

DOGS ON CALL, INC.

SPRING 2019

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Do you think warm weather is finally coming? One sure sign of Spring is all the requests coming in asking for presentations, asking us to sponsor booths at events, and of course requests for our wonderful Dog Bite Prevention Program. Stay tuned for all those dates, because we sure can't do it without you!

Dogs On Call is celebrating it's 20th anniversary this year! More to come on plans to recognize this milestone.

Your DOC board welcomes member comments and suggestions and invites you to attend board meetings. Dates are on our website.

Thank You for all you do!

Artie & Henry

MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS

Sometimes we need a helping hand! If you're in a situation that, for whatever reason, you need a ride to a DOC visit (e.g., personal physical challenge, dead car, parking concern), please let the event coordinator know and that person can put out a call for help.

We currently have a member who is temporarily unable to get around as easily as she previously did and could use a lift to a DOC visit now and then. She knows she can ask for help and all our other DOC members should feel free to ask about getting a ride, too!

Karen & Pete



BARON MAKING A DIFFERENCE AT ST. MARY'S

We often wonder if our visits to patients really make a difference. Well, today it was brought home to me that it really does make a difference to the patients. Baron and I were at St Mary's this morning. We were walking down the hall and a lady called out, "Oh, there's Baron. Hi, Baron." So we walked over to greet her. She introduced me to her hubby and proceeded to tell him and me how much Baron's visits did for her when she was a patient in the cardiac unit. She said she was frightened of what her life was going to be like, and just to have Baron visit her and sit next to her with his head in her lap relieved so much stress for her. She went on about how important and memorable pet therapy visits are. I'm ashamed to admit I don't remember her face, but she sure remembered Baron's face. And that makes what we do worth it.

Janel & Baron

THERAPY VISITS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Congrats to new board members and thanks, Artie, for mentioning me in your thoughts. I really appreciate it. I wanted to share with everyone that I had a stroke. While I was in Capitol Lakes in rehab, I was missing Pierre so much; it had been almost a month. I was walking with physical therapy down the halls and saw a dog. I went berserk with joy and made him walk me over to see the dog. The dog, Hank, turned out to be a therapy dog from a different organization that comes on Saturdays. I was overwhelmed with joy and happiness. I petted the dog, loved the dog, and played with him, as I was allowed to do because he was a therapy dog. I was just full of glee and then I realized how much joy and love our therapy teams bring to people. It was never as clear or as apparent to me what a great thing we and our Pet Partners do out there. I am still overcome when I think of that moment. As Pierre ages and slows down, I was thinking of retiring him, but now more than ever I am inspired to go as far as he wants. You all are doing such welcomed and valued work. It may take me a while to get back to it, but in the meantime I hope you all realize what a difference your visits make. Thanks to you and to us all.

Dana & Pierre

PET PARTNERS CANCER FUND

In late 2018, our pup, Matilda, had a cancerous mass removed. Even though the surgery went well, it was a difficult few weeks of our lives. Adding to a cancer diagnosis are some fairly significant vet bills, so I encourage you to look to the Pet Partners Cancer Fund for assistance if you need to treat your visiting partner. Funds available are limited to \$1,000.00 and you must submit an application to be considered for those monies. The application is simple and documents the type of cancer and treatments planned. The caveat is that your vet invoices Pet Partners directly for costs up to \$1,000.00 after your application has been approved. Pet Partners was very helpful and responsive during the process.

Matilda recovered quickly and will be continuing to visit during 2019.

Lance & Matilda

A MEANINGFUL CONNECTION

Last summer, I received a phone call from a student I taught years ago in Monroe. Through a family member and social media, she learned of my involvement in Dogs On Call. She is now a third-grade teacher in Brodhead and is finalizing her Master's Thesis on "Impacts of a Therapy Dog on Student Achievement and Engagement." After qualitative research, she needed an actual registered therapy dog team to visit her classroom for several weeks. This would test her hypothesis that "a therapy dog can increase reading motivation, encourage students to have a voice, improve behaviors and incentives, and to identify any barriers to an animal in the classroom." My Pet Partner, Izzie, and I willingly agreed to participate in her project.



Our visits lasted one hour over a five-week period during the fall of 2018. During this time, we interacted with students through large and small group activities. Examples include I read to the kids, they read to Izzie, they performed Reader's Theatre, completed a crossword puzzle about dogs, journaled their reactions and emotions experienced during visits, and composed and read a thank you letter to Izzie. During these visits, school counselors, special education teachers, support staff, the superintendent, and principal all observed students and their interactions with Izzie. Parents were also involved as, they consented for their child's participation and agreed to provide feedback to the teacher about conversations they had with their children on the days they visited with Izzie.

The following conclusions were reached upon completion of our visits. Parents' surveys stated that their child was excited to be part of the therapy research program, while two students who were apprehensive about interactions with a dog were very eager to visit with Izzie by the end of the experience. In the classroom, positive feelings increased (via emotional check-in data) on days that Izzie visited. The teacher found smiling faces and readiness to learn significantly increased when kids knew it was "a dog day." These feelings would continue into following days. Pre- and post-visit journals found a willingness to write lengthy reactions compared to a one- or two-sentence summary on previous entries. Some students indicated that the dog helped them to focus better during learning, while some wrote about missing their own dogs and how the therapy dog made them feel better about school and themselves. Several shy students gained confidence to speak up in the small group setting and showed no hesitation to read aloud. Three at-risk students achieved significant social, emotional, and academic improvements during the visits. These gains were further substantiated by school counselors and the principal.

I'm sure most of you are not surprised by these findings. However, being part of "the discovery process" and being able to share Izzie for testing purposes was very validating, rewarding, and warmed my heart. This experience was to last five weeks, but our classroom connection continues. We now visit the classroom monthly and our relationship deepens. It will be sad to have the school year end, but knowing that Izzie and I played a small part in helping a former student complete her thesis as well as providing positivity to 21 third graders reminds me of why I'm thankful to be part of Dogs On Call. You just never know what kind of connection you and your Pet Partner may experience in your therapy journey.

Todd & Izzie

VISITING AT CCI

Do you like to go on a nice drive with your dog? How about helping DOC and be part of a valuable visiting program at the same time?

I am looking for a few more teams to visit Columbia Correctional Institution in Portage. The visit would be every couple of months on a Thursday afternoon for approximately 1-1/2 hours.

Visiting in a prison sounds a little intimidating, and when we started doing these visits five years ago, we didn't know what to expect either. There are rules and a routine we have to follow, but when you are focusing on your one-on-one visit, I don't think you could tell the difference from any other visit you've been on. With the exception that all the men are wearing the same outfit!

The program was started for the inmates as a reward for good behavior and meeting goals. All the men are screened for appropriateness with animals.

Several DOC teams have been in the program from day one. That's how much of a positive impression it has made on us. As is the nature of the facility, we often visit with the same men over the years. Others are first-time visitors. But everyone, including staff, is happy to see the dogs. And it's not just the interaction with the dogs that is a treat; the men get value by interacting with the dog handlers, too. Conversation with a human other than a prison employee is welcome. The men love collecting the dogs' trading cards and keep them to use as bookmarks or even models for pictures they draw. These visits are very meaningful to everyone.

If you'd like more information on becoming involved, contact Karen Peckham at karenp@dogsoncall.org

Two dogs from years ago, soaking up the attention of two inmates. (Used with permission.)



Marie & Dora



Karen & Raider

Karen & Pete

VIEWPOINT FROM A MEMBER

Before joining Dogs On Call in October, I had volunteered for the past 10 years in shelters, and fostered for various rescue organizations. So I kinda thought I knew a lot. I realize now how much Pet Partners and my DOC mentors have taught me.

For example --

Todd coached me:

- * Always keep my dog close AND my number-one focus. While we were on campus and a slightly more relaxed environment, he was teaching me important habits that are essential to advocating for my dog in EVERY environment. This has been particularly helpful for Betty and me during hospital visits.
- * Your dog may require a greater distance from other working therapy dogs. Advocate for that space and avoid events that aren't conducive to spreading out.

Karen P has been so valuable setting Betty and me up for success in nursing homes and hospitals. A few lessons I've learned from Karen:

- * Look for new areas and groups to visit. Keep it interesting and spread the love.
- * Assess every situation and room to see what modifications can be made to allow the patient the greatest access to your dog. Many patients have physical limitations and it's important to be creative while still following rules.
- * Don't be afraid to acknowledge that your dog excels in some visit situations and isn't so great in others.

While participating in the Barnes and Noble event, I gained expertise and advice from Artie, Karen S (Zombie's Mom), and other patient and kind experienced handlers:

- * Reset the environment. If your dog seems anxious, temporarily remove them from the area. Give them a potty, exercise, or sniff break, and some 1-on-1 reassurance.
- * Don't become discouraged if your dog isn't immediately acting like the perfect therapy dog.

It. Is. A. Dog. Every handler has a story of a less than ideal experience.

- * They reinforced how the handler's number-one responsibility is always to advocate confidently and quickly for their dog.

I'm sure I have a lot more to learn, but Betty and I are having fun, and we are extremely appreciative of the support from the Dogs On Call teams.

Sheila & Betty



OVERWEIGHT PETS HAVE SHORTER LIFESPANS

Years ago, my wife and I adopted a wonderful yellow Labrador named Charlie. At first, he had normal weight around 75 pounds. He steadily gained weight until he reached 100 pounds.

A veterinary exam determined Charlie had a thyroid problem. With daily medication, his weight returned to normal. He lived over 14 years, but his life was cut short by severe arthritis. Like other pet owners, I felt cheated.

Surveys show most Americans regard their dog as a full family member and half of pet owners sleep with their dogs. Perhaps it is out of love that so many people feed their pets more than they actually require. I take great pleasure in feeding my dogs, horse, and sheep. I feel that I am taking care of them and expressing love, but too much of a good thing is a bad thing.

The downside of this tender relationship is that dogs have relatively short lives and the pain of losing them can be just as deep as losing a human family member, as I can attest.

The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention reports 100 million American pets are overweight or obese, including 59% of cats and 54% of dogs.

Our pets are paying the price with increased risks of preventable health problems and shorter lives. They suffer higher rates of arthritis, urinary tract disease, liver disease, low thyroid function, knee ligament injuries, diabetes, spinal disc disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, and heart failure.

Our dogs never live long enough to begin with, and being overweight reduces their longevity.

Recent research studied 50,000 pet dogs of 12 breeds and gave us a measurement of the loss in terms that we can grasp. Smaller breeds lose more lifespan than larger dogs. For example, overweight Yorkshire Terriers lose two years of life.

I think all pet owners would love to have another two years to spend with their companions, if only there was a way to make it so.

The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (petobesityprevention.org) offers free information to help. This includes a pet weight check with graphics of a dogs and cats at various weights, and a scoring system. Pet owners can compare the graphics to their own pets and make an informed decision.

There is information about ideal weight ranges for numerous breeds, plus dog and cat daily caloric needs so pet owners can determine how much food reduction is required for safe weight loss.

The "Weight Translator" really raised my eyebrows. It compares pet weight by breed with that of a human male or female. For instance, it compares a 12-pound Yorkie with woman weighing 218 pounds.

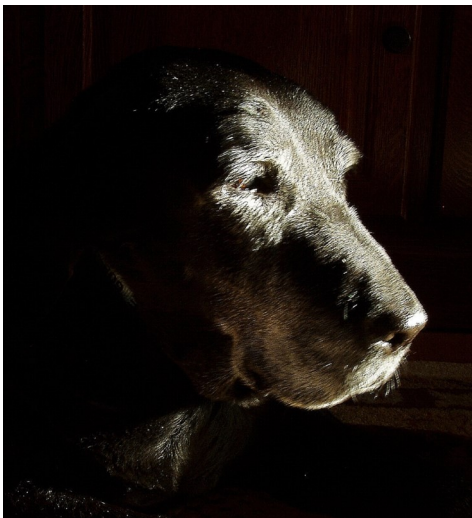


OVERWEIGHT PETS HAVE SHORTER LIFESPANS - CONT

My experience with Charlie motivated me to be more careful about our other Labrador, Jake. He was lighter to start with and we gave him a measured amount of food for his breakfast and supper. If he got additional treats, we reduced his meal size.

I also rely heavily upon The Whole Dog Journal (WDJ), a monthly periodical devoted to canine health, nutrition, training, and behavior. WDJ accepts no advertisements and publishes an annual review of dry and canned dog foods for quality and price.

Once I learned how to read dog food labels and what ingredients to look for, I chose to only buy high quality foods and to avoid some treats altogether due to their unhealthy ingredients and processing.



Jake got plenty of daily exercise including walks, jogs, retrieving toys, and playing tug. For a 60-pound dog he was strong and athletic, sometimes dragging me across the living room when he won a game of tug. The rug burns might have bothered me had I not been laughing so hard.

Regular veterinary visits helped us avoid preventable ailments and gave us the benefit of objective feedback from our veterinarian. Jake also got prompt medical care for any injuries he sustained, and he was rather accident prone... such as when he ventured too close to my horse while she was in her stall and was kicked in the head for his intrusion.

Jake lived a long, healthy life and nearly reached 16 years of age. For a Labrador, that is quite an accomplishment. Now Buddha and Gandhi are our senior dogs. They are both in great shape and are getting the best stewardship and care I can muster.

As Maya Angelou famously said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

Dan



NEW MEMBER PROFILES



Frank and Wendy own Yahtzee, a four-year-old yellow Labrador. He was trained by Occupaws to be a guide dog for the blind, but didn't make it in the program. Occupaws wanted Yahtzee to go to a home that would use him for therapy work. Lucky for Frank and Wendy, they were able to adopt Yahtzee.

Yahtzee shares the household with Dublin, a seven-year-old yellow Lab who was adopted as a puppy. Plus, there are six horses (Taj, Norman, Lynx, Jordan, Stan, Joaker) and two cats (Charlie and Eenie).

Dublin and Yahtzee have previously visited at Sauk Prairie Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, libraries, Mounds Fest, and the Dane County Humane

Society's camps when they were members of another therapy dog group. As Pet Partners and Dogs On Call members, Wendy will continue to visit with Yahtzee at Sauk Prairie and St. Mary's Hospitals; Frank is interested in visiting at the Sauk Prairie Hospital and also would like to visit at the VA Hospital in Madison.

Wendy enjoys reading, and hobbies for Frank are hunting, working with his hands doing repairs and building things. They both love to travel, spend time with their grandchildren, and camp with horses all over the United States.



Marcella is the proud owner of three Guinea pigs (also called Cavies), one of which is now a registered Pet Partner. Sybil, 3-1/2 years old, is an Abyssinian Longhair mix, purchased from a pet store as a pup (the name for a baby Guinea pig). Sybil's siblings include Sienna, 2-1/2 years old, and Skylar, 1 year old.

Marcella is excited to bring Sybil to visit residents at skilled nursing facilities and work with children through the Read With Me program at libraries.

When not spending time with her Guinea pigs, Marcella enjoys writing novels, reading, and playing guitar.

Katie and Luke got Golden Retriever Murphy from Harvestime Kennels in Menasha. Murphy is three years old now and is the only pet in the household.

Murphy will be busy, as Katie and Luke plan to visit libraries, nursing homes, hospice patients, and on campus.

Luke works as a pharmacist and Katie is an occupational therapist who works with children. In their spare time, they enjoy traveling and spending time at a family cabin in the summer.





HOSPITAL NEWS

New Team at Meriter: Jan and Mike with Cricket

New Team at UW Health Rehab Hospital: Nydia and Pretzel

SPECIAL UW HOSPITAL REQUESTS GET RESULTS!

SPECIAL REQUEST #1: I received an email on a Thursday night from a woman wanting a visit for her mom who was quite depressed and missing her dogs. She said a Golden Retriever would be especially welcome. We were JUST at the hospital that night, but her email came in too late for us to accommodate them. I put an email out to our teams that evening, to see if anyone could come during the week, and I heard from several people right away. The patient had visits on Friday, Sunday, and Monday. The teams scheduled for the next Thursday were going to stop by, too, but the patient had already been discharged. Since her daughter thought her mom would be there at least a week and maybe longer, I credit all the therapy dog visits with a quick recovery!

Yvonne & Daisy, Marnie & Finnegan, Andrea & Samantha were the teams that visited. Courtney & Chopper volunteered, too, "if a Golden Retriever couldn't go," but Samantha filled that request!

SPECIAL REQUEST #2: Around Christmas, we had a request from the Health Psychology department to visit a young man who was paralyzed from the neck, down. (He could feel sensations, but not move.) I was lucky to be along on the first visit, acting as visit captain while Andrea & Samantha visited with him. Samantha sat solidly by the patient's bed for at least 20 minutes while a nurse helped the patient pet the dog. There were about six of the unit nurses watching from the hallway. They all wanted to see the patient's reaction when he saw the dog -- a big smile! The nurses were crying, I was crying, and Andrea said somehow she held it together. They had a very engaging conversation with the patient, the patient's dad, and the nurse. Andrea said the visit made her whole holiday.

In the following weeks, several other teams (Sheila & Betty, Marnie & Finnegan, Yvonne & Daisy) were able to visit the patient before he was discharged. They were challenging visits, but the teams handled it like the pros they are.

A GREAT EXPERIENCE AT MERITER

Sandy related a great experience she and Molly had on the neurology unit at Meriter. "It was only 9:30 a.m., but the staff was already having a challenging day and needed some puppy love when we checked in at the nurses' station. We happened to be there right as the Physical Therapy staff were getting their patients up and moving. Well, Molly was just the right motivation for one patient to do just that as we all cheered her on to walk to the line on the floor where Molly waited. Then a BIG celebration!!! Evidently they had been trying to get the patient walking for quite a while and were excited to finally get her moving again." Before leaving the unit, Sandy & Molly got another big thank you from the staff.

Karen & Pete



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