

"Paws & Hearts"

Animal Assisted Therapy

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WINTER 2025 NEWSLETTER

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"Paws & Hearts"

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As I sit and pen this Newsletter I am looking at the calendar and the piece of paper from the State dated December 1, 2000, that declared we were a 501 C3 Non Profit with our assigned number. How can twenty-four years have flown by so quickly?

I've spent enough time taking most of our readers on journeys back through the years, so I promise not to do that again. Instead, I will talk about recent happenings and plans for the coming year.

A few people have suggested having a 25th-Anniversary party, but the board and I have opted to have a Celebratory Volunteer Luncheon in early April which coincides with Volunteer Month. We are going to invite all our current volunteers and a few who have stayed in touch all these years.

Let me wrap up this first newsletter of 2025 by saying that it has been such a joy to watch this program develop over 25 years. I sincerely thank all of the volunteers, especially the 4-legged ones, both past and present who have donated their time to "Paws & Hearts". You are all incredibly special!

- Richard Waxman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Add to your calendar!

PET BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

Monthly Meetings

Second Wednesday of the Month 1:00pm

VOLUNTEER BOOK CLUB

Last Wednesday of the Month 1:00pm

25th Anniversary Volunteer Luncheon

Tuesday, April 15th @ 11:30

"TERRY'S" VIEWS

("Lucky", "Scruffy", "Maddie" & "Bingo" in thought)



For the last few months Dad and I have been spending a lot of time in the office. Dad has been making dozens of doggy-treat bags to give out for something called Santa Paws. Again, this event affects me how?

Dad has actually been very nice to the office neighbors who walk by the windows. These are the people I love to bark at all day long. Dad has invited some of them into the office to make introductions which I guess he's hoping will have me lessen my barking greetings. Dream on baby! I live to bark at passers-by and jump at the windows!

We did go to a women's group and make a presentation in early November. And yes, I was on my bestest behavior. Although I think it had to do with the vice-like hold Dad had on me when we were up at the lectern talking (and quietly barking!)

Here we go again with that '25th Anniversary bit!' OY!

 "Terry" Waxman

"Paws & Hearts"

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The Perfect Volunteer Inquiry!

As we start a new year and a new chapter, it is time to once again discuss not only what makes for a great volunteer team, but also what makes for a *great first inquiry*.

The reason I am putting this article together is because last year we had more calls from well-intentioned potential volunteers who hadn't taken the time to read through our Website or watch the training videos. Two people went to all the trouble of sending in Volunteer Applications without as much as an initial phone call. And sadly for one reason or the other they didn't work out.

All of this was very puzzling because I can't for the life of me understand how anyone would even consider volunteering their dog and their time without fully researching and understanding what would be required of them. To say nothing of understanding the amazing rewards volunteers get from going on these visits!

I have gone back to our Website a few times now and it looks pretty clear to me that an initial phone call should be made to our office to inquire about the program, *AFTER* having read through our website and watching the videos. I truly listen to the people who call in, and again it puzzles me how many people don't listen, rattle on and on, and don't let me ask my questions. If potential volunteers don't listen over the phone, there is no way they will listen to the patients they will be visiting. When I ask callers to go back and read through our website, watch the videos, and check out the Facebook page for Volunteer Stories, I never hear back. It seems like asking someone to do something is unwelcome. I would hope that people want to really understand what Pet Therapy is and if it would suit them and their dogs?

I have to say that I am thrilled when someone calls and they have invested the time to go through all of our materials and have a list of questions for me. Then I know they have done their initial homework!

We were lucky last year. We had a few new volunteer teams get started with us, and they are doing incredibly well. All our volunteers make amazing weekly visits! That's just the way it has always been with us.

The check-list for your dog's suitability is pretty easy—

Is your dog a minimum of one-year old? Spayed or neutered?

Does your dog like every human he or she comes in contact with?

Is your dog well-mannered and does he or she listen to simple commands that you give them?

That's pretty much what we are looking for! And are you, the human at the end of the leash, a full-time desert resident? Sorry but we don't take snowbirds. And most importantly, are you, the human, happy with being the co-star of these visits? Your dog does all the work here. You are basically just the driver. Will you be comfortable standing beside a bed or a wheelchair just listening to the patient talk while they enjoy your dog? These visits are not about us talking. This is the time for your dog to make someone feel really amazing from not much more than a doggy kiss and a bit of petting!

We are always happy with *well-thought-out inquiries* which we hope will lead to a new Volunteer Team!

Santa Paws!!



What an amazing turn-out we had on Saturday, December 7th for our first Annual Santa Paws Event! So many lovely dogs came through our office and had their holiday photos taken with Santa! It was truly a magical morning!



We have to thank first and foremost our dear friend Duane who played Santa. And thanks to all the "Paws & Hearts" volunteers and board members who lent a hand, to Loving All Animals for their beautiful booth, and to the new Emergency Clinic for passing out information on their services. You all made the Santa Paws very special!

Enjoy the photos and let's do it again this coming December!!



NEWS TO SHARE



VOLUNTEER BOOK CLUB

In November our Book Club had another Author Zoom Presentation. This time it was a Canadian author from Richard's home town that he's gotten to know over the last few years. Jon Wells is a reporter for the local Hamilton Spectator and has been a reporter/journalist for over 30 years. Jon primarily reports on crime-based stories, and over the years he has turned some of the stories into full-length books! Jon suggested I read a book called "Poison" and I asked if he would like to give our group a talk. On Wednesday, November 20, we had Jon in our office via Zoom for the most delightful presentation of our series thus far!

WOMEN'S CLUB PRESENTATION

On November 5, "Terry" and Dad made a presentation to a women's club at Mission Hills, called Desert Newcomers. This was the same group we had spoken to a year ago, and they asked us back. Once again we were assisted by one of our very long-time volunteers Karen Dorn who is a member of this group. Karen introduced us and spoke beautifully about her many, many years volunteering for us. Her introduction was so spot-on that there was very little left for us to cover, and we received a warm round of applause at the conclusion of our talk and came away again with some lovely donations!



2025!

25TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY VOLUNTEER LUNCHEON

On Tuesday, April 15, we are going to have a big Volunteer Luncheon. We will get a chance to properly acknowledge and thank our current volunteers and a few from the past who have kept in touch with us. The volunteers will get to meet our local board members, and for our new volunteers you'll get to learn a little about how all of this started. We truly hope that everyone who is invited will attend!

THE REST OF THE YEAR

As always first and foremost we are always recruiting new volunteer teams, i.e. human and canine to work with us making visits to local facilities. That is just always on-going!

If "Terry" and I are asked to make presentations and talk about our work we are always ready, willing and able!

Our monthly **Pet Loss Bereavement Group** meets the second Wednesday of the month at 1pm in our office and all valley residents who need us are welcome to attend.

Our **Volunteer Book Club** meets the last Wednesday of the month at 1pm and over the two years we have been hosting it, we've all come across books we never would have if it weren't for fellow members' presentations! Please consider attending. We all have a hell of a good time, and the homemade chocolate cookies aren't bad either!

~ Volunteer Stories ~

**We are continually adding new Canine Ambassadors and their handlers--
Our volunteers have been sending in some of the most amazing reports from their weekly visits.
Each and every one of you are making such a difference in the lives of the
patients that you and your Canine Ambassador visit!**

In this issue we are going to highlight two Volunteer Reports from teams who visit Alzheimer facilities.
Both of these reports are incredibly touching, and we wanted to share them with you!

BOB & "THOR"

Vista Cove in Rancho Mirage

Just before entering the 1st building there is a little court yard sometimes used by family members to bring out their relatives to spend quality time together. Today one of the residents was sitting in her wheelchair in the court yard with her relative (daughter?). This resident has been declining over the last month and has become very frail. On earlier visits the resident would smile, wave and speak to us in German. On our visit last week she did not respond. Today as we entered the court yard the resident recognized us and blew us a kiss with her hand. The daughter was pleasantly surprised that her mother was able to recognize us. The daughter told me that her mother was not doing well and wanted to know how we knew her. I explained that we came weekly and that her mother really enjoyed her weekly visit from Thor. Then we went inside and visited with Gayle who is always very happy to see Thor. During our visit Gayle told me that she had a big surprise over the weekend - both her children came to visit. Even though Gayle enjoyed the surprise visit, she wished they would come more often. Thor always jumps on her lounge chair and she really enjoys this time together. I told her we are like family because we visit her every week. Gayle said that made her very happy and was going to start crying. She held back the tears and she said she wanted a hug. I gave her a hug and now we are like family. This was such a touching moment for me - I had to hold back the tears too!



GAYLE & "POPPY"

Bella Villagio in Palm Desert



Poppy again pulled me down the hall when we got to the facility today, eager to see all her new friends. This time one of the ladies said, "Here comes Poppy." I saw lots of happy faces when we walked into the main room. Poppy was so excited at first that she just ran from person to person, allowing them to pet her but not jumping on anyone's lap. Then Pat came into the room, she was very excited to see Poppy and Poppy felt the same! She jumped into Pat's lap and gave her lots of kisses. When we go around the room, Poppy seems to sense who wants her up on their lap and who doesn't. We walked by a few women who reached down and petted Poppy and hugged her and then all of a sudden she jumped onto one of the women's laps. I think the woman was surprised, but didn't seem to mind. We walked around the room several times and every time, the same thing happened. Poppy has really seemed to connect with this group of Alzheimer's patients. It is as though she senses they are very special and that she alone can give them a few moments of pleasure with her gentle presence!

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

"Paws & Hearts" is a leader in the field of "Animal Assisted Therapy" (AAT) and it is our mission to enrich the lives of the frail and special care cases that require the loving attention and affection that only a 'four-legged' healer can provide.



"Paws & Hearts"

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25th ANNIVERSARY Volunteer Luncheon

**Tuesday
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**Volunteer
Luncheons
Over the
Years**



*Mark the date down
on your Calendar!*

