would start getting along better.

Well, I have done several “Dog Bite Prevention” classes with DOC and learned many things. One of them was to keep dogs and children separate and under constant surveillance. Dogs don’t always understand children and their actions and it can scare them or confuse them or threaten them. In turn, their reactions can be fast and physical. This is one of the more common scenarios where dog bites occur. A dog bite to a child can mean not only physical harm but a life full of being afraid of dogs... a truly unfortunate way to live. And for the dog, it may mean being taken out of its home or even euthanized because it can no longer be trusted.

I tried to warn the mother, without being overly dogmatic, that this was a potentially dangerous situation and that she might want to rethink bringing them together, do some hard work training the dog, and make this joint experience a gradual encounter. She seemed unconcerned. She thought things would be just fine. Well, I could not really say more than what I had said. I had already overstepped my bounds, but I left feeling frustrated and afraid for the whole situation.

I wonder what any of you DOC members would have done. Do you say anything when you see a dog and young child in each other’s face? Do you comment when a dog is eating and a child starts to play with the dog? Do you ever react when a dog and young child are left alone without supervision because “they get along just fine”? I wonder if I overreacted. I wonder if our concerns are overly cautious. I know statistics say that dog bites are most common between dogs and children, but based on what info?

Anyway, just an experience I had that left me feeling helpless, wondering if I was stepping outside “my business,” or if I had an obligation to comment. It seems to me, without any training from DOC, intuitive that a “crazy, wound up” dog and a toddler is a disaster waiting to happen. Perhaps the woman was in denial because she wanted it to work out. I totally understand that situation. What do you think?

Dana & Pierre

Upcoming Therapy Dog??

Enjoy this picture of Cowboy with his new little brother, Boots! We now own a fine pair of Cowboy Boots! Boots is a Chiweenie and pretty naughty! I don’t think he’s ready to be a Pet a Partner anytime soon! But with Cowboy’s good example, he may have potential.

Kristan & Cowboy



Luna Visits At The Salvation Army

Luna and I have been visiting the Salvation Army Homeless Shelter every Wednesday. She was the perfect addition to a church service project I have been a part of for over fifteen years.

The shelter is comprised of families and single women, all in need of shelter and compassion. Our church brings teens to play with the children in the gym, and do activities like playdough and art projects. Families often have to leave their own pets to be a part of the shelter and welcome Luna's visits. Some of the children and parents have a fear of dogs, but Luna's gentle approach helps them let go of their fears and enjoy the love a dog can offer. Families often are there many weeks and really look forward to Luna's visits. The shelter staff also get a morale boost by her visits.

We always make a trip to the hallway each week to visit with the single women who wait for the gym to open up and become their nightly bedroom. They are so grateful for her visit! Recently, one of the women died in her sleep at the shelter, causing great stress for the other women. They actually waited for Luna's visit, buried their heads in her fluff, and were consoled by her. Luna was especially gentle and loving that evening, and let the women cry and hug her. At Christmas, Luna passed out gloves to the women, and many of them use her trading card as a bookmark.

One week, the staff approached Luna with a gift bag. Inside was a sealed flavored bone, along with a note from one of the single women, stating that now that she had been out of shelter for a couple months, she realized how much Luna's visits meant to her. She dropped the bag off as a thank you for Luna's help in getting her through such a tough time. Blessings given, blessings received!



Linda & Luna

Did Your Dog Pass The Neutral Dog Test?

Of course s/he did! Even though it was nerve-racking for the handler, that was a neutral dog in a quiet situation. Now, picture your dog at a new facility with lots of people, new smells, and new experiences. He might not want a dog, however friendly, rushing up to him. If your therapy dog wants to meet another therapy dog (and it's a good idea to get the sniffing over before going to work), please ask the owner first – "Is it OK if our dogs meet?" Don't assume every therapy dog will be totally OK with every other therapy dog! Don't let this happen to you and your dog! And, if you know your dog isn't fond of other dogs, be proactive and protect your dog. Ask the other team to STOP before they get too close. Remember YAYABA!



Safety Night At The Children's Museum

Eight Dogs On Call teams attended Safety Night at the Madison Children's Museum on Wednesday, March 1. Dogs of all sizes greeted several hundred children and parents, helping them learn the correct way to meet a dog – Ask the owner, "May I pet your dog, please?"

Thanks to these teams:

Marie & LuLu
Megan & Cricket
Bob & Charlie
Sherie & Caleb
Kay & Daisy
Karen & Zombie
Dana & Ozzie
Gretchen & Bode



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