

PAW PRINTS



THE OFFICIAL MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF
HEARTS AND PAWS COMFORT DOGS



A 2023 study by the University of Saskatchewan concluded that ER patients who were visited by a therapy dog reported less pain than those who weren't.

In this newsletter you can expect:

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Hero Hound: Scarlett O'Hara
Hero Handler: MarilynRose Guarino

"When I lost my beloved cocker spaniels, Sebastian & Gypsy after 15 years, I vowed never to have another dog. Then, I went with my friend Jerry to Schultz Guest house in Dedham to see a puppy named Bessie, knowing that I would love her on sight. By the time I got to Dedham, she had been adopted. Lucky for Jerry, Bessie's sister was still adoptable. They put a 10 pound, 5-week-old puppy in my arms. I cried, Jerry cried, and the agent filling out her papers cried. That was the beginning of my life with Scarlett O'Hara from the streets of Tennessee.

From that moment on, my life has never been the same. By that afternoon, Scarlett was on her way to Cape Cod and her future family at Hearts & Paws Comfort Dogs. That was almost 6 years ago. Not a moment goes by that I am not certain that this event was orchestrated by the Great Spirit above. So much of my life changed in those hours and continues evolving daily.

The people who have entered my life because of this amazingly gentle and spiritual dog continually affect me at home, at work, and especially with Hearts & Paws. I meet people constantly who have heard of our organization on and off the Cape. I love watching Scarlett greet people with such joy she almost seems to dance toward them. Her Siberian eyes bring people into her absolute joy at getting their attention, knowing she was cruelly abandoned and left to survive on her own. Naming her was so easy because of the spirit that she showed right away. And given a chance, she will be an amazing companion no matter the road we travel!" -MarilynRose Guarino

Do you and your dog want to be featured in our next edition?
Scan the QR code to submit your story.





From the Alpha's Desk

COMFORT CHRONICLES

Greetings Hearts & Paws Members, Friends, and Supporters,

I am so excited for our inaugural newsletter! Thank you to all who have contributed. It's hard to believe how far we have come in just under 3 years. What started as a few people sitting around a table during the holidays of 2021, has turned into 47 active members, 31 certified dogs, and a whole lot of fun and service to our Cape Cod Community. We have helped children learn to read, assisted with those experiencing grief, combatting illness, or dealing with cognitive decline, and visited with veterans and others who needed an extra dose of love.

Throughout the summer, many of our members participated in **Dream Day Camp** in Nickerson State Park in Brewster--a free of charge sleepaway camp for kids with chronic illnesses and their families. We continued visits to various cognitive day programs across the Cape, such as the **Alzheimer's Family Center** at the Cape Cod Mall in Hyannis, a program at the **Dennis Senior Center**, and **Rock Harbor Respite** in Orleans. Members also enjoyed several *Reading to Dogs* programs at various local libraries. Some of these types of visits will continue throughout the year on a routine basis in Eastham and soon Provincetown.

At the same time as doing visits, members took part in a variety of events across the Cape, raising money for other non-profit organizations. Such events were: *Bark in the Park* baseball games with both the Cotuit Kettleers and

the Harwich Mariners, a *Bark and Sip* at Cape Cod Coffee sponsored by Tito's Vodka, *The Bow Wow Bash* in Eastham, *Hounds of Highfield* in Falmouth, and the *Cape Cod Dog Festival* and the *Seaside Le Mans* race in Mashpee.

This fall, our school visitations picked back up, and I am pleased to announce that in addition to Falmouth, Sandwich, and the **Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School**, we added **Ezra Baker Innovation School** in Dennis. We also added visits to the **Chatham Housing Authority**. We participated at several public events, such as the *Walk for Alzheimer's* in Provincetown to benefit the **Alzheimer's Family Support Center** that we serve with, and the **Eastham Turnip Festival**, where we will have a *Reading to Dogs* program. In December, we plan to participate in the Harwich Holiday Stroll to raise money for the **Harwich Children's Fund**.

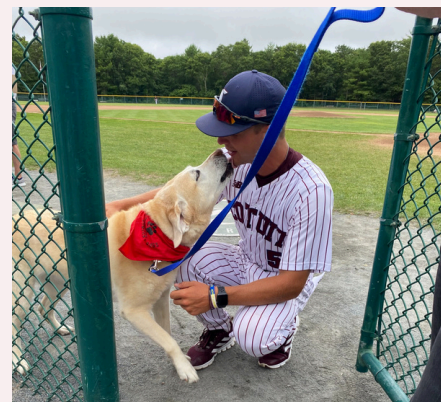
It is an honor and privilege to be part of an organization so full of amazing people and dogs. Without you all, Hearts & Paws would not be what it is today. I would like to thank each and every one of you for your hard work and dedication. You are an inspiration! You are an example of how selflessness and love can truly make a difference.

Happy Paw-lidays!

Amy Usowski, President



PAW-TNERS IN ACTION





From the Admins **BEHIND THE LEASH**

● Spotters: The unsung heroes of comfort visits

by Rebecca Blair, Vice President

The term “Spotter” originated in the aviation industry as one who “looks for or observes a particular thing as a job or a hobby.” HPCD adopted this term after Boston area hospitals used it when therapy dogs and related volunteers visited patients and staff.

A Spotter is a unique role that HPCD uses with all comfort visits. The Spotter is a full member of the organization, and can be a member with or without a dog. When a member is in the role of a Spotter, s/he does not have responsibility for a specific dog. Instead, the Spotter comes to the visit with the sole intention of being the “right hand of the dog’s Handler. The Spotter ensures that the environment is safe for the dog, the handler, and the participants by checking that the floor is free of food or medication. If the Handler needs assistance, requires a restroom break or must take a phone call, the Spotter temporarily manages the Handler’s dog. The Spotter also takes responsibility for checking HPCD staff into the “Sign-In Kiosk” and alerts staff when the visit time is almost up. Both Handlers and Spotters are crucial to a successful visit. One HPCD Spotter stated, “This job is very different and enjoyable because I can watch all the participants and dogs, rather than just focusing on my own.”

If you are an HPCD member and you either don’t have a dog or your dog hasn’t completed the CGC test, you can be a Spotter. Learn more at: heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org/spotter-requirements/

● Join the pack

Help us spread joy with Cape Cod children, veterans and deserving adults. Check the latest visitation schedules and Handler/Spotter needs on the **Volunteer Scheduling Pro (VSP)** app.

● Pup-coming events

- **December 6** - Harwich Christmas Stroll, 6-8 pm
- **December 8** - Dennis Village Stroll, 12-5 pm
- **March 21 – 31** - the next **spirit wear sale** will open, pending interest.

Quick Links



[Spotter Requirements](#)



[Spiritwear Samples](#)



[Upcoming Events](#)



[Documents & Handouts](#)

Carol's Training Corner **GOOD DOG!**

by Carol Miller, Professional Dog Trainer and Author



Ongoing training helps owners build a better bond with their dog. We also want to continually keep pups active and learning new, or practicing old, skills. This month we discuss the "Collar Grab" game.

While this seems a simple exercise, it is extremely valuable for all dogs, especially comfort and therapy dogs, who are required to interact with strangers on a regular basis. By practicing this, you are teaching your dog to be calm when hands come at them, even in alarming ways.

Here is the process:

- Sit your dog in front of you, and have a treat hidden in one hand.

- Reach for his/her collar (initially at the side of the body, not over the head) with your free hand. Take it gently, and while holding it, give your dog a treat with your other hand. Let go. Repeat 4 or 5 times in a session.
- If your dog is hand shy or nervous about this, start by just moving your hand by the side of the dog's face, then give the treat.
- Gradually work up from reaching to just touch the collar, then gently holding it.
- You should use a collar grab every time you do a recall. It is important to be able to grab your dog when needed. This game helps nervous dogs get used to hands coming at them.

For comfort dogs, I recommend you "overtrain" this -- after your dog is comfortable with being grabbed by the collar, begin to move your hand towards him in more aggressive or frightening ways (always gradually work up to this).

Touch other parts of his body, such as feet and tail, and, most importantly, have anyone who comes to your house practice collar grabs.

This simple exercise will pay off in years of a more relaxed dog when out with strangers.

Please note that this exercise is outlined in the Members Area of the website under "**Documents and Handouts.**"

AKC Good Citizen Trainers

Know someone interested in getting their canine **AKC Good Citizen Certified**? Our current HPCD Trainer Referral List includes only trainers who use "positive reinforcement" methods. Be sure to mention HPCD when signing up!

Visit heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org/resources for additional training information.

Our Officers

- President 🐾 Amy Usowski
 Vice Presidents 🐾 Rebecca Blair & Jeff Idels
 Secretaries 🐾 Mary Hastings & Brian Hastings
 Treasurer 🐾 Sue Bernier



Business	Location	Contact Information
Tail Waggin' Dog Training	South Dennis	Heather Garre (508) 736-3202 tailwaggindogtraining.com
Chatham Dog Club	Chatham	Annie Corrigan (508) 776-5219 Facebook: Chatham Dog Club
MJ Obedience	Bourne	Michael McGrath (508) 759-3647 (508) 250-5551 (cell) www.mjobedience.com
Joseph's Obedience Training	Pocasset	Lori (508) 563-1122 josephsdogtraining.com
Karen Pryor	National	karenpryoracademy.com

WE WELCOME YOUR IDEAS!

Help us improve our newsletter. If you have a great experience to share, a question to ask our trainer, or other ideas, please contact: info@heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org