

PAW PRINTS



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
HEARTS AND PAWS COMFORT DOGS



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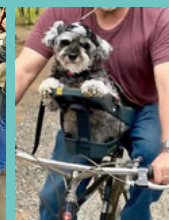
Preparing for
emergencies

TOP DOG

Remembering



Blueberry



"If the kindest souls were rewarded with the longest lives, dogs would outlive us all." - Unknown

Blueberry served as an amazing comfort dog with Hearts & Paws, as well as a certified therapy dog with Cape Cod Hospital "Dogs on Call." She was the "perfect size" to visit schools and nursing homes, as she had a small body and a huge heart.

Shirley Murphy and her husband adopted Blueberry from San Antonio, Texas just prior to the pandemic. While living in upstate NY, they started taking classes with Adirondack High Peaks Dog Training Club, and Blueberry was a natural! Blueberry and Shirley joined HPCD in March 2024, after moving to Cape Cod the year prior. Once Blueberry obtained Therapy Dog certification this past spring, she began visiting patients at Cape Cod Hospital. Blueberry and Shirley actively served the community by bringing love to schools, nursing homes, the hospital and local events.

Children would flock to Blueberry when she visited schools, libraries and Camp Dream Day. Blueberry remained calm and easy-going, patiently letting the kids paint her paw for the project with Cape Cod Lighthouse. At the Terraces nursing home in Orleans, where Blueberry was a beloved regular, you would find her visiting residents both in their rooms and in the day room.... sometimes on their beds and laps! Even as Blueberry experienced increasing health issues, she rallied to share her love wherever she went, and will be sorely missed by all she comforted.

Shirley and Blueberry -- thank you for your incredible contributions to our organization. Blueberry left her pawprints on many hearts.

REMINDER

Open to all Hearts & Paws members - humans only.

**Member Appreciation Dinner
Sunday, November 2nd, 3-6 pm**

Oliver's Restaurant
960 Main Street (Route 6A)
Yarmouthport, MA

The Hearts and Paws Board wants to celebrate YOU and all YOU do to make our organization as wonderful and successful as it is. We're bringing folks together to share a meal, stories, and fun! RSVP was requested by October 17.

OCTOBER 2025

From the Alpha's Desk

COMFORT CHRONICLES

Greetings Hearts & Paws Members,
Friends, and Supporters,

It is hard to believe that another summer has come and gone. As I write this, it is 75 degrees and sunny on an unusually warm day in October, which is allowing me to continue with my lovely delusion that summer is still here.

While I do love fall, summer on the Cape is really something special. The past few years, Hearts and Paws Comfort Dogs has made it even more special. Summer is a time when some visits, such as our school visits, take a temporary respite; it is also the time when the number of public events that we do rises.

What fun we had this summer at all our events: **Hounds of Highfield**, two **Bark in the Park** evenings at Cape League Baseball Games, **Cape Cod Dog Fest**, a **Fundraiser for 22 Mohawks**, and a **Dog Festival in Harwich**. Events are a way to make our presence known in our Cape Cod communities, and to make connections and build bridges with other community organizations. Events are where we met many of you, and how your journey with Hearts and Paws started!

Speaking of events, we have a couple festive opportunities lined up for late fall/early winter for you! Each year we participate in the Harwich Stroll, which is always the first Friday evening in December in Harwich Port.

We set up with Santa at the Chamber of Commerce, and hand out candy and good cheer to the families waiting in line, while also fundraising for a local Harwich non-profit such as the Family Pantry or the Harwich Children's Fund. We will also participate in the Dennis Village Stroll on the afternoon of Sunday, December 14, spreading merriment, and fundraising for a local non-profit of our choice. Sign-ups for both events will soon be up in the Members Section of our Hearts and Paws Website. All dogs – not just CGC certified pups – are welcome at these public events. What a great way for new dogs to dip a paw into volunteering!

We ask that members participate in at least one visit monthly, and two or more events per year. HPCD success relies on the generosity of its members to volunteer their time. The more we all volunteer, the more comfort we can bring to our Cape Cod communities. Your time is greatly appreciated!

For now, enjoy the change in the seasons, and I look forward to seeing many of you at our first **Member Appreciation Event on November 2!**

Amy Usowski, *President*



● Other pup-coming events ●

- **Friday, December 5 - Harwich Village Stroll**
5:30 - 8:30pm, Doane Park
Harwich Port, MA
- **Sunday, December 14 - Dennis Village Stroll**
12 - 5pm, Dennis Village Center
and along Route 6A - Dennis, MA



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.

OCTOBER 2025

Featured Partner: **Chatham Housing Authority**

Paw-tners in Action

The seniors living in Congregate Housing at the Chatham Housing Authority (CHA) face many challenges in their day-to-day lives. Some are without family or friends nearby, which can bring about isolation. Others are facing challenges to their physical health. This creates anxiety and is often accompanied by severe pain. Constant financial constraints can make the world feel a lot smaller, and can cause a great deal of frustration.

For all these reasons, when I met Amy Usowski, the President of Hearts and Paws, I jumped at the chance to connect the CHA residents with her and her volunteers.

Monthly, these dedicated folks come to the CHA, bringing several sweet dogs to visit the residents. This adds joy to the residents' lives; additionally, it brings residents out of their apartments to chat, to find out what is new, to check in with me about things they need or issues they are facing, and most of all, to experience the incredible comfort that only a dog can give. We have turned these events into "Paws Parties." Recently, one of our new residents brought his guitar and sang for us. He is practicing new songs for our upcoming party.

The residents of the CHA look forward to seeing their furry friends, and I see the remarkable benefits for community building that Paws Parties provide to our seniors every time our Hearts and Paws friends visit. Words cannot express our gratitude and fondness for our friends at Hearts and Paws.

Hugs to all of you from all of us,

Kathryn Whaling, *Chatham Housing Authority*





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

● Marker Training

by Rebecca Blair
Vice President
New Member Onboarding/Education Co-Chair

Carol Miller was a Board Member, Founder and Trainer for HPCD. Carol passed this year, and left us with a number of useful tips for better-behaved puppies: many of which can be applied to older dogs as well. I adapted some of Carol's "tips" for marker training below. All information can be found in her book Puppy Training: Six Weeks to a Better-Behaved Puppy.

Marker training refers to a word or sound, like in this case "yes." As Carol notes, "You must understand that the 'mark' doesn't mean 'good dog.' Rather it tells your dog that what he did at that very moment was what you were looking for and will earn him a treat." Carol explains the treat can start out with food, and later transition to verbal approval, such as "good dog."

"A mark is always paired with a treat (M/T). [A treat can be a reward other than food.] At first your dog will not know what you mean, but he will figure it out quickly, and will begin to try to guess what he needs to do to get you to M/T... To mark a behavior, at the exact moment he does what you are asking, say 'Yes!' and give him the [positive reinforcement he recognizes.] The mark gives you time to hand the dog his treat (no later than 1 second or so, the sooner the mark the better). After you release him, you can touch and praise him, but during the training you should do no more than say a soft 'Good Dog.'"



"You don't want to excite him so much into forgetting what he is doing. Marking a behavior is only used at the beginning stages of learning until your dog understands what you are looking for. However, if you are working on improving it (or a new behavior), go back to marking, since this is a new challenge for him."

Adapted and courtesy of Carol Miller, CDT. See Puppy Training: Six Weeks to a Better-Behaved Puppy (2012.)

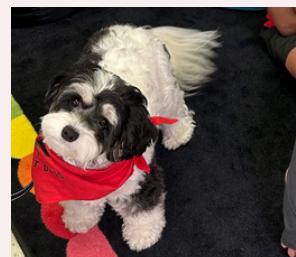
Additional Note: Matt McNamara presented a training session at the All Member Meeting in September on the topic of "Job Performance Review Designed by Dog." He also shares the dog's point of view about the power of immediate feedback using a different type of mark: a "Click." See Matt's handout on the Members' Area of the website.



Infographic from Meraki Dogs

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



Training Corner

GOOD DOG HUMAN!

Be Prepared: Pet First Aid & CPR Can Save a Life

by Tom Topham

Topham Emergency Medical Education, Inc.

In a randomized clinical trial published in 2025 by a Wayne State University School of Medicine physician, children (ages 5-17) who spent about 10 minutes with a therapy dog in an emergency room had a 46% drop in anxiety levels, versus only a 23% drop in the control group. In addition, only 35% of the children in the therapy dog group needed medicine to calm them down or treat their anxiety, compared to 55% in the control group.

No one ever expects a medical emergency—but when it comes to our pets, being prepared can make all the difference.

Whether it's a sudden injury, allergic reaction, or life-threatening emergency, knowing what to do in the first few moments is critical. That's why learning Pet First Aid and CPR is one of the most valuable things you can do as a pet owner or caregiver.

In our **Pro Pet Hero Pet First Aid & CPR course**, you'll gain the knowledge and confidence to act quickly and effectively during an emergency. By the end of the class, you'll be able to:

- Recognize the signs of a **life-threatening emergency** in dogs and cats
- Create and use a **first aid and disaster preparedness kit**
- Respond to injuries like **fractures, bleeding wounds, or respiratory distress**
- Identify and manage **toxin exposure, snakebites, insect stings, and allergic reactions**
- Perform **life-saving CPR** for pets in critical situations



We also cover how to assess common signs of illness and determine how urgently veterinary care is needed. You'll learn practical, hands-on skills and leave with peace of mind knowing you can help your pet in a time of crisis. Emergencies are unpredictable—but with the right training, you don't have to panic. You can **act**.

My passion for this work began with a deep commitment to protecting working dogs—especially those who may be injured during active shooter or high-risk incidents. Recognizing the critical need for life-saving measures in the field, I became an advocate for improving care for these animals on the front lines.

I was proud to contribute to the development of statewide protocols in support of **Nero's Bill**, which allows for the treatment and transport of injured police and service dogs in ambulances. This legislation was a major step forward in ensuring that K9 officers receive the urgent medical care they deserve.





To register for classes or learn more, contact: tom@tophameme.com

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  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 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 Snug Tail Pet Therapy	Attleboro	snugpettherapy.org (617) 594-4602