

PAW PRINTS

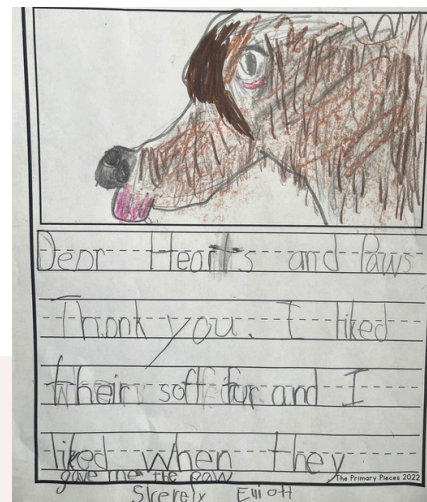


THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
HEARTS AND PAWS COMFORT DOGS



weef wisdom

An aggregated report released in June 2024 concluded that Animal Assisted Activities and Therapies (AAAT) improved certain core symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), including social communications, irritability, hyperactivity, and word usage. This identifies a simple and cost-effective way to help improve the social function of children with ASD.



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Recipient of the 2024 President's Volunteer Service Award



"I am the proud owner of Raziya (which means "sweet and adorable" in Swahili), a 5-year-old Rhodesian Ridgeback. Raziya is my husband Dan's and my 7th Ridgeback.

Although Ridgebacks are protective of their owners, right from the beginning we noticed Raziya's temperament was laid back and engaging. Our dog trainer also noticed and suggested she would be a perfect candidate to become a therapy dog. We worked with her to get all of the certifications necessary.

We winter in Florida and summer in Massachusetts, and have had the good fortune to work with Joyce Pessel of Bonafide Therapy Dogs of Florida, Leah Hyman of Dogs on Call, and Amy Usowski of Hearts & Paws Comfort Dogs in Massachusetts. All three groups work exceptionally hard with their volunteers and their dogs in settings that enable us to bring comfort, support, and happiness to people in need.

Raziya and I have had the privilege of providing comfort and animal therapy to patients at the Boca Regional Hospital, Cape Cod Hospital and their affiliated cancer centers, as well as to schools, nursing and rehabilitation centers, Dream Day Camp, and the Alzheimer's Support Group at the Cape Cod Mall. I cannot tell you how much pleasure and satisfaction it gives me to see big smiles on the faces of everyone Raziya interacts with, not to mention all the kisses given out.

Joyce from Bonafide Therapy Dogs was instrumental in my receiving the President's Silver Volunteer Service Award. While I am humbled and privileged to have received it, I am aware that this award would not have been possible without my loyal friend and companion Raziya." by Carol Rull, Handler

MARCH 2025



NEXT ALL MEMBER MEETING

6:30pm - Monday, March 17th

Dennis Memorial Library

1020 Old Bass River Rd, Dennis, MA

From the Alpha's Desk

COMFORT CHRONICLES

Greetings Hearts & Paws Members,
Friends, and Supporters,

As this latest newsletter comes out just prior to Spring, I have been reflecting on some of the things that we typically think of when we think 'Spring.' What do you envision when you think of Spring? Coming out of hibernation? More daylight to walk the pups? More warmth? Growth? Renewal? New opportunities? Spring Cleaning? (All except the last one for me!)

About growth...

We have seen a tremendous amount of it in our small organization in the past few months. This has largely been due to winter outreach activities, such as the *Dennis and Harwich Christmas Strolls* and the *Harwich Volunteer Event*, and folks coming over from other organizations. How can it be that a couple years ago we started this organization with just 15 people and 6 dogs? At the time of my writing this article in early February, we now have 62 members and 33 certified dogs in our organization! Since the New Year, we have added 9 new members and 3 new dogs. Incredible! Especially for an all-volunteer non-profit, and one that does require a lot of time from its members. New members breathe new life into our organization, with new ideas and strengths to offer.

With growth we can spread more love to those who need it across the Cape. We are currently serving at 17 separate sites across Cape Cod, from **Falmouth Schools** to the **Provincetown Library** and everywhere in between. Our volunteers and dogs are visiting **hospital patients and staff**,

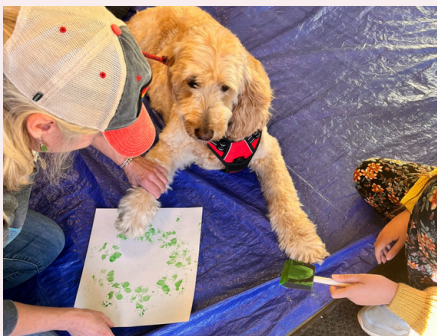
those dealing with **cognitive loss** in Sandwich, Hyannis, Dennis, and Orleans, those battling **substance abuse** issues, and **students across Cape Cod**. Our organization has been noticed far and wide, and we get constant inquiries to add visits to new locations. With new folks coming on board, we hope to increase visits to places that could use us more frequently, and to add visits to new venues as well. We are currently trying to add visitation opportunities for you coming this Spring.

Growth is wonderful, but it can also bring challenges at times. In addition to being President, I am also the Regional Coordinator for the Mid and Lower Cape visitation sites. As a Regional Coordinator, I try to balance the needs of the organizations we serve with the schedules and wishes of our volunteers. As someone who loves puzzles and problem-solving, it's right up my alley! Another challenge we face is how to grow while still operating as a tight-knit, cohesive organization. I think we are doing extremely well with that. We want all members, new and old, to feel like friends and family. The events are another way to socialize and bond, and something everyone can participate in. As we grow, we hope to offer more opportunities for members to get together outside of volunteering. This organization started as a group of friends wanting to do good with our dogs, and that's how we intend to keep it as we grow along the way.

Happy Spring!

Amy Usowski, *President*





Featured Visit: Lighthouse Charter School

Paw-tners in Action

"The Lighthouse Charter School is a Massachusetts public charter school located in East Harwich for students in grades 6 through 8. For our initial visit in Fall 2023, Hearts & Paws had four dogs meet many of the students in a large area within the school. This was one of our first school visitations. We quickly learned the importance of limiting the number of students interacting with the dogs at one time. Everyone at the school was very supportive; and, in conjunction with Jennifer Hyora-Williams, the Director of Student Services, we developed a plan for visitations moving forward.

Our LCS program has grown to twice a month visits with two sets of dogs/handlers and one spotter. Small groups of students rotate in to "visit" with our dogs and everything runs smoothly. Everyone's efforts have resulted in a strong positive relationship for Hearts & Paws with the faculty and students at Lighthouse.

The bonds between our dogs, the students and the faculty has made Hearts & Paws a part of the school community. This feeling goes both ways, and last November it resulted in a collaborative effort between students and dogs to create original "dog paw" paintings for the elderly. The paintings were a fairly messy endeavor; but the students, dogs, handlers and faculty members all worked together to create six large and colorful paintings, which were framed and prepared for hanging. A week later, the students and dogs visited the "Terraces" nursing home in Orleans to donate the pictures to the residents.

This "link" between dogs and students didn't stop there. The students also made their own dog cookies and had a fundraiser to benefit Hearts & Paws. Each visit strengthens our relationship with the school community. Everyone seems to enjoy the time that we spend there, and we hope to continue the program for a long time to come."

by Brian Hastings, Co-Secretary

● Pup-coming events ●

- **Saturday, April 5** - *Emergency Medical Information for Dogs*, time and location TBD
- **Saturday, April 5** - *55th Annual Hyannis Rotary Home Garden and Lifestyle Show*, 9am - 4:30pm, Hyannis Youth and Community Center - 141 Basset Lane, Hyannis
- **Saturday, April 19** - *Harwich Health and Environment Fair*, 11am-2pm, Harwich Cultural Arts Municipal Building - 204 Sisson Rd, Harwich
- **Sunday, May 25** - *Cape Cod Cares for the Troops*, time and location TBD

Quick Links for Members



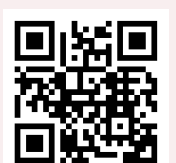
**Spotter
Requirements**



**Meet the Officers
and Dogs**



Upcoming Events



Spiritwear Order
(goes live soon)



Do you have a dog, story, or event you'd like to see featured in our next edition? Scan the QR code to submit your story.



From the Admins

BEHIND THE LEASH

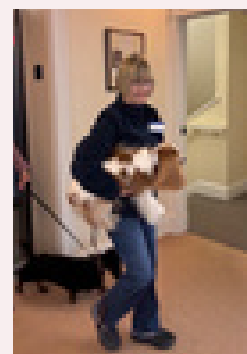
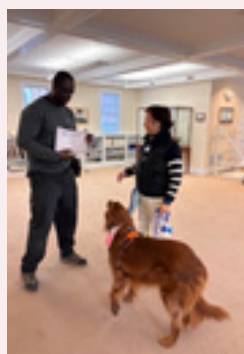
• January Therapy Dog Certification

by Rebecca Blair, Vice President and Training Observer

January 28, 2025 was a banner day for six of our dog teams. The teams met at the Dennis Memorial Library to certify or re-certify their dogs as therapy dogs to visit Cape Cod and Falmouth Hospitals. **In order to visit hospitals in the US, a dog and handler must have "therapy dog" certification.** The handler also needs to be designated as an *official volunteer* at the hospital for these visits.

While a *CGC (Canine Good Citizen) certification* indicates that a dog has basic manners and good behavior in public – often a necessary first step towards becoming a therapy dog – a **certified therapy dog** has completed specialized training to provide affection, comfort and support to patients, often in hospital settings. Unlike Canine Good Citizenship certification, managed by the AKC with approved trainers, therapy certification is not managed by AKC, though it does require that dogs complete the approved training and testing.

Tony Cadogan, owner of [Snug Tail Pet Therapy](#) in Southern MA, was the tester and trainer. Tony is a proud member of *K9 First Responders* and is a master at understanding dog behaviors. He identifies the benefits of pet therapy as "reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation, encouraging communication and social skills, providing comfort during stressful times, and reducing depression and anxiety."



The graduating dogs are:

- **Shirley Murphy and Blueberry**
- **Kitty Shaw and CJ**
- **Robert Shyllberg and Ruby**
- **Linda Valente and Tess**
- **Judy Chaples-Burke and Breezy**
- **Lois Barry and Sabrina**

Our graduates expressed the following about their therapy training experience:

"Tony showed me how to get Ruby's attention at certain times by standing in front of her rather than beside her. Tony was very fair and supportive. He helped Ruby reach a higher level." -Bob

"My job is to help Tessie reach her full potential. This was the first time we took this test and she wasn't nervous at all. Tony kept it light and fun for Tessie." -Linda

"Tony was fair and qualified to test our dogs given his background in K-9 training and his knowledge of dogs' temperaments. I look forward to having CJ visit the hospitals." -Kitty

"Tony was especially good regarding older people with canes, crutches, and loud voices; getting in front of your dog, and introducing your pet to a new setting." -Shirley

"I would like to see a child or two added to the testing to see how the dogs do with kids." -Judy

Special thanks to Brian Hastings who acted as the "guest old man" with a cane and a loud voice, essential for the training session.

WE WELCOME YOUR IDEAS!

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

MARCH 2025

Carol's Training Corner GOOD DOG!

The Keys to Creating a Terrific Recall

by Carol Miller

Professional Dog Trainer and Author

A terrific recall can save your dog's life. It allows the possibility of freedom from restraint in locations where this is permitted, such as some beaches, parks and trails. It makes taking your dog out a pleasure rather than a struggle.

In order to have a terrific recall, you must begin to understand the various reasons why a dog may choose not to come to you. Most dogs have an "In a minute!" type recall – they want to finish what they're doing, and then they'll come. This is simply not good enough. If we call our dog, we need him or her to respond promptly and enthusiastically. Here are some reasons that this may be difficult to achieve:

- **Breed** – some breeds have been specifically created for independent work, or to follow a scent no matter what.
- **Temperament** – while some dogs are what we call "Velcro" dogs, sticking to their owners at all times, many dogs are more secure and adventurous, and love exploring the environment.



- **Training** – some lucky people have dogs that just love to do what they say, but the rest of us must train our dogs, and train thoroughly around the things that call to our dog the most.

Before we can start, we must understand two critical elements of all training – the power of reinforcers, or rewards, and the influence of distractions.

A reinforcer is anything that your dog likes. This includes things that you do for or with him or her, such as food, treats, toys, games, belly rubs, or massages, and also includes things that you don't necessarily have anything to do with, such as great smells in the grass, other animals around while on a walk, people walking past a window, garbage on the ground, and any of dozens, even hundreds of other things that your dog is pulled to.

A distraction is exactly what it sounds like – something that takes your dog's focus away from what he or she is doing. Reinforcers are usually distractions as well – chasing a squirrel may be a reinforcer, while seeing a squirrel during a walk is a distraction.

The laws of learning state that "Reinforcement builds behavior." This works both for and against us. When we reinforce our dog with food or a great game after the dog does something we like, we increase the chance that it will happen again. The downside is that when your dog eats something great off of your counter, this is also a reinforcer, and the chance that he or she will check the counter again is greatly increased.

The same holds true for recalls. If you constantly reward your dog for coming to you, the dog will do it more. If instead, being free means the fun game of chasing squirrels, he or she will choose the squirrels.

All of this means we must work hard to be the source of the dog's reinforcement, and minimize their chances of being rewarded by their environment.

This and other exercises are outlined in the Members Area of the website under "Documents and Handouts."

AKC Good Citizen Trainers

Know someone interested in getting their canine **AKC Canine 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.

Business	Location	Contact Information
Tail Waggin' Dog Training	South Dennis	Heather Garre (508) 736-3202 tailwaggingdogtraining.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
Tony Cadogan SDO Inc.	Southern Mass	Tonyc_selfdefense@comcast.net (617) 594-4602

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