

THE POOCH PERIODICAL

Fall 2013—Volume 2, Issue 3

Recognition Event For Therapy Dog Avalon December 10, 2013



This year's Appreciation/Recognition Event will take place at St. John Ambulance Provincial Office on December 10th 2013, starting at 6:30pm. Please let us know if you plan to attend! We hope to see a great turnout again this year!

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Therapy Dog Facilities

- St. Patrick's Mercy Home
- Saint Luke's Home
- Agnes Pratt Nursing Home
- Masonic Park Nursing Home
- Glenbrook Lodge
- Kenny's Pond Retirement Res
- Caribou Memorial Veteran's Pavilion
- The Janeway
- Tiffany Village Retirement Res
- Psychiatric Unit—HSC
- Interfaith Home
- Dr. Hugh Twomey H.C.C.
- Lakeside Homes
- Mountain View Estates
- The Bungalows
- Corner Brook Long Term Care Home
- Daffodil Place
- Waterford Hospital
- Thrive
- Choices for Youth
- Marine Institute
- Health Sciences Library

Therapy Dog at Christmas Parade in St. John's



Once again, St. John Ambulance Therapy Dogs were involved in the St. John's Christmas Parade. Also thanks to "For the Love of Dogs" group members who walked in the parade with us! Everyone had a lot of fun!



St. John Ambulance
Therapy Dog 

Two Impactful Therapy Dogs Pass Away

During the lovely summer and fall of 2013, it is with heavy hearts that the Therapy Dog Program announces the passing of two of its longest-serving dogs. Their Therapy Dog stories are below.

Casey: A Pet Destined to be a Therapy Dog

Casey, a German Sheppard/Australian Blue Heeler mix, was born in 2002, and was adopted from the SPCA by Noreen Flynn. Noreen felt Casey to be a “vivacious dog,” who could command a room. In 2004, Noreen heard of the work of another Therapy Dog team, Glenys Dlugosch and her dog Teddy, and thought that Casey would be an excellent match for the program. So, in 2005, Casey was successful at a Therapy Dog testing, and did not look back. Noreen and Casey began visits at St. Patrick’s Mercy Home, and eventually to the Janeway, as well. So effective and dedicated were the pair, that Noreen decided to take the role of Unit Coordinator at these two facilities, which she still holds to this day.



Noreen describes Casey as a dog that everyone loved. Casey would bound his way into a resident’s room with gusto and confidence, only to be able to show amazing gentleness, affection, and care for the resident’s condition. Casey was also a dog that everyone could make a connection to. A resident with Alzheimer’s found past memories when visited by Casey, when not much else could trigger such an event. Either innate or learned, Casey also showed an amazing ability to detect when a resident was not well, and would spend extra time, and give extra affection. Casey was a dog that could improve a mood in an instant, and made everyone he was in contact with feel special. Suitably, Casey did receive just reward for his service; he looked forward to two ice creams and a bag of cheesies from generous residents at each visit!

In the late summer of 2013, with ailing health, Casey passed away. The Flynn family has been devastated by this loss, but has the comfort of all of the lives that Casey impacted. A life with great impact and meaning is not easily forgotten.

Dusty: A Quiet and Cuddly Pet

For those who know Therapy Dog handler Edna Knight, it will be no surprise to hear that her dog Dusty was a shih Tzu. Edna has a particular affinity for this breed of dog, and Dusty was a very special pet for Edna for many, many years.



Dusty began his Therapy Dog career in 1999, after a successful testing with former Evaluator Bruce Dyke. Dusty started visits at St. Patrick’s Mercy Home, initially under the supervision of Lorraine Button. Over the years, Dusty mostly visited at St. Pat’s, but also paid visits to Keyin Tech., as well as Saint Luke’s. Edna describes Dusty as a quiet, laid-back dog who loved to get up on the beds and “just have a snuggle, kisses, and treats.” Just like his handler Edna, Dusty was also dressed up for holidays and special occasions at St. Pat’s, like St. Patrick’s Day, Easter, Halloween, and Christmas.

Dusty developed very special relationships with residents at St. Pat’s, and was always quick to gobble up a treat on his visits. Edna recalls a time where a particular resident saw Dusty coming for a visit, and quickly realized, “Oh my, I don’t have a treat for him!” When Edna offered the resident to feed Dusty the treats that she brought, the resident replied, “That’s not a treat!”, and was off to the kitchen to get a Dixie cup to feed him. Dusty and the resident became great pals.

Over the past few years, Dusty’s health had been in decline, having trouble walking, and going deaf and blind. But, up until his last few days, he was still ready to pose for photographs, and interact with Edna’s other dogs. Edna took Dusty for a retirement visit to Saint Luke’s on June 6, 2013, and Dusty passed away in the late summer, at almost 16 years old. Edna always referred to Dusty as her “Knight in Armour.”

“Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen.”

— Orhan Pamuk

Therapy Dog Retirement: Margot French and Nahanni

Margot first heard of the Therapy Dog Program while in Ontario. After moving back to Newfoundland in 2005, Margot would take her dog to visit her mother, who she was caring for. Margot reports that Nahanni had “a real talent” with illness and therapeutic intervention. Margot noticed that Nahanni would spend more time with her ill mother, suggesting that Nahanni had an advanced sense of empathy and caring, and would try to make others feel better. Nahanni would lay close to a person dealing with illness, and would stick by this person even when Margot wandered around. In response to Nahanni’s nature, Margot enrolled herself and Nahanni in the Therapy Dog Program by way of a testing in 2007 at St. Patrick’s Mercy Home with former Dog Evaluator Bruce Dyke. Nahanni passed the testing with flying colours. Margot describes Nahanni as a quiet dog, and so barking at the testing was never a concern!



Margot and Nahanni started as a team at Glenbrook Lodge with Unit Coordinator Glenys Dlugosch. For the next 2-3 years, Margot and Nahanni were weekly visitors to Glenbrook, including visits to the apartments in the complex. The pair then visited at Cambridge Estates, where they visited with about six regular residents. Most recently, Margot and Nahanni were a brave pair in piloting the MUN visits to Queen Elizabeth II Library in December 2012. Nahanni’s (and Margot’s, too!) calm demeanor was an absolute asset for the stressed-out students during exam week. So impactful were the pair, that they returned for visits to MUN at the Loft in the University Centre. An fascinating sight it was to see a calm, meticulous Nahanni navigate the hustle and bustle of the University Centre! Even with all of the surrounding excitement, Nahanni stayed focused on the task to calm the students and share in some affection. Nahanni showed this affection with a constant tail wagging.

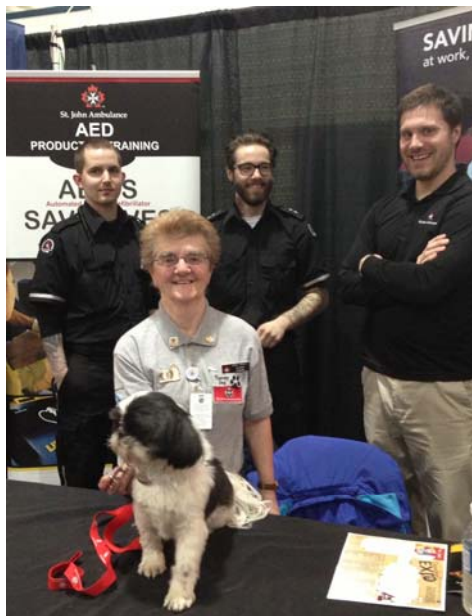
Margot reports that she did not realize the significant impact of the program before she started. She notes that Nahanni was vital to keep her motivated in the program, knowing the impact that Nahanni had. Nahanni would react to the smell of Margot’s Therapy Dog t-shirt, in knowing that there was a task at hand. Margot notes that she has been proud of her affiliation with St. John Ambulance and the Therapy Dog program, suggestion that “our world needs this program.”

A story that Margot recalls fondly is a time that Nahanni actually barked at Glenbrook, among perhaps a half-dozen times Nahanni has barked in life. Margot reports that the rather ferocious bark from the sublimely calm Nahanni frightened the life out of a resident at Glenbrook who knew Nahanni well, and it was in response to another Therapy Dog who was entering the resident’s room. Nahanni, it seems, was not yet finished the therapeutic work, and felt the need to share this information with the other dog! The other handler said in response, “That’s okay, we’ll come back later.” This was something that everyone could laugh at a short time later.

A very sad update to this story: Nahanni passed away in early December. He was almost 13 years old. He will be remembered fondly by all of us with the Therapy Dog program as a wonderful example of a much-loved therapy dog.

“The dog is a gentleman; I hope to go to his heaven not man’s.” — Mark Twain

Pooch Periodical Creator Moving On



David Palmer, former Community Services Coordinator, and the driving force behind the Pooch Periodical, took an exciting new position with Western Health in September. While we are sorry to see him leave, we wish him nothing but the best in this new position!

David was a big fan and supporter of the Therapy Dog program and under his guidance and leadership, significant steps were taken to grow and expand the program across the province. We are very pleased to report that David plans to remain involved with St. John Ambulance as a volunteer and he will be instrumental in revitalizing our Medical First Responder Division in Corner Brook and plans to work to expand the Therapy Dog program to facilities on the West Coast. Shown on the far right of the photo, with MFR and Therapy Dog volunteers, David thoroughly enjoyed spending time getting to know members of our Community Services Program and will certainly be missed!

Some Therapy Dog Visitation Reminders!

This seems like a great opportunity to review some visiting guidelines! (Section D-7 in the manual)

- Handlers and dogs must be clearly identified as SJA volunteers while visiting—this means that once you complete the three supervised visits, you receive a red polo shirt, scarf for your dog, and ID that should be worn on all subsequent visits. If you don't have your uniform yet, please contact us at Provincial Office.
- All dogs must have current vaccinations. If your vet form is about to expire, we will contact you for an updated copy. This is required every 3 years.
- Visiting dogs must be cleaned and well-groomed while visiting.
- Visiting dogs must be on leash and under the control of the handler AT ALL TIMES. No one else should hold the dog's leash without the handler holding the leash, as well. This rule applies to all dogs, regardless of size.
- At any one time, no more than 2 dogs should be in the same immediate area as the patient/resident being visited. A handler must visit with only one dog during one-on-one patient/resident visits.
- Any incidents that take place on a visit (injury to resident, dog, or handler) are to be reported to the appropriate staff member immediately and to Provincial Office as soon as possible so that an incident report can be completed and any follow up action can be taken.

"The better I get to know men, the more I find myself loving dogs." — Charles de Gaulle

What Makes A Good Therapy Dog

As the Evaluator Trainer for the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program and a dog trainer and behaviourist in this province, I often get asked by people wanting to participate in the Therapy Dog Program, “What makes a good therapy dog”, and “What training can I do to help my dog pass the testing”?

Firstly, it is important to realize that therapy dogs and their handlers are evaluated as a part of a team. It is not only your dog that is being tested but you as well. The test is a temperament test not an obedience test however the more obedient your dog is, the better they tend to do in the evaluation. The dog handler teams are evaluated based on very strict guidelines and criteria set out by St. John Ambulance. When it comes to the dog, the program is looking for dogs with calm and solid temperaments and dispositions. Therapy dogs tend to be friendly and laid back and welcome attention from people in a variety of situations. They tend to be very confident and easy going dogs. Handlers are evaluated based on their ability to control and interact with their dogs and people. Handlers are personable, easy to talk to, patient, understanding and compassionate individuals. As a dog handler team, the Program is looking for a team that moves and interacts with the public with ease, confidence, and control. The better your handling skills, the better and more effective the communication between you and your dog, the better you and your dog tend to do at the evaluation.

What type of training can one do to assist in a successful completion of the evaluation? At present, there is no formal program that is recommended in which one can participate to prepare for the testing. However, if one wants to prepare, the following would help:

- participation and successful completion of a good quality obedience course.
- early proper continuous and successful exposure and socialization with both people and dogs of various temperaments, dispositions and physical make ups.
- early proper continuous and successful exposure to a variety of situations...crowds, noise, commotion.
- practice with politely accepting treats from people
- practice with politely and easily accepting handling from people

Ultimately you and your dog will be invited into seniors homes, hospitals, work environments, schools and organizations. St. John Ambulance wants to ensure that you and your dog will be great ambassadors of this long-standing and well-respected program. The evaluation process is fairly strict and standards are necessarily high. If you and your dog are unsuccessful in your initial attempt, focus your training and try again. Re-testing is permitted after a period of 6 months. The rewards you bring will be worth it.

Ken Reid B.A., B.S.W. R.S.W.
Evaluation Trainer
St. John Ambulance

**“All his life he tried to be a good person. Many times, however, he failed.
For after all, he was only human. He wasn't a dog.” — Charles M. Schulz**

The Back Page

Upcoming Events

Group Visit to Health Sciences Centre—
Psychiatric Unit @ 2:00 pm (contact
jennifer.brown@easternhealth.ca):

- December 13th and 27th

Group Visit to Waterford Hospital @ 1pm

- Friday, December 20th

Group Visit to Tiffany Village @ 7:00 pm
(contact Audrey Pryor):

- Tuesday, December 17th

Group Visit to Kenny’s Pond @ 7:00 pm
(contact Angela Martin):

- Monday, December 2nd

Group Visit to Veteran’s Pavilion @ 7:00
pm (contact Michele Boriel):

- Wednesday, December 18th

Group Visit to Daffodil Place @ 7:00 pm

- Monday, December 23rd

Choice For Youth @2:30pm

- Saturday, December 7th

Thrive @3:00-5:00pm

- December 9th and 11th

Visits during Exam Week:
MUN: Dec 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18

- From 12:00—2:00pm

Health Sciences Library: Dec 9, 10, 11, 12,
13, 16, 17, 18

- From 7:00—9:00pm

Also HS Library: Dec 14, 15

- From 2:00-3:00pm

Marine Institute: Dec 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

- From 11:00am-noon

Therapy Dog on Halloween!



Upcoming Testings

Central Newfoundland:

- Spring/Summer 2014

Western Newfoundland:

- Spring/Summer 2014

Avalon

- Early Spring 2014

General Updates

- Therapy Dog program is eagerly looking for volunteers willing to visit with adults with developmental issues at Eastern Residential Support Board. The visits are in residential homes, under the close supervision of ERSB staff members. ERSB currently has one Therapy Dog volunteer visiting, which has shown a remarkable impact on the handler, dog, and the adult receiving visits. A once-per-month commitment is asked.
- The Therapy Dog program starts visitations at the Waterford Hospital in November! We are very excited to expand our program to this facility and provide therapeutic visits with patients at the Waterford.

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