

the BARKER



A Therapy Dog Publication of St. John Ambulance NS/PEI Council

FALL / WINTER 2009



Tanner

proudly submitted by
Volunteer Tanya Kontuck of New Glasgow

Letter From the Editor

Summer has come and gone so quickly, now fall is here and winter is fast approaching. This is such a beautiful time of year, the leaves changing color creates beautiful scenery and the pile of leaves are lots of fun for the dogs to play in!

This past season has been busy for the Program. I travelled to all areas of the Therapy Dog Program, meeting as many volunteers and facilities that I could, attended Volunteer Appreciation Meet and Greets and promotional events which have all been lots of fun! Thank you everyone for taking the time to meet with me and getting me better acquainted with the Program!

Since I started as Therapy Dog Program Coordinator, I have been on several visits with Therapy Dog Teams. Each visit amazes me more and more the difference our Teams make with the individuals they are visiting. Seeing the Therapy Dog Teams in action really shows how important this Program is to not only the residents/clients, but to their families, friends and to the staff. The instant smile on everyone's face when a Therapy Dog Team walks into the facility proves it all!

I would also like to take this time to welcome all of the Health Care Facilities that are now receiving the Barker Newsletter. I hope you will enjoy reading about the Therapy Dog Program and all that we are upto! Thank you for being so wonderful to our St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Teams and being a part of this valuable Program! I have enjoyed meeting and speaking with you and I look forward to working with all of you towards the continued success and growth of the Program!

I hope you all enjoy the Fall / Winter edition of the Barker!!



Jaime Wolfe

Therapy Dog Program Coordinator

DID YOU KNOW??

Dogs have been proven to respond to more than 60 words

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The Loss of a Therapy Dog

Valerie Brideau, QPBP, CCE

The contributions made by animals in care giving and academic settings are increasingly being acknowledged by professionals in health care, education, occupational therapy and mental care counselling. The fields of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) and Animal Assisted Counselling (AAC) are gaining credibility and recently have expanded their range to include working in the area of children with Autism. Assistance and Service animals provide daily care and independence for their owners.

However, one of the most widely recognized areas through which animals, particularly dogs, have assisted their human friends, is in the field of visitation. Through regular visits, Therapy Dog teams bring joy, comfort and the opportunity to socialize and their presence may open up discussions between individual residents and the staff who are in charge of their daily care. Those visited may bond with a particular dog/handler team and rely upon that connection as a treasured point of contact with a world they have left behind. For some, this may be their only outside visitors as families do not live nearby or relations may be strained. Staff at care facilities also rely upon the Therapy Dog teams to interject a much welcomed break in the routine, a sense of fun and an underlying hope that individuals who have shown no interest in their surroundings may engage with the unconditional acceptance of a dog.

It would be easier to get Therapy dogs to “talk” about team contributions than to be able to elicit responses from their human counterparts. While you have no hesitation to proclaim proudly, and for good reason, about the positive aspects of your work – the smile your dog puts on a face or how it engaged someone in much needed physical activities; you rarely speak of the challenging aspects of your role – the time, the expense, the commitment, and the stress. Being involved in a Therapy Dog program requires dedication to the organization, to your canine partner who must deal with the physical and emotional demands of the persons being visited and, fulfilling a responsibility to the staff of the visiting facilities to participate in regularly scheduled visitations that enhance the well-being of the people in their care.

While you are proud of the work that your canine partner provides, focus upon yourself seems irrelevant or perhaps self-serving. You often describe yourself as “just the one holding the other end of the leash” while your dog takes the spotlight. You embody the saying, “That it is better to give than to receive.” There are times, however, when your humble attitude towards level of dedication and commitment may not be helpful and this is when you suffer a loss through retirement

or death of your beloved animal companion, your partner and team mate.

Caring for others needs to begin with caring for yourself. It has been acknowledged in many circles that we must nourish ourselves before we are able to help others is an undisputed truth that we often gloss over. In the 80s, an article titled Help Me I’m a Helper outlined what would be later termed “professional burnout.” Caregivers and teachers and the prime candidates as they put others needs in front of their own.

When a team member, human or canine, is stressed, perhaps injured or is beginning to slow down and cannot contribute 100%, changes are forced upon you. Sometimes, it’s physical: you simply don’t have the strength to take one more flight of stairs; your dog can’t jump into a vehicle or has the patience to be patted or spoken to one more time. Sometimes, it’s emotional, the stress of the time commitment, economic downturns and perhaps individuals whose reliance upon you and your team is more than you anticipated. And sometimes you may simply be attempting to put off the inevitable. You are tired. Perhaps you may be able to alter how much or what you are doing but other times you need to recognize that there comes an end to all things. It may be time to retire.

For those who have lost a beloved companion and team member through death, it can feel as if your world has come undone. You may struggle with your personal feelings of overwhelming grief and your sense of guilt at not be able to fulfill your commitments as a team. You may feel a sense of a loss of self-esteem that came from your work in the community and may feel pressured to acquire another dog before you are ready, if you ever are. While intellectually you may know that your personal grief comes first, your sense of duty may gnaw at your ability to mourn your loss completely.

Taking the time to grieve the loss your animal at a personal level is vital to your well-being and in doing so you honour both your dog and your teamwork. Recognize that whether your loss is due to retirement or the death of your beloved companion and partner, you will experience the stages of grief: shock and disbelief; anger, alienation and distancing; guilt; depression and resolution.

Whether you decide to open your heart to another animal and work again within the Therapy Dog community is a personal decision. Everyone takes different paths in life and timing is truly everything. Know, however, that your work although quietly pursued has been noted around the world. Everywhere there are stories of the hearts warmed and the souls comforted by the work of a single Therapy Dog team. You are never forgotten.

DID YOU KNOW??

The best time of day for dogs to track a smell is in the morning

What's Going On?



Over the summer and fall a lot has taken place in the Therapy Dog Program!! Read on to see what we've been up to and where the Program is headed.

Promotional Events



The summer and fall were very busy attending promotional events like the Antigonish Highland Games Parade, Scotian Gold Pet Day, PEI Gold Cup and Saucer Parade, PEI Humane Society Pet Expo, Yarmouth Dog Jog, and the Halifax Kennel Club Wag, Wiggle and Woof Dog Event. This fall we have also attended the Wilson's Wellness Expo in Berwick, the Alzheimer's Conference in Dartmouth, and the Nova Scotia Recreation Professionals in Health Conference. The Program was very successful at all of these events and were a lot of fun to partake in!



The Program also hosted a special event at Grandview Manor in Berwick. This event was a Doggy Fashion show!! Several volunteers from the Valley and area came to dress up their dogs in different outfits and show them off to the Residents! We had a lot of fun and I'm looking forward to hosting more of these events in the future!!

I'd like to thank everyone for helping out at the events over the summer, as there are many events and only one of me, it is difficult to get to all of them. I really appreciate all the assistance at the booths and organizing the special events like the Doggy Fashion Show and the Meet and Greet!

Program Growth

Since July, 2009 we have held 7 evaluations and have evaluated 35 new Teams all over Nova Scotia and PEI. Congratulations Therapy Dog Teams and Welcome to the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program!

I am also pleased to announce there have been changes made within our Volunteer Recognition System. In Previous years, Volunteers have received a veteran pin after 8 years of service. This has now changed to Teams receiving the veteran pin after 5 years of service with the Program. Congratulations Veteran Therapy Dog Teams; we appreciate your time and commitment to the Program!

Safety First!

Volunteers, it is important you read through the H1N1 plan sent out to you. Remember to wash your hands regularly and that you use the hand sanitizer before, after and in between visits. If you or your dog are not feeling well, please do not visit at that time! Call the facility to let them know you are ill and make alternate visiting arrangements with them! Thank you!!

Volunteer/Recreation Directors, please share your facility H1N1 preparedness plan with your Therapy Dog volunteers. Please feel free to get in touch with me if you require any updated volunteer contact information or assistance doing this! Thank you!!

QUIPS AND QUOTES

“Home is where the dog hair sticks to everything but the dog!”

- Unknown

DID YOU KNOW??

Dogs can hear a sound 250 yards away—that's over two football fields!

Tasty Treats

PUMPKIN WAFERS DOG TREAT RECIPE

One 15 oz. can mashed pure pumpkin
(NOT the spiced pie filling)

3/4 cup cream of wheat (or rice cereal if
wheat-sensitive) You can mix this dry--no
need to cook it first

1/2 cup dry powdered milk

Mix all ingredients together. Drop small
spoonfuls (I use about half of a tablespoon)
onto a lightly greased cookie sheet and bake
at 300 degrees for 15-20 minutes.



Therapy Dog Mentor Position

The St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program
is looking for Experienced Volunteers to act as
Mentors to new Volunteers in all regions of NS
and PEI!

Position Requirements:

- Current Therapy Dog Volunteer (minimum 1 year of experience).
- Strong knowledge of the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program Policies and Procedures.

Volunteer Spotlight

written and submitted by Emily Landry

Lily Rose is a 3 year old Silky Terrier and from the first day she came to our home it was very apparent that she was a gentle, loving little dog.

I always felt that she would make a great visitor to seniors residences or nursing homes. The opportunity came for her to be tested as a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog and her therapy visits began. She has brought much joy and smiles to the faces of so many people. When our visit time comes around each week she is very excited because she knows she is going to work.

It is amazing to watch Lily Rose work her magic! People who have been afraid of dogs, now look forward to having this little princess sit on their knee to be petted, kissed and hugged. One person who was having a hard time adjusting to their new environment found that this little dog somehow understood and was quite content to stay on her knee for a cuddle. It was so nice to see a smile on this person's face when she knew she had found a new furry friend who would come visit her every week.

Then there are the "treat ladies" who always have a little doggy treat for their special visitor and then Lily Rose settles down for her visit and sometimes a "wee snooze" on their laps before she moves on to the next person. This definitely makes their day.

And not just the ladies, but the gentlemen as well love this little dog and make a huge fuss over her each week. Lily Rose takes it all in stride and loves it. Some who have declared that they "do not like dogs" now smile and want to talk to Lily Rose as they see her each week. For those who do not want a cuddle, then Lily Rose will do her "dance" to entertain them.

Without a doubt, our visits are wonderful, not just for the residents but also for myself and Lily Rose. We have made new friends and enjoy our visits each week.



EXTRA!! EXTRA!!

We're always looking for material for the Barker. Please send us your favorite dog quotes and jokes, photos for our cover dog, stories about your furry friend and notes on special visits!