

Therapy Dog Chronicles

**A Publication of Paws for Healing, Inc.
Mending Hearts, Minds and Bodies with Gentle Paws
and Guiding Hands**

February 2022



A Message from our President

Greetings to all of the PFH volunteers and Happy New Year to each of you!

It has been a long pandemic for us and I know that many of you are more than anxious to get back to what you do best: volunteering with your special canine! The best I can say is that I have hope that we will be back to a new kind of normal soon.

St Helena Hospital and Queen of the Valley Hospital and Napa State Hospital in Napa are all taking steps in preparation for volunteers to return once omicron cases begin to decrease substantially and we will keep you posted on that. Some of the schools in Sonoma County have allowed a limited amount of volunteers to begin serving. We have two volunteer teams actively serving at Travis AFB in Fairfield—they have helped with the Covid vaccine booths as well as visiting with hospital staff on a regular basis.

And you'll see an article about vaccine clinics with children where volunteer teams have helped provide comfort and distraction for people, mostly children, receiving their Covid vaccines—mostly in Sonoma County but also in Solano County. These have been great opportunities and may continue into the spring as needs arise. So there are incidences where we are jumping in and able to volunteer.

There is an article about Loree Mar in this newsletter—she has been continuing her volunteering at an elementary school in Vacaville for the last three years. She was selected volunteer of the year there. So that is a great example of hope for our organization!

A Message from our President (Cont.)

Personally, any time I get the dog uniforms out all 5 of my dogs start dancing in anticipation. So they are ready to get busy for sure. I am still witnessing so many dog walkers in our neighborhood—always a good sign for canines in general.

The long term lack of activity has also meant that we have lost some volunteers—some people have moved and some of our volunteer canines have died. I personally lost my first PFH volunteer, 16 year old Bart, in May. He was the best dog ever and I have so many wonderful memories of him and his volunteer successes and am so thankful for those great memories. Two other board members, Donna and Don Forst, lost their Cabo to cancer. An article about Cabo is enclosed in this newsletter.

But we carry on and keep going. We still have our vests and shirts to sell if anyone might need something new, and we love to hear about any creative ways you have kept your dogs stimulated and happy during Covid....pictures are welcome for sure.

Please let us know how you are doing and we will do our best to keep you updated on openings and new volunteer opportunities. Keep on keeping' on and hugs to your canines...woof woof!!



Bart DeCrevel



Bart DeCrevel

Board Members:

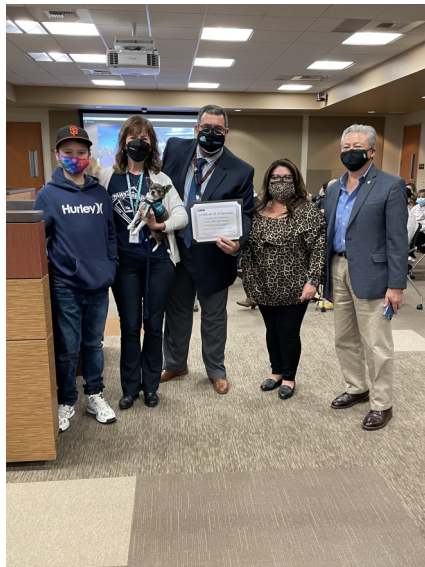
Sara DeCrevel sarad42@comcast.net, board chairperson

Don and Donna Forst danddforst@gmail.com, Sonoma County chairs and lead instructors

Nikki Pacheco nikki.pacheco@sbcglobal.net, Secretary

Pauline Seago seagop@sbcglobal.net, Treasurer.

Sharon DaSilva seasideteddy3@yahoo.com, Evaluation Assistant



Loree Mar is pictured here with Principal, Greg Moffitt and the vice Principal, Joanna Adams of Fairmont Elementary school in Vacaville, , . Also pictured are Loree's husband Ted Mar and their grandson Ryder Nichols who is a 5th grader at the school, and also Sparky her PFH therapy dog! Loree was named Volunteer of the Year at the school in January and was recognized and presented with a certificate! She and Sparky have been volunteering there every week for three years and Sparky is very popular with all the children there. Congratulations to Loree and Sparky!!!

YOU HAVE SEEN SOME OF THESE BEFORE BUT THEY ARE STILL GOOD:

The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail instead of his tongue.

Anonymous

If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went.

Will Rogers

There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face.

Ben Williams

A dog teaches a boy fidelity, perseverance, and to turn around three times before lying down. *Robert Benchley*

Women and cats will do as they please, and men and dogs should relax and get used to the idea. *Robert Heinlein*

If your dog is fat, you aren't getting enough exercise. *Unknown*

Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole. *Roger Caras*

MY GOAL IN LIFE IS TO BE AS GOOD A PERSON AS MY DOG THINKS I AM.

Therapy Dogs and COVID

Last fall, Paws for Healing was asked to provide therapy teams to comfort children ages 5-11 who would be getting vaccinated for COVID 19 at clinics in Sonoma County. Our teams had been denied access to do their work for many months but now the need was urgent. We were all worried about getting sick, but thinking about these kids...they needed our dogs! We were happy to help comfort them as they got their Covid vaccine.

I am so grateful for the positive response that I got from our volunteers...they responded with a very quick “yes”. A total of thirteen clinics were held at Sonoma schools and at least two of our therapy dogs attended every one!

Watching our teams at work the feeling that most surfaced for me was” awe”. Each dog calmly sat at the feet of the child and was petted and hugged by kids nervous or in tears. Our dogs were worried about them, looking up into their little faces as though to say, “Are you ok? I’m here. Try not to worry. I will help you”.

You all know it...therapy dogs are indeed extraordinary. They will patiently work for us for hours until we say it’s OK to stop. They are often exhausted and sleep for hours after working. Yet, they are ready to go again when the vest comes out and we ask them to help someone in need.

Parents , nurses and staff agreed: the dogs were the best part. They got the kids through! More clinics are scheduled in the Spring, and will bring calm to an uncertain experience.

Donna Forst

Therapy Dogs and COVID (Cont.)



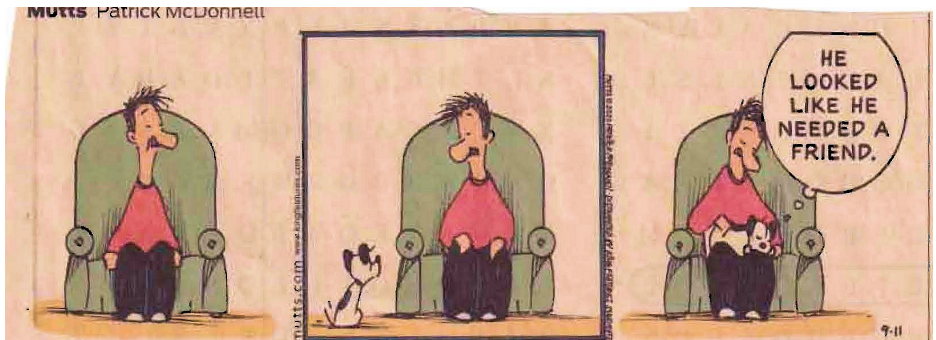
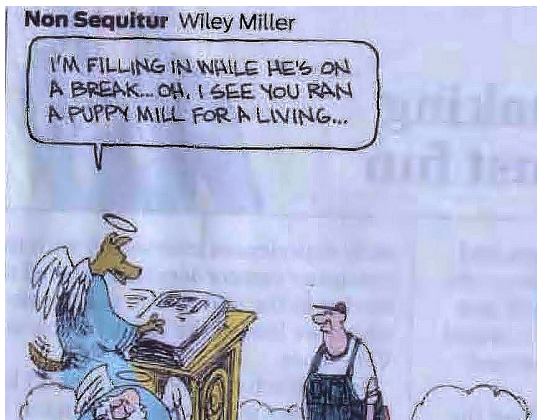
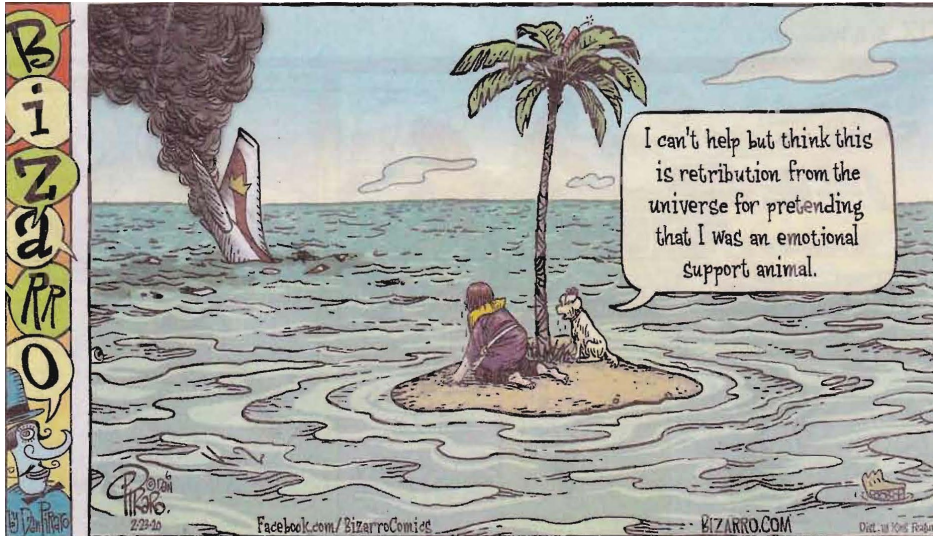
Donna & Cricket



JoAnn & Moira



Victoria & Gracie



Thank you Theresa

It with much regret that we announce that Theresa Rhoads, our Solano County coordinator and Board Member has had to resign for personal reasons. Theresa has been a wonderful addition to Paws for Healing and has so many talents I am hesitant to list them since I'll probably leave something out. She is an online and computer expert, she was instrumental in our website maintenance, helped in many roles at the training and evaluations, has kept track of volunteers and continued to communicate with them. She has revised some of our paper forms, and also volunteered with her little black poodles.



Theresa Rhoads and Moji

Theresa did all that with a smile and lots of energy and willingness to do just about anything asked and we are very grateful. Good luck and be in touch, Theresa! Woof woof from our canines

PAWS FOR HEALING HELPS OUT....

I became involved with the Humane Society of Sonoma County thru a friend of mine who is an active volunteer with the shelter. My involvement started by my donating hand-crafted items for their various fund-raisers.



About two or three months ago, I was contacted by the volunteer coordinator who asked me about making vests for their dogs who were volunteering as therapy dogs. Since I've been involved with PFH for many years and have had the honor of being the "designated seamstress", my reply was "no problem!" I had on hand some fabric that we had used for uniforms a while ago so the whole project turned out to be very easy for me to complete.

I was able to make several vests and they are similar to the ones for PFH but these have their own logo and a message which states "please pet me". It felt good for this non-profit (Paws for Healing) to help another doggie non-profit agency.

Marilyn Horvitz

TOO SOON TO SAY GOODBYE

By Donna Forst, LMFT, CHES,
Oakmont Resident Contributor



Someone told me that George Carlin once said, "When you buy a dog, you are buying a tragedy. You know how it's gonna end." And yet having dogs has been one of the richest, most fulfilling parts of my life. The time we were given to love each other has always been worth the pain of saying goodbye...

We lost our Cabo a few weeks ago. He had started feeling sick in February and after multiple blood tests, CT scans, ultrasounds, aspirations of tumors and seven biopsies, he was finally diagnosed with lymphoma in his intestines.

As with human cancer patients, a flurry of medications followed. We had a counter full of drugs to support him... for nausea, diarrhea, to stimulate his appetite, also steroids and antibiotics. On top of all this, he developed a bladder stone, so now the protocol included a special diet to "shrink" the stone...and more antibiotics for the bladder infection.

Chemotherapy was an option and we grabbed it like a drowning person grabs a life preserver. We were in the "denial" stage of grief. Cabo was still taking walks, playing with our other Golden Retriever, Cricket and chasing lizards. Maybe he'd beat it! Maybe this could give us some more time!

He did amazingly well on chemo for eight weeks. He was like his old self... taking longer walks, playing vigorously, eating like a maniac. Until he began to slow down and his breathing changed. The cancer had metastasized to his lungs. The lymphoma was growing there and gradually suffocating him...

We had only a few more days together. One night around 10:00, I realized we couldn't ask him to stay any longer. As we shared that final car ride to the clinic, I told him I loved him over and over and over again. Our cherished family pet, my therapy dog bringing kindness and love to so many people in hospitals, schools and clinics, my devoted companion as my "hearing" service dog. Ten years together...I asked myself how I would survive this loss...

Thankfully, his passing was peaceful. It was one of the most difficult decisions of my life but it was the best decision for him...

Life after Cabo has been a mixture of intense grief and "bucking up" to keep the depression at bay. At times I have found myself clinging to Cricket for comfort. At other times I feel abandoned and bereft, finding no relief. I see his loving eyes and smile everywhere I turn. It feels like a knife piercing my chest; then it eases for a while. Such is grief...

One of our vets who knew Cabo well told me to remember that "the love is still there". The kids he helped relax as they read to him and improved their reading skills, or the clinic staff members, formerly afraid of dogs who learned there were some really nice ones like Cabo, or the patients in the hospital that remembered him and greeted him by name years after he had soothed their fears—all of them felt better because of him. The love does remain.

The thrown-away stray found on the streets of Cabo San Lucas had quite a

following. Family, friends, neighbors, the parish community and all the facilities where he worked, knew and grew from his love. There is no doubt in our minds that this sweet, gentle boy was an angel sent to love all of us. So, when I get through this raw, vulnerable stage, the memories will comfort and console me.

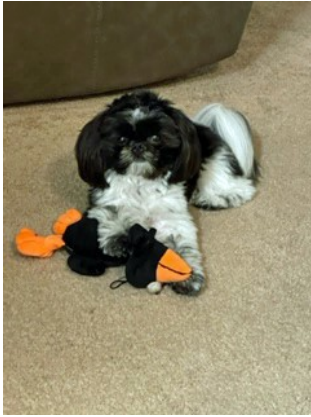
It would always be too soon to say goodbye...But love remains.

Rest In Peace, Angel Boy...

Donna is a retired marriage and family therapist. In 2009, her passion for dogs led her to develop a humane education program using demonstration dogs for Petaluma and Penngrove schools. For the last several years, she and her husband, Don, have trained pet therapy teams for Paws for Healing and coordinated therapy teams for hospitals, clinics, and schools in Sonoma County.

She is "mom" to Golden Retriever Cricket, 2 years, and a Certified Humane Education Specialist (CHES) and Sonoma County Regional Coordinator for Paws for Healing.





Sharon DaSilva, PFH board member has a new soon-to-be PFH volunteer: "Teddy an 8 month old Shih Tzu"



Chuck Constantine and his English Setter visiting CSU maritime and helping to sell Girl Scout Cookies. Chuck and his PFH canines have been consistently visiting at Travis AFB, mostly outside, sometimes inside with hospital staff. Keep up the good work, Chuck!



Articles and comments
for publication in the
Newsletter from our vol-
unteers are not only
welcome but solicited,
send them via email to:

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