

THERAPY DOG CHRONICLES

A Publication of Paws for Healing, Inc.
Winter 2023



A Message from our President

Hello to all....this newsletter has been a long time coming and we have had so much to share with everyone. Paws for Healing is finally coming back in full force! COVID stopped everything and it has taken a while to get things going once again, but here we are and we need you! Our hospitals and skilled nursing facilities are asking for volunteers, and the libraries and schools have been going strong now for a little while. Many positive things happened even during the COVID stoppage---some of our teams visited firemen and workers during the fires at their staging facilities; many of the teams helped at COVID immunization clinics; volunteers helped at Travis AFB at their immunization clinics and outdoors, visiting staff—so several volunteers created ways to stay active and keep the community covered in special and significant ways. Sadly we lost some of our volunteers---moving out of the area, or dogs dying or retiring. For that we are of course saddened. On a positive note though, many volunteers have reported they have new puppies and will be rejoining us as soon as puppies age a little. We can't wait! Our classes have been held this past year with new volunteers, hurriedly trying to get into facilities that have not been opened for a while...it has been a little bit of a challenge but an exciting one. And we are once again part of the Give!Guide event here in Napa----it is a non-profit fundraising program that acts as a facilitator for over 60 nonprofit agencies in Napa, teaching the community about the nonprofits and helping the organizations to raise essential funds. There is more about that in the newsletter. So, if you are a current volunteer we thank you and we are happy you are out there in the neighborhood, doing your good works. If you are a former volunteer, we hope you will consider rejoining us. It is still fun and enriching and so very worthwhile. We need new volunteers so please spread the word when you go to dog parks or walk in your neighborhood!

Happy happy holidays and be in touch.
Sara DeCrevel for the Board at Paws for Healing



Santa Paws

Santa stopped by Pet Food Express in Napa just before Thanksgiving for an early holiday photo op. We had a great turnout, with many cute Christmas outfits, and lots of fun. Thanks to everyone who came out and supported our annual fundraiser event.



<https://www.candogiveguide.org/nonprofits/paws-for-healing>

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New Facebook Page

We've just launched a new Paws for Healing Facebook page. This is a public space to share news, updates, photos, inspiration, and fun.

<https://www.facebook.com/pawsforhealinginc>

Please stop by and visit our page. Check back often to find out about announcements and all the latest happenings.

We would really appreciate if you could Follow or Like us and Share with your friends.

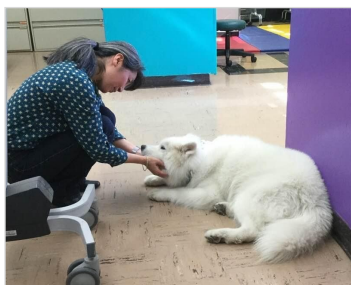




Niko: An Experience of Grace



I thought you might want to know about this humbling experience we had yesterday at Spring Lake Village SNF, our first time back in a couple of months because of spurts of Covid in the SNF and even in Independent Living. Coincidentally, it was the last room we were to visit for the day. The door was mostly closed but slightly ajar and so we knocked and opened it enough to see an elderly woman asleep in her bed and what turned out to be her daughter sitting in a chair facing the bed. I asked if they would like a visit from Niko. The woman beside the bed said she would love one so we came on in. As we approached the bed Niko stretched out a bit ahead of me on the leash like he often does when greeting a person and then stopped just in front of the sitting woman but with his full attention on the woman in the bed, in a stance I had never seen before. He just stood there for at least 15 seconds and then finally I gave a tug on the leash when the woman sitting in the chair said "I'm the one who wants to see you." With a little encouragement from me he broke his attention from the woman in bed and turned to attend to the woman in the chair. We sat talking quietly for a good ten minutes while she petted Niko the whole time, a long time for him to stand still with one person. Then the lady from the front desk knocked and came in and said "The Undertaker is here." My response "Oh my goodness, I had no idea. I thought she was just sleeping." The daughter said "Oh my goodness. I had no idea you didn't know. I thought they had sent you in to comfort me while waiting for the undertaker."



Two things I will say about Niko. First, he has never seen a deceased person before but it was clear to me that he knew something was very different about this person. Second, he has never been that tolerant with an adult petting him before, remaining still where she could reach him (she never took her hand off him) and occasionally looking up and making eye contact with her.

I am glad that this event happened to me, a retired physician, instead of one of the other teams where the owner might have been freaked out when they learned the patient was deceased. As we were leaving the room as the undertaker was coming in, he reached down and petted Niko and thanked us for being there. I am glad we are able to do what we do!

~Jan and Niko

Funnies

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

LYNN JOHNSTON



Pearls Before Swine Stephan Pastis



Inspiring Quotes...

“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands — one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.

~ Audrey Hepburn

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, “What are you doing for others?”

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

~ Margaret Mead

“To ease another’s heartache is to forget one’s own.

~ Abraham Lincoln

“Wherever you turn, you can find someone who needs you. Even if it is a little thing, do something for which there is no pay but the privilege of doing it. Remember, you don’t live in the world all of your own.

~ Albert Schweitzer

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.

~ Elizabeth Andrew

“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth.

~ Muhammad Ali

“Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves.

~ Horace Mann

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

~ Mahatma Gandhi

“You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

~ Kahlil Gibran

“Volunteering is an act of heroism on a grand scale. And it matters profoundly. It does more than help people beat the odds; it changes the odds.

~ Bill Clinton

**“Mending Hearts, Minds and Bodies with Gentle Paws and Guiding Hands”
~ Paws for Healing, Inc.**

Paws for Reading—With a Twist!

by Donna Forst and Victoria Dettman

We have been Paws for Reading teams for many years at various schools. The usual format has been to see about five students an hour for ten minutes of reading time. They would come in, sit down, read, give our dogs a treat, get a Paws card or bookmark and then return to their classroom. It works. And reading scores, as well as an appreciation for dogs, increases.

So we were surprised when Victoria and I showed up for our first Paws for Reading sessions at a new school. This teacher, who knew the school's students well, chose a different approach and it's pretty remarkable.

Victoria and I are in a roomy lounge-type setting that is relaxed and inviting. We sit with our dogs on different sides of the room. The teacher has designed a schedule of six students for each of us in an hour and a half. The children range in age from the youngest to the eldest in the school, so we don't stick to one grade level. The students get not ten, but fifteen minutes each to be with me and "Cricket" and Victoria and "Gracie". They are told that they have a choice: they can color, they can read a book to our dogs or they can just talk. This experiment will last for three weeks with the same students coming each week to the same team. Some will leave, but some will also stay another three weeks with us.

So why, you might ask, is this a big deal? It's a big deal because each of these children faces extra stressors of one kind or another and they need the attention. It may be alcohol or drug abuse in the home. A divorce. The death of someone they loved. So they need to have someone, one caring person sit with them, look them in the eyes and just BE THERE.

The Washington Post identified the crisis in youth mental health in a recent article entitled, "In a crisis, schools are 100,000 mental health staff short". They go on to say that there is an appalling shortage of therapists and wait lists can run as long as five to ten months in some community clinics. Suicide has increased. Our Surgeon General, Vivek H. Murthy recently called the youth mental health crisis, "the defining public health issue of our time" and seventy percent of schools have reported an uptick in students asking for mental health services since the pandemic started.

[Story continued on next page]

Paws for Reading—With a Twist!

by Donna Forst and Victoria Dettman

[Continued]

Clearly and unequivocally, we are not there as licensed therapists. But we *are* there to be *present*. We can listen, ask questions about their pets, ask them what they like to do best, how their day is going and any number of other *safe* questions. And the result is nothing short of remarkable.

We have been only been to this school twice but we have already made a difference. The first time, students came in nervous, not knowing what to expect, maybe a little sullen and defensive. Our dogs broke the ice. We told them funny stories about them, asked about their favorite pets and smiled a lot. We chatted. We laughed. And we got them smiling...

After that first visit, we received feedback that the students we saw were happier, more relaxed and smiling when they returned to their classrooms. Their teachers were thrilled. The teacher who organized it was teary-eyed, she was so happy.

Our second visit was yesterday. Students came in SMILING! One girl said to me, "I wish I could stay here all day". A boy who had been a biter/kicker/scratcher on the playground didn't have any conflicts. We got them talking about things they loved like bearded dragons and playing ball and music and a snake called a ball python.

That's all it took.. no magic. No clinical therapy. Just PRESENCE.



We can only hope that these kids will feel better and know that some adults really care. We will keep you posted. Maybe you know a school that would want to try out this model. Maybe you are the one to do some Paws for Healing instead of strictly Paws for Reading. Don't be afraid of it. The kids need us...

Paws for Reading



Gracie and "mom" Victoria awaiting their next student in Occidental.



Cricket and Gracie after giving lots of hugs and kisses at Harmony Elementary school.



Cricket and Zuzu at Paws for Reading class.



*Merry
Christmas*

Moirira goes to a kindergarten class in Santa Rosa at Hidden Valley Elementary School where the children describe the pictures in the books to her .



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Questions and Inquiries

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Our Board

The board members wear many 'hats' and while they have titles, they do much more for our organization, such as publicity, helping with evaluations, volunteering with their canines, paperwork, etc. We have many 'extras' also, such as our Canine Evaluators, Norm Stangler and Nanci Caron; our tech consultant, Sandy Eggers; our uniform manager, Marilyn Horvitz...just to name a few of the main ones. We have no paid help so words cannot express the gratitude we have for each of these people who share their time to keep Paws for Healing viable.

Upcoming Events

2024 Class Schedule

Winter

Jan 27, Feb 3, Feb 10

Spring

Apr 6, Apr 13, Apr 20

Fall

Sep 21, Sep 28, Oct 5