

Dogs On Call, Inc.

WINTER 2019

Letter From The President

The end of 2018 is sneaking up on me fast as I am trying my best to get everything done on my “to do” list. I think time would be well spent looking at our “things we have accomplished” list, as most of us underestimate what we have done during the year.

Dogs On Call (DOC) as a group has made many people smile with our therapy animal visits. These visits have happened in hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, libraries, dorms, schools, hospice care, and many other facilities. I would like to personally thank each one of you for sharing your Pet Partners with others in need of a visit. I would also like to thank your family members for sharing you with Dogs On Call. Without the human end of the leash, none of these visits would be possible.

As the days continue to be short, the snow continues to fall, and the temperature continues to plummet, please remember that there continues to be a need for visits.

Thank you for all you have done for DOC in 2018 and for all that you will continue to do in 2019; we have truly been blessed by your membership.

Laura, Kooper, Oliver, & Shadow

Visits Benefit Everyone

I have always been a firm believer that staff benefits as much from therapy dog visits as the patients do. Baron and I were at one of the hospitals we visit and, when we got off the elevator, a nurse came around the corner and got down on her hands and knees to hug Baron. She said, “Oh Baron, you have no idea how much I needed to see you today.” I told her to take all the time she needed to be with him. Baron was such a trooper. All the while the nurse was hugging him, he just rested his head on her shoulder. The nurse told me she was a little overwhelmed that morning because one of her favorite patients passed away the evening before. It really brought home to me how very heartfelt a therapy dog’s visits mean to all staff and patients alike.

Ja’nel & Baron

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Ginny and her Pet Partner, Amy, have been a DOC therapy team since 2011. At 14 years old, it is time for Amy to retire, as it is hard for her to trek around to visits.

Ginny has recently adopted Coco and is hoping that soon she will be ready to test to become a Pet Partner.

Thank you for your years of visiting, Amy, and thank you for your dedication to DOC, Ginny.



Hospital News

Big News! Hospitals Welcome Five New Teams!

At Meriter: Beth & Maggie and Sheila & Betty.

At UWHC: Marnie & Finnegan and Ciara, Sheila & Betty, and Jack & Bennie.

Lab Employees Need Therapy Dog Visits, Too!

Four of our Meriter teams, Pat & Wilson, Beth & Maggie, Karen & Pete, and Sheila & Betty, visited with employees of the Meriter Hospital Lab facility. The two visits were organized as a stress reliever and reward for the employees who were involved with the recent flu immunization & TB test campaign. Many people shared stories about their own pets and gave our dogs lots of loving. One employee even set up a Skype visit with the dogs and another employee who was out for the day!



Dog-Less Help Needed At UW Hospital

At UWHC, we are looking for additional “Visit Captains” who accompany the therapy dog teams on visits. The Visit Captains check with patients to see if they want a dog visit, administer hand sanitizer to the patients, move bedside tables so the dog has clear access to the patient, chat with patients, families, and staff about our therapy dog program.

The Visit Captain is a UWHC volunteer, so would have to go through the hospital’s volunteer process. The shift is from 6:30-7:30 on Thursdays. There are two teams and two visit captains per shift. I put out a monthly schedule and the volunteer can pick their available dates. A minimum of one visit per month is required, but more would be preferred.

If you or any of your dog-loving friends would like to help out, contact Karen at karenp@dogsoncall.org

Now You Know What Your Dog Hears

Recently, our dogs visited on several different occasions with an excited, animated patient who was thrilled to see the dogs. The patient spoke only Spanish, but that didn’t stop the person from asking questions and talking pretty much non-stop during the visits. Our limited knowledge of Spanish meant we could pick up a word now and then, but there was no real understanding of what was being said. We smiled a lot and that was good enough! The patient had a wonderful time and thanked us abundantly every visit. (THAT we could understand!) I couldn’t help but think this must be like what our dogs hear when we speak to them – a lot of chatter they don’t understand, but every now and then words they know, like “car ride,” “treat,” or “walk”!

Karen & Pete



New Member Profiles



Kay volunteers at the Dane County Humane Society (DCHS) and found Jesse, a Maltese mix, when she came in as a stray. Surprisingly, no one claimed the calm, sweet one-year-old dog and Kay scooped her up.

At Kay's home, Jesse, now approximately two years old, joins Maggie, a Dachshund mix, and Chester, a Shih Tzu mix, who were also adopted from DCHS.

Kay is open to visiting a wide variety of facilities, but is mostly interested in the Sauk Prairie Hospital (near her home in Mazomanie) and the Read With Me program.

At DCHS, Kay works with newly admitted dogs and those in the behavior modification program. She also enjoys exercise and reading.



Sheila also adopted her Pet Partner from the Dane County Humane Society – Betty, a seven-year-old Boxer-Pit mix. Sheila says, “It was love at first sight and we love her more every day.”

Sheila's house is full of animals, as they own finches and Lydia, an adopted 11-year-old Italian Greyhound. They also foster “a variety of dogs and critters for DCHS.”

DCHS told Sheila that Betty loves children, so they are hoping to take advantage of that quality in their therapy career. Sheila says it is important to her to visit the VA hospital.

Aside from volunteering at DCHS, Sheila enjoys yoga, painting shabby chic furniture, and any Badger sporting event.

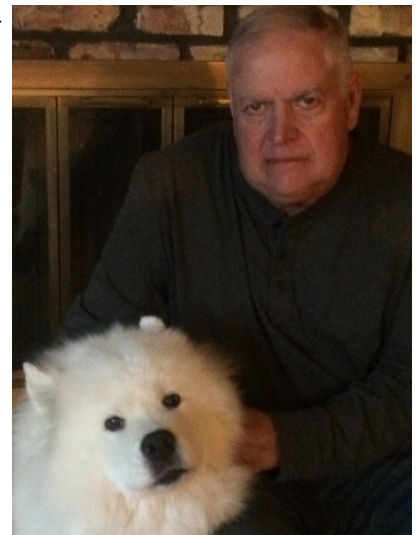


Jan and Mike's Pet Partner is Cricket, a seven-year-old Samoyed. They adopted Cricket when Cricket's breeder died unexpectedly leaving six Samoyeds to find homes.

They have no other pets at home, but have had many Samoyeds in the past.

At this point, Jan and Mike have no firm plans for facilities to visit, but want to consider skilled nursing/assisted living facilities, Meriter Hospital, and UW campus visits.

Spare-time activities for Jan include walking and biking; they both enjoy RV camping.



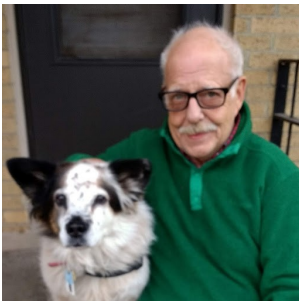
New Member Profiles - Continued

Jack got Shetland Sheepdog, Bennie, as a puppy from a breeder in Madison. Bennie is now six years old.

Jack has another Sheltie at home, Lily, but she is the exact opposite from Bennie and maintains her farm dog personality.

Visiting at UW Hospital & Clinics is the target for Jack and Bennie. Since Jack already volunteers at the hospital, it will be a smooth transition.

Other interests for Jack are cooking and playing video games.



Michael is the proud owner of Missy, a 12-year-old Australian Shepherd mix. The rescue group said no one wanted her at age 10. Mike said, "Perfect – old dog, elderly man!"

Michael visited at the VA Hospital with Missy and another dog before it became a requirement to be a DOC team.

With the word "kayak" in his email address, you know Michael enjoys paddling. Other interests are fishing, golf, and writing.

Deirdre lives in Verona with Sunny, a two-year-old Goldendoodle. Deirdre was looking for a dog that would be good for therapy work and decided on that breed. She got Sunny as a puppy from a breeder.

Visiting children and veterans is the goal for this team.

Deirdre has many interests: She is an avid reader and yoga enthusiast, enjoys cooking, and "some" gardening, and also likes hiking and anything involving the sea.

Cristina's Miniature Poodle, Roo, was a graduation gift from her mom. Roo came from a rescue group in Illinois and was previously with an elderly couple. When Roo first came to Cristina, he was "terrified of everything." But, "With a lot of time and patience, he blossomed into my best friend," she says of her nine-year-old buddy.

Cristina also has Si, another Poodle, and Australian Shepherds, Piper and Taz.

Roo will be busy with visits, as Cristina has her sights set on nursing homes, hospice, libraries, and hospitals.

Cristina says, "Roo and I enjoy hiking, backpacking, going for trail rides, and traveling. Pretty much anything outdoors when the weather is nice!"





New Member Profiles - Continued

Lori has a tag team of therapy dogs, Pixel (1-1/2 years old) and Deja (7 years old), both Pomeranians. Pixel came from a breeder and Deja was a rescue. Lori says of Deja, "She was a mess; very sick when we got her." Sounds like she's doing fine now!

It's a busy little household, with Lori's two other dogs, Zori (7) and Rafie (8), who are Chinese Crested dogs.

The Read With Me program and visiting with seniors are first goals of Lori's, but she's interested in volunteering almost anywhere.

Lori enjoys the outdoors, going walking, or snowshoeing in the winter. Inside, she likes art and craft projects, and reading.

New Member Profiles Submitted By:

Karen & Pete

A Read With Me Cat?



I often get asked, "How do you make a cat a Read With Me cat?" The answer to that is - you don't! As a matter of fact you, you don't "make" a cat a therapy cat, either. Statistics show that more dogs pass the Pet Partners evaluation than other species, but that doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of other species out there that make great Pet Partners.

I happen to be one of the lucky owners of two cats that have made great Pet Partners. Both of my boys have loved to ride in the car and love to meet new people. My house is always full of little people, so being involved in the Read With Me program has been a great fit for them.

If you have a Pet Partner that is or isn't a dog that you feel would be a good fit for the Read With Me program, Dogs On Call is always looking for more teams to join our current reading teams. We currently have teams in libraries, schools, and after-school programs, but there are many other opportunities out there if we had more teams interested in volunteering in the Read With Me program.

If you feel this would be a good fit for you and your Pet Partner, please contact me via email at laurak@dogsoncall.org

Laura, Kooper, Oliver, & Shadow



A Conversation With A Therapy Cat

On August 1st, the John Deere Madison Wellness Committee invited Dogs On Call to visit. It was a fantastic success with calm dogs and a cat who provided much needed time outside to enjoy their company. One of those therapy animals was a cat named Sir Huxley who lives with John Deere Acquisition's Supervisor Erin H. The Wellness Committee has expressed interest in having him back, but a date hasn't been set. John Deere Processor Sarah H. got to have a sit down with Sir Huxley and this is what he had to say.

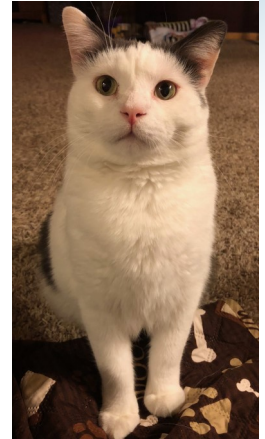
Wouldn't you rather be working for an organization called Cats On Call?

It doesn't bug me that I work for Dogs On Call. It goes to show that cats breathe rarified air. There are 120 dog teams in Madison and (last I heard) only 2 cat teams. Not that dogs can count.

Is it easier working with teenagers?

It's not easy working with teenagers because they have "attitude." Normally that is something we cats admire, but in adolescents, not so much. They sit back and fold their arms over their chests and say they don't like cats. CHALLENGE ACCEPTED! It's up to me to prove them wrong, so I do. By the end of the visit, when my partner Erin is ready to leave, they don't want me to go!

My favorite person to visit so far was Lady Lucy. She was 99 years old and in hospice care. She didn't care if I took a nap while Erin and the nurse talked. I took a nap, Lucy took a nap... awesome visit!



What would you say is your job description?

My job description: Purr. Purr. Purr. Allow people to worship me as the god I am. Purr. Purr. Purr. Pet Partners says it is "Touching lives and improving health through the power of therapy animals." They left out the worship part, though, and that's where I get my job satisfaction.

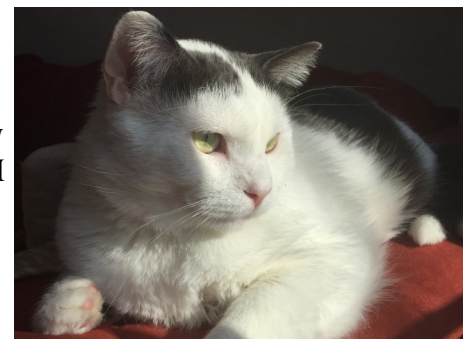
Do you have a favorite part of being a therapy cat?

My favorite part of the job is THE WHOLE JOB. When Erin gets out my harness, I know I get to go to work and I get all excited. I don't like the car ride, but once we get to our destination, I get to ride in my stylin' turquoise blue stroller. Then I get attention lavished on me for an hour or two. And when I get home, Erin plays laser tag with me. My job is the whole package.

What is the most interesting thing to happen on the job?

The most interesting thing that happened on the job was when I was working at Barnes & Noble East Towne to help holiday shoppers de-stress. I got to work with a Maurice, the Therapy Bunny. People are shocked to see a cat working with dogs and even more shocked to see a cat working with a bunny. Maurice is a very cool bunny. We hit it off fabulously. He knew some great jokes; I laughed the whole time.

Erin & Huxley





Recently I attended a dog event and observed about 30 dogs and their handlers come and go in the course of three hours. Most of the dogs were taken to one another for greetings. Call it the curse of knowledge, but I see such interactions through the lens of human handling skills and canine body language.

Sometimes what I saw was relaxing and fun, and at other times I worried about the outcome, especially when handlers allowed overly aroused dogs to engage each other. There is a correlation between arousal and loss of self-control. I often saw introductions occur spontaneously and without regard to safety.

Case in point, a husband and wife brought their Poodle for puppy socialization. The puppy looked anxious and was repeatedly alarmed by things in the environment.

A moment later, a young man walked his adolescent Boxer along the path within 50 feet of the Poodle. The puppy went into a state of alarm. Her body stiffened with the tail raised high and waving frantically as she barked explosively.

The man paused with a look of concern on his face...and then moved ahead and introduced his dog to the Poodle. As they got closer the Boxer became excited, pulling with all his might, dragging the man toward the Poodle.



The Poodle became more alarmed and both dogs lunged at each other when they came within range. The man stopped and struggled to hold back his Boxer, who was launching vertically and spinning in the air like a crazed ballet dancer.

It was a poor learning experience for both dogs. The Poodle learned other dogs are scary and unpredictable, while the Boxer learned nothing about appropriate greeting behavior.

In another case, a lady with a very reactive black Terrier circled around the event while her dog repeatedly lunged and snapped at other dogs. She scolded her Terrier and then cast her eyes upon a timid Bichon who was held fast by a leash, several feet away.

The lady cradled her Terrier's head in her hands, pushing him toward the Bichon like a cruise missile while chanting, "Be nice! Be nice!" She pushed his muzzle directly toward the target. The Bichon looked about for an escape route, or help from nearby humans, and looked terrified as the threat steadily approached.

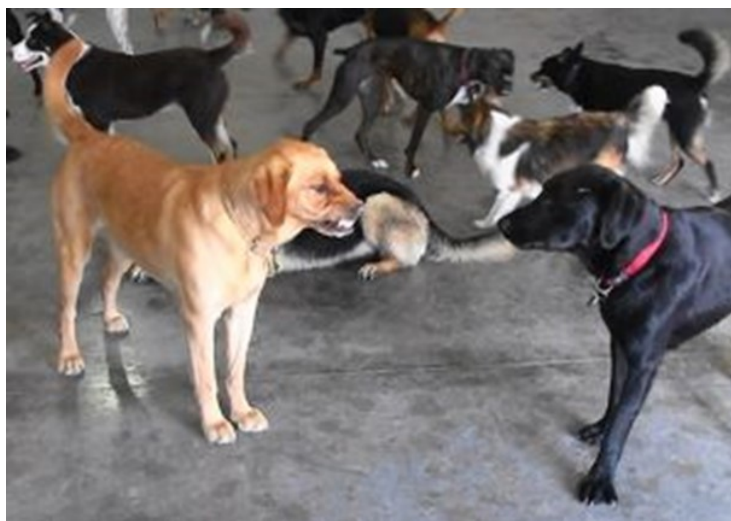


Managing Dog - Dog Greetings - Continued

Such introductions may plant the seeds of dog-dog reactivity in fearful dogs. In my experience, I suspect as many as 20% of dogs are reactive upon seeing other dogs, when on leash. That is a behavioral problem best prevented by appropriate dog-dog greetings.

When allowed to move freely, a well-mannered dog (off leash) will avoid sustained direct eye contact and approach with a smooth gait in a perpendicular or semi-circular manner. This allows each dog to size the other up and determine whether there is a threat to safety or a polite invitation to say hello.

Dogs want to sniff each other to gain information, usually beginning at the muzzle and working toward the anal glands. After about three seconds, dogs then typically either choose to play or disengage.



When dogs meet while leashed, they lose the option of free movement, limiting their ability to communicate through body language. Communication is vital to signal non-threatening intentions.

Leashed greetings are often face-to-face with sustained eye contact as they close the distance. Dogs normally do that when they are threatening each other.

Meanwhile, their handlers may be standing still, engaging in polite human greeting behavior. That forces dog to remain in close proximity far longer than they prefer.

Imagine a human hand shake that goes on...and on...and on...while a stranger is two feet away, staring at you. It would be uncomfortable for people, and it is uncomfortable for dogs.

If leashed dogs choose to disengage, they are trapped by leashes and so tension rises until there is an outburst, which could lead to a fight. Dogs who choose to play together quickly entangle themselves and their handlers, and that can turn to panic and conflict.

The best dog introductions are done off leash in a safe area with two attentive and capable dog handlers who know how to read canine body language for stress signs. A second-best option is to use long training leads in which the slack is left on the ground so the dogs can move about.

I suggest letting the dogs greet briefly, then separate them, and let them greet again. Doing so several times allows them to gather scent and remain calmer during the process. With repetition, the drama of an initial greeting fades and they learn how to relax in the presence of other dogs.



Managing Dog - Dog Greetings - Continued



Many dogs I work with who are highly reactive while on leash do well with dogs in a daycare setting or fenced yard where they can move freely and communicate.

When I walk Buddha on leash in public, we never engage in dog-dog greetings. I may wave to acknowledge the other handler and then cross the street or turn around to avoid encounters with (stranger) dogs. I see little to gain by random interaction with unknown dogs and too much risk.

After all, if you were out for a walk (without your dog) you would probably just acknowledge strangers rather than rush up to them while shouting and waving your arms to greet them. We do not have to closely engage with everyone we see in the community and neither do our dogs.

I think there is far more value in giving our dogs a positive, relaxed experience each time they see another dog than letting them run amok like rock fans in a mosh pit at a concert. As always, please be your dog's best advocate.

Resources:

Aloff, B. (2005) *Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide*. Dogwise Publishing.

Kalnajs, Sarah. (Blue Dog Training & Behavior LLC). (2007) *Am I Safe* (DVD)

Kalnajs, Sarah. (Blue Dog Training & Behavior LLC). (2007) *The Language of Dogs: Understanding Canine Body Language and Other Communication Signals*.

Miller, P. (May 22, 2018) "Proper Dog-to-Dog Introductions in the Home 1." From https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/issues/11_1/features/Proper-Dog-Introductions-and-Canine-Socializing_15996-1.html

Rugaas, T. (1997) *On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals*. Dogwise Publishing.

Daniel H. Antolec

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