

PAW PRINTS



THE OFFICIAL MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF
HEARTS AND PAWS COMFORT DOGS



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Remembering Board Member Carol Miller



Carol Miller—author, HPCD co-founder, and dedicated board member—believed deeply in the power of trained dogs to change lives. She passed away last month, and in this issue, we honor her legacy through stories from those who knew her and an invitation to support a cause close to her heart. We hope these memories reflect the kindness, wisdom, and passion she shared so generously.

From the Alpha's Desk

COMFORT CHRONICLES

Greetings Hearts and Paws Members, Friends, and Supporters,

I thought it fitting to talk about memories in this edition, as we have lost our dear member and friend Carol Miller recently. Carol was extremely driven and passionate about our mission. Underneath her sometimes tough and stoic exterior was a deeply caring person. She worked behind the scenes as our webmaster, creating a site that gets us constant compliments, was a mentor to anyone who needed a little help training a pup, and was a fierce friend. As I rifled through everything to try to find a good photo of Carol for this edition, I mostly found photos with her in them, but almost never ones where she was the main subject. That was how Carol was. She generally did not like to be in the spotlight and preferred to be in the background, but her impact on our organization and those in it was nothing short of monumental.

In thinking about Carol, I started thinking about the importance of memories. Each visit we make is creating memories for ourselves and the people we serve. We have created so many wonderful memories over the past few years: memories none of us would have if not for this wonderful group. It is wonderful interacting with a person who may have some cognitive loss, and all of a sudden, they tell you a beautiful story of the pets they have had in their lives. It is pure joy to help a child get over their fear of dogs, or to hear that the dogs were the reason they were excited to come to school that day. It is beautiful to witness a blind individual at one of our visitation sites run his hands through soft fur and start interacting with people and pups alike. When we leave, we leave those whom we visit with memories and hopefully make their day a bit brighter. Memories are a gift, and one to be most cherished.



Amy Usowski, President

Remembering Carol



I met Carol Miller as Hearts and Paws Comfort Dogs (HPCDs) was being newly incorporated in 2022. Carol was a very successful certified dog trainer (CDT). Carol wrote two books "Housetraining Success" and "Puppy Training: Six weeks to a Better-Behaved Puppy," both now available on our website for free download. She took the lead in sharing her training tips with the newly formed group of colleagues who were interested in sharing the unconditional love, comfort and compassion of dogs with members of our Cape Cod community. She actively demonstrated her strategies for how to train dogs to be comfort dogs with a wide audience of soon to be members of our newly created 501c3 organization.

Carol and I became acquaintances and then close friends. We shared the emotional experiences of managing the loss of our mothers, within a year of each other, and other family members. I was honored to meet one of her sons and spend time with her wonderful, devoted wife, Fran. I enjoyed learning from her. She was incredibly well organized, thoughtful and quickly agreed to be the webmaster for HPCDs, a much more challenging role than she ever imagined. Today new members comment on how impressive and content rich the website is. We worked together on the HPCDs Handbook and on the content for new member orientation. For a year she continued to explain and demonstrate various training tips at meetings.

Carol was an expert, talented advisor for members who were struggling with a wide variety of training and behavior challenges. She was frequently (sometimes too frequently) asked during new member orientation sessions, which we co-taught, about all kinds of behavior challenges with a new member's dog as well as how to pass the CGC test required for all our members. She was a very strong advocate of Positive Reinforcement Training. She spoke very firmly against using any physical Negative Reinforcement and never minced words on this topic.

Carol had a wonderful sense of humor and some of her favorite orientation comments were:

"Training is for the human... even more than the dog."

"You ("human dog owner") must stay calm because when you are anxious, nervous or frightened, your emotion travels right down the leash. Stay calm and be prepared always for the unexpected."

Carol shared many examples of successes and challenges with dog owners/handlers and behavioral issues with dogs. All were educational and she shared most with lots of humor and candor.

Carol's favorite breed was Border Collies. She raised dogs herself and in fact her latest companion, Teddy, passed away this year.

As Carol demonstrated in life, her mindful planning and preparation skills guided her as she was unfortunately diagnosed with liver cancer. She was thoughtful and competent as she made her decisions about next steps. HPCD truly lost a strong advocate when Carol passed away in May 2025. As I remember Carol, I am comforted by the words of John Lennon: "Count your age by friends, not years. Count your life by smiles, not tears."

I will miss her!

Rebecca Blair, Vice President and Education/New Member Onboarding Co-chair

She certainly was a true friend, and there are many people and dogs whose lives she touched. Carol could appear to be a serious person, but she also had such a dry sense of humor! She will be missed very much. Carol is the reason I joined Hearts and Paws.

Remembering Carol



I met Carol on the Cape 8 years ago, not long after both of us had transplanted here. As my first friend on the Cape, Carol was truly a gift. She was kind, fair, witty and honest, and loved all animals! Carol was an early pioneer in the development of Hearts & Paws Comfort Dogs. In addition to her board membership, she was known as our "computer guru," spending months developing our website. Carol was also our "dog whisperer" at Hearts & Paws, always sharing her amazing dog training skills both in person and online. She presented clever and fun mini training sessions at our earlier regional meetings, and her training books are shared to all members on the Hearts and Paws's website.



Carol was instrumental in supporting me through the attainment of therapy dog certification for my dog, Sophie. Two years ago, Carol accompanied me off Cape for Sophie's evaluation. I was a nervous handler, and Carol kept me calm. The week prior, Carol had worked with me to teach Sophie how to "leave it" so she would walk past food on the floor. It was a command Sophie had never learned. Thanks to Carol and her incredible training techniques (the secret ingredient was liverwurst), Sophie is forever the queen of "leave it". Thank you Carol for all you gave, and for your friendship.

Anne Thomas & Sophie

I've found that the universe brings the most special friends into your life at the most challenging times. When my 3-month-old goldendoodle, Charley, and I moved to Cape Cod in Spring 2024 after my divorce, money was tight. I hoped to pursue comfort dog work, but needed help. That's when Carol met me and took up our cause.

Carol generously offered training free-of-charge. Each week, she drove from the Outer Cape to my Mid Cape home. She brought books, training tips, and encouragement that helped Charley and me become a team. She believed that, with hard work, we could pass the CGC test. She rarely spoke of her health challenges, or let them limit her. In May, I shared the good news that Charley had graduated manners classes, and was beginning CGC Training. Unfortunately, Carol passed before our planned June visit.

Charley is just over a year old (and still bursting with energy at HPCD meetings!) Although CGC certification is rare for dogs under 2, Charley and I decided to go for it. We think graduating a young, certified comfort dog to the HPCD team would be a perfect tribute to Carol.

Amy Groden

In memory of Carol, please consider making a donation to her favorite charity: Glen Highland Farm Senior Border Collie Rescue and Sanctuary. Carol also supported Wildcare and Family Pantry.

JULY 2025

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.

Featured Partner: **22Mohawks: Restoring Purpose, One Paw at a Time**

Paw-tners in Action

At its heart, 22Mohawks is about second chances—both for people and for pups. Founded with a mission to combat veteran and first responder suicide, the organization connects trainable companion dogs with individuals carrying the invisible wounds of service. Through canine companionship, airborne operations, and mental health education, 22Mohawks helps its heroes rediscover purpose, build resilience, and reconnect with their communities.

The name “22Mohawks” comes from a sobering statistic: an average of 22 veterans die by suicide each day. The organization was created to change that narrative—and it’s doing so one life at a time.



Through the Pups for Vets and First Responders program, dogs—many of them rescues—are paired early in the process with a veteran or first responder. From day one, the person and pup train together, completing Canine Good Citizen certification as a team. This shared experience builds trust, routine, and a meaningful bond. These dogs aren’t service or therapy animals—they’re loyal teammates who bring stability, connection, and a renewed sense of purpose.

22Mohawks also runs the Airborne Operations Retreat, which combines skydiving with suicide prevention workshops, and Operation SitRep22, which provides confidential access to mental health support.

To raise critical funds and bring the mission to life, the organization hosts its annual Path to Purpose Gala—a powerful evening of impact stories, community connection, and celebration. It’s a night to honor the lives changed—and the lives saved—through these programs.

From shared training to quiet companionship, community outings to tough days made easier, these pups aren’t just pets—they’re part of the healing journey.

To learn more, donate, or get involved, visit www.22mohawks.com

Written by Erin Colligan, Chief of Staff, 22Mohawks





NEXT ALL MEMBER MEETING

6:30pm - Monday, July 21st

Dennis Memorial Library

1020 Old Bass River Rd, Dennis, MA

A study by researchers at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, College of Medicine and College of Nursing proves the mood-boosting benefits, reduction in emotional exhaustion, and improvement in work engagement when therapy dogs programs were introduced. The pilot study found that self-reported positive mood nearly doubled among the health care workers who engaged with highly trained dog-handler teams in the therapy dog program.



● Pup-coming events ●



- **Saturday, July 12 - Cape Cod Dog Fest**
11:00am-3:00pm, Cape Cod Dog Center -
31 Evergreen Circle, Mashpee
- **Sunday, July 13 - Cotuit Kettleers Bark in the Park** 5:00-7:00pm, Lowell Park -
10 Lowell Ave, Cotuit
- **Sunday, July 27 - Harwich Mariners Bark in the Park** 5:00 -7:00pm,
Whitehouse Field - 75 Oak Street,
Harwich

BREAKING NEWS



Hearts & Paws was featured in the 2025 issue of Cape Cod DOG magazine! Click to [read](#) or [purchase](#)

Quick Links for Members



Spotter Requirements



Meet the Officers and Dogs



Upcoming Events

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

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Training Corner

GOOD DOG!

Teach Your Dog "Touch"

Did you know that teaching your dog new commands or tricks helps them practice focus and further establishes a bond between you and your pet?

"Touch" is a great recall command that will engage your dog's mind and improve his/her focus. The "Touch" command requires your dog to touch his/her nose to the palm of your hand.

Here's how to teach it:

1. Ready your treats: Have a few small, tasty treats ready in your pocket or hand.
2. Present Your Hand: Hold your hand – palm flat and facing your dog – in front of you. Keep your hand at your dog's nose level.
3. State the Command: Say "Touch" aloud once. Do not repeat the command.
4. Reward Good Behavior: The moment your dog sniffs, nudges, or shows interest in your hand, say "Yes!" (mark the behavior with a clicker), and IMMEDIATELY provide them a treat.
5. Reinforce Learning: Try this again and excitedly say "Good Dog" and immediately reward with a treat when they bump or sniff your palm.
6. Refine the Technique: As your dog gets better at "Touch" raise the expectation. Only provide them a treat if they firmly touch their nose to the palm of your hand. Be patient – they will eventually figure out the right behavior. If they get frustrated, go back to basics.
7. Practice, Practice, Practice: Practice the "Touch" command with short, frequent sessions (3-5 minutes each). As your dog improves, gradually increase the difficulty by moving your hand further away, higher up, or to different locations.

Bonus: When your dog touches their nose to your palm, do a simultaneous collar grab. Your dog will get used to his collar being handled and it will be easier to leash your dog if you use this recall command in an emergency.

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.

Our Officers

President
Vice Presidents
Secretaries
Treasurer



Amy Usowski
Rebecca Blair & Jeff Idels
Mary Hastings & Brian Hastings
Sue Bernier



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
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