

Companions, Inc.



Paws for a Cause since 1986

The Tailwagger

January 2023

President's Corner

Happy New Year All,

Thank you to the Board of Directors for electing me the next President of Companions, Inc. I have been part of this organization for a long time and decided it was time for me to help keep the magic going in the post- Covid era.

I have always had Golden Retrievers. When my husband and I first got together, I wanted a lab and he wanted a Brittany spaniel – we compromised on Golden Retrievers, and that is all we have ever had! We compete in field trials with our dogs and spend as much time as possible bird hunting – the Golden's first love – maybe after people. My first dog in the program was Pompoone and I think we joined sometime in the mid-1990s. Pompoone was a ham and a comedian. When he passed, I had a few year hiatus until Solo came into our lives and started with Companions at 2 years old. He was a little one-eyed protégée, loved to hunt but was a star in his Companions work. Gulia was 8 years old when she started her visits. It took that much time to settle her down. And now I get to do visits with Pronto who brings smiles to everyone he meets.

I was working during much of my time with Companions ~~but~~ always relaxed and found such satisfaction from the time my dogs and I got to meet so many interesting people in our visits. Now I am retired and mostly go to Behavioral Health – and UAF finals, which is a blast if you haven't ever done it. The more pets there the better.

Pet Awareness Day will be live and in color this year! This is the major fund raising event of the year and we need lots of help so please see what you can do. I am sure there will be many more events this coming summer and opportunities for your pets to get out in public with their blue scarves on.

I hope you are as proud of what you and your pets do for this community as I am. I am looking forward to meeting all of you and please don't hesitate to get in touch with me with ideas, suggestions or conversation. katelamal@gmail.com or text 907-388-7102.

Happy New Year!

Kate Lamal



Remember, when you have completed at least six months of two visits per month to our other sites, you and your pet are welcome to add Fairbanks Memorial Hospital to your places to visit. But before that, you need to take the class "Handling Skills for Safe Visits" which prepares you for therapy animal visits in the hospital setting. Here are two upcoming opportunities:



Pet Partners
Touching Lives, Improving Health

Handling Skills for Safe Visits

Preparing for Therapy Animal Visits

FREE in-person mini workshop for current therapy animal handlers and people interested in becoming therapy animal handlers

Thursday, February 2, 2023

6:00-7:00pm

at Pawsitive Dog Training

pre-registration required—SPACE is LIMITED!!

Using a scenario-based approach, you'll explore core handling skills and practice effective responses to a variety of situations that will ensure safe visits for you, your animal and your clients.

To register or more information, visit:
<https://petpartners.org/>



Pet Partners
Touching Lives, Improving Health

Handling Skills for Safe Visits

Preparing for Therapy Animal Visits

FREE virtual mini workshop for current therapy animal handlers and people interested in becoming therapy animal handlers

via Zoom Wednesday, February 8

6:00pm-7:30pm

Using a scenario-based approach, you'll explore core handling skills and practice effective responses to a variety of situations that will ensure safe visits for you, your animal and your clients.

To register or more information, visit:
<https://petpartners.org/>

Spotlight on our members!

While we and our pets are known and beloved by those we visit, we don't often get a chance to meet each other. The isolation and restrictions of Covid have eliminated a lot of our social events, which we hope will resume in 2023. In the meantime, we are going to focus on a couple of visiting teams in this space each issue.

Eleanor Denton & Bear



We found Bear in the “free to good home” section on Craigslist. He was 6 months old when we picked him up and he turned out to be a priceless addition to our family. Easily, the best dog we have ever had! The whole family started volunteering through Companions Inc. with Bear back in 2018 and he turned out to be a natural. It has always been a joy to watch him connect with people and bring cheer to those he sees.

Our three kids are all off in college now, with the oldest graduating this spring. In addition to the visits we do with Companions, we also volunteer with the Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces Animal Visitation Program and National Crisis Response Canines. This includes jobs at Fort Wainwright, Eielson and the airport. Whenever I get his “uniform” out of the drawer, his excitement level goes through the roof and he is ready to go to work. We always have a great time visiting with people and making new friends. I'm so happy that we became a part of Companions and have been able to unleash Bear's talents to share with so many people!

Erin Parcher-Wartes and Piper



For many years I hoped to have a dog who could do the kind of work that the animals of Companions do; until Piper came into my life, no other dog was a good match. In August 2017, he and I participated in the Walk With a Friend event and were approached by someone from Companions and encouraged to apply. You can imagine how thrilled I was to learn that my then 1.5 year old dog might be a good fit for Companions' work! Piper and I have been members of Companions since early in 2018, a few months before his 2nd birthday. At the time, I had no idea that my life was about to take a spectacular turn, which meant that I'd be out of the state for months at a time. Fortunately, everyone in Companions has been willing to accommodate my long absences, and I try to make up for missed months by volunteering as much as possible when I'm in town. Piper, a Golden Retriever/ Yellow Lab mix, is now nearly 7 and absolutely loves his work. We do most of our visiting at the hospital and at Behavioral Health Unit therapy sessions and he will get very excited if we drive in that vicinity. I feel guilty if we don't stop, so sometimes we just come in for a short visit in the lobby area by the elevators. When not practicing his superpower, which is leaning in for a good ear rub, he is at home where he valiantly defends his small kingdom from the marauding hordes of squirrels, steals snap peas and other veggies straight from the garden, eats the few raspberries that the plants grow, allows his younger dog brother to chew on his ears, absolutely loves playing fetch and spends hours snoozing on his pillow (though more recently he's discovered the couch!) resting up for the next possible adventure. According to those he visits at the hospital he is perfect, so soft, handsome, just what is needed, the best, such a love, a very good boy, the best hug ever, and downright amazing. But don't worry, Piper doesn't let all these accolades go to his head. When I'm not working as Piper's chauffeur, I volunteer with Meals on Wheels, work in my garden, knit and travel.

Remember, YOU are the best advertising for Companions, Inc. When you tell your friends and family about our visits and our events, they become interested in joining. If you want Companions business cards, flyers or other advertising to spread among YOUR friends and business contacts, please call or text Pam Sprout at (907) 590-9824.

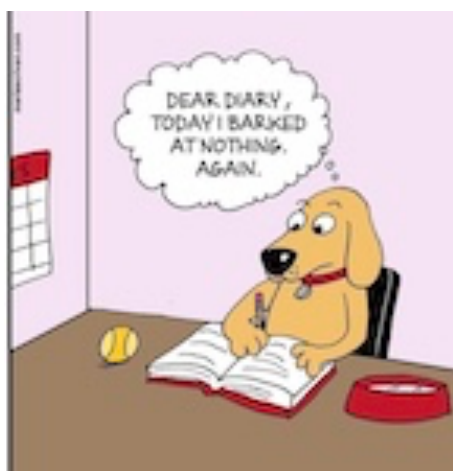
7 Ways to Ensure the Mental Health of Our Therapy Animals

(article abstract taken from Standards of Practice in Animal-Assisted Interventions, a Pet Partners publication)

Therapy animal handlers enjoy volunteering their time to enhance the lives of others, but it's important that therapy animals are also comfortable doing this work. Many people wonder whether or not therapy animals actually like their jobs. Two recent studies have addressed this question. A 2018 *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* study found that 26 therapy dogs working across various pediatric oncology settings did not show increased stress during their time spent working with patients, while a 2020 study by the Mayo Clinic-Rochester of 19 therapy dogs working with fibromyalgia patients demonstrated that there was no increase in physical signs of stress during visits. It's reassuring to see evidence like this that therapy animals who have been screened and credentialed for appropriate temperament and aptitude can visit without negative impact on their welfare. However, this research sparks a conversation about how crucial it is that we take appropriate steps to protect the mental health of our therapy animals. Here are ways you can protect the welfare of your therapy animal in a potentially stressful field.

1. Understand the 5 Basic Freedoms
 - Freedom from thirst, hunger, and malnutrition.
 - Freedom from discomfort.
 - Freedom from pain, injury, or disease.
 - Freedom from fear and distress.
 - Freedom to express most normal behavior.
2. Start with Positive Training--Beginning with a basis of positive training will contribute to the overall maintenance of your therapy animal's mental health, as well as your bond, which is vital for a successful therapy animal team.
3. Never Force Your Animal to Go to Work--It's very important that our therapy animals enjoy participating in animal-assisted interventions, not merely tolerate them. We support this so strongly that it's codified in our standards of practice.
4. Recognize and Respond to Body Language--As a handler, you should be aware of the specifics of your animal's body language.
5. Advocate for Your Animal--Because animals can't speak for themselves to tell us these things, it's up to you as the handler to advocate for them.
6. Continue to Add to the Body of Knowledge--If you have the opportunity to participate in a research study about therapy animals, consider taking part.
7. Provide Novel Experiences and Enrichment--Just as we expect ourselves to practice self-care and have work-life balance, the same opportunities should be afforded to our therapy animals.

For the full article, visit <https://petpartners.org/blog/7-ways-to-ensure-the-mental-health-of-our-therapy-animals/>





Friends who have crossed
The Rainbow Bridge



This quarter saw the heartbreaking passing of two beloved dogs belonging to Board members. Maria DeBaun's lovely Siri, one of the most frequent dog visitors to FMH and other sites and Pam Sprout's golden Hank, a regular at BHU, had lived long loving lives, but never long enough.

Board Members

President Kate Lamal
katelamal@gmail.com
Text (907) 388-7102

Vice President Pam Sprout
Recording Secretary Betsey Jacobs
Treasurer Shirley Winther

Other Board Members

Maria DeBaun Jamie Marschner
Bobbi Ross Daisy Huang
Dave Stewart

Companions, Inc.
PO Box 73601
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707
(907) 687-4247 call or text



Welcome to our very first
2023 members, Heather
Agustines and her adorable
dog Ripley!

Save the Date



Companions, Inc.

"Paws for a Cause"

is "Back on Track" with our annual fundraiser

Pet Awareness Day

May 13, 2023

12-4pm

Fairgrounds Borealis Bldg

We will need everyone's help to make this day successful. Be on the lookout for emails requesting help with various tasks before, during and after the event.

Contact Bobbi Ross 907-388-3508 if you have any questions.



The first PAD volunteer opportunity you can help with is becoming part of our "Donations Team".

This is a group of our volunteers willing to canvas our community asking for donations, whether it be monetary donations, items for the silent auction, door prizes, etc. The Donations Team will get together once to meet each other and to divvy up which community places you want to ask for donations, ask questions, etc. From that point you work through your list and get the donations. Fortunately our 2020 Donations Team had already made excellent headway in receiving donations before Covid stopped everything so we are able to use those for 2023 PAD. However we still need more. Please contact Bobbi if you are interested in volunteering for the Donations Team.

veggieamt@alaska.net or 907-388-3508