

# PAW PRINTS



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
HEARTS AND PAWS COMFORT DOGS



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Joy and Meggie are an outstanding handler/dog team. Meggie is an adorable little Cocker Spaniel with an irresistible personality. Together, they arrive at every visitation with great enthusiasm and warmth. Meggie is always beside herself with happiness as she enters the site, greeting everyone she sees with her trademark "joy" (no pun intended).

Meggie has a wonderful way of showing her exuberance during every visit. Her short little tail wags a

hundred miles an hour for the entire visit. One of the students in East Falmouth asked, "Did you give her a cup of coffee this morning?"

Meggie is the only Cocker Spaniel in the Hearts and Paws organization, and somehow elicits deeply personal memories with our clients. One older gentleman at Cape Winds Rest Home in Sandwich was brought to tears because he had a Cocker Spaniel in his youth, and seeing Meggie had a profound impact on him.

As you can imagine, Meggie is a fan favorite with children and adults alike. We appreciate Joy and Meggie's years of service to Hearts and Paws.

## ● Pup-coming events ●

**Saturday, March 21 - 9am-4:30pm**

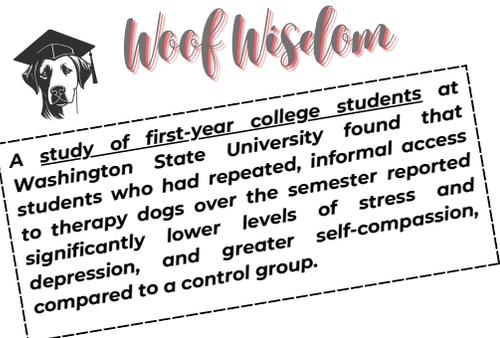
- Home, Garden and Lifestyle Show  
Barnstable High School  
744 Main Street, Hyannis, MA

**Saturday, April 25 - 11am-2pm**

- Harwich Health & Environmental Fair  
Cultural Arts Municipal Building  
204 Sisson Rd, Harwich, MA

**Sunday, May 24 - Time & Location TBD**

- Cape Cod Cares for the Troops



**REMINDER**

**Next All Member Meeting**  
**Monday, March 16th - 6:30pm**  
Dennis Memorial Library  
1020 Old Bass River Rd, Dennis, MA

**MARCH 2026**

# COMFORT CHRONICLES

*From the Alpha's Desk*

Greetings Hearts & Paws Members,  
Friends, and Supporters,

In lieu of my regular article, below is the speech I gave at our first annual Member Celebration in November 2025. At that event, we gave out awards to various members for outstanding service. I have listed those recipients below as well. The decision on who received awards was very difficult for the Regional Coordinators, as so many of you go above and beyond for this organization. Without further ado, here is my speech, as well as the awards!

\* \* \* \* \*

*Hello everyone. It is my honor to welcome you all to our first Hearts and Paws Volunteer Recognition Event and Member Social. As one of the founding members, it has been incredible to see the development of this organization over the past few years. We started with 15 members and 6 dogs, and were only initially serving the 4 Falmouth Elementary Schools. Now we have around 70 members and 40 certified dogs serving from Falmouth to Provincetown.*

*Since the beginning of this year, we have served 30 locations across the Cape with visits. We have served schools in Falmouth,*

*Sandwich, Hyannis, Chatham, Yarmouth, Dennis, and Harwich. We visit Elderly Care Facilities and Memory Care programs in Mashpee, Hyannis, Dennis, and Orleans. We have helped children learn to read at libraries in Dennis, Eastham, and Provincetown. We visit those in recovery from substance use, we visit with those who have served our country, we comfort people who are in hospice and their families. It is an understatement to say that we succeed in our mission to provide unconditional love to all.*

*We have raised money for various other non-profit organizations in our community who need it more than we do, such as the Sampson Fund for Veterinary Care, 22Mohawks, and the Harwich Children's Place. We have made so many new friends and community connections along the way. We may not have gotten to know one another without this organization. Friendships formed in service are a beautiful thing. Kind hearts can achieve more than most think possible. I want to thank my fellow board members and all of you for making Hearts and Paws all it is.*



**Canine Team of the Year:**  
Upper Cape - Carol Slatkin & Sophie  
Mid/Lower Cape - Candy Van Sciver & Violet  
Outer Cape - Bob Shyllberg & Ruby

**Spotter of the Year:**  
Upper Cape - Gina Corbo  
Mid/Lower Cape - Bonnie Chiantera  
Outer Cape - Regina Stoker

**Rookie of the Year:**  
Upper Cape - Adrianna Glazener  
Mid/Lower Cape - Kathy Carey  
Outer Cape - Moira Piscatelli

**Above and Beyond:**  
Upper Cape - MB Maughn  
Mid/Lower Cape - Amy Groden  
Outer Cape - Josie Soraghan

**Lifetime Achievement Award**  
MarilynRose Guarino

Amy Usowski, President



## WE WELCOME YOUR IDEAS

Help us improve our newsletter. Do you have feedback, a question to ask our trainer, or a dog, story, or event you'd like to see featured in our next edition? If so, please contact [info@heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org](mailto:info@heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org).

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# COMFORT CHRONICLES

*Pup-dates from the Board*



On Superbowl Sunday, your Hearts and Paws Board Members met for our roughly quarterly board meeting, and we had a lot to talk about! First, we'd like to extend a **warm welcome to new Board Members Donna Martin and Amy Groden**. Both Donna and Amy have shown a great deal of dedication to our organization, and we look forward to having their enthusiasm and expertise on the Board.

We have decided that as we grow, we really need to do a better job to explain roles in our organization. Soon, **we will be hosting a class on Guidelines and Expectations for Spotters**. The Spotter is a critical role in our visits. Some responsibilities include ensuring that handler/dog teams have what they need and are comfortable, that teams are checked in on VSP when they arrive at a site, and watching over all participants during visits. We want everyone who is a Spotter to feel comfortable in this role and know what it entails, so look forward to a dedicated class on Spotting coming up soon!

[Spotter Overview](#)



Another big announcement is **our plan, for the first time ever, to hold a fundraiser for HPCD**. We have always fundraised for other organizations in need in our community, and will continue to do so, but we would like to add in 1 fundraiser per year for our organization. If you would like to assist in the planning, please reach out. We are hoping for a May/June 2026 event.

Lastly, Rebecca Blair has been hard at work **updating the HPCD Handbook, and it is now available in the Members Area of the Hearts and Paws website!**



## Our Officers

President  
Vice Presidents  
Secretaries  
Treasurer

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



## Join the pack



MARCH 2026

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.

## Paw-tners in Action

Featured Partner: **“SOAP” Program**  
**Outer Cape Health Services, Wellfleet**



*“Since December 2024, HPCD has been privileged to volunteer monthly for the Outer Cape Health Services ‘SOAP’ program at the AIM Wellness Center in Wellfleet, MA. Our HPCD team at this site consists of me and Sophie, Bob Shyllberg and Ruby, and Spotter Bonnie Chiantera. We conduct monthly visits to participants in the outpatient addiction program, typically connecting with participants twice over the span of their treatments. This fosters familiarity for all and reinforces comfort and safety within the group.*

*HPCD visitations are an opportunity to bring comfort and reduce stress to these individuals during their 6-week outpatient treatments, individual counseling and other services. It doesn't take long for a patient to join Sophie on the floor or enjoy a visit with Ruby, Velcro-ed to their lap! I'm always amazed at how the unconditional love from our dogs truly calms and comforts these participants. All participants, including Ruby and Sophie, benefit greatly.”*

*-Anne Thomas, HPCD Outer Cape coordinator*

“ We really enjoy coming here because it's a small group, people want to engage with the dogs, and people are communicative. It evolves into a natural conversation and makes for a nice morning.”

Handler Bob Shyllberg ”

### What is SOAP?

SOAP stands for **Structured Outpatient Addiction Program**. SOAP is an intensive outpatient program that offers focused counseling on a wide range of recovery and relapse prevention topics. SOAP patients receive group counseling 3 days a week, as well as weekly individual sessions and ongoing case management. We also incorporate presentations from partner agencies in the community on services such as employment, benefits, housing, education, and legal advocacy. Patients generally engage in the SOAP program for 1-2 months. Graduates of the program report that they are better equipped to meet their recovery goals and are more aware of recovery resources. SOAP meets at the AIM Wellness Center in Wellfleet

*Bridget Kinahan, M.Div, MSW, LCSW Manager of Recovery Services, Outer Cape Health Services Wellfleet, MA*

### Participant Feedback

“These visits make me want to get a dog but I don't want to walk it.”

“It's calming.”

“It gives you happy feelings.”

“They make good companions.”

# BEHIND THE LEASH

From the Admins

## Dog Certifications

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



We often get asked about the difference between certifications for dogs. Here is an easy reference:

### Comfort dogs

Comfort animals may work during an active crisis. They offer a calming distraction. Comfort dogs often work with a variety of public facilities, such as nursing homes, schools and veterans' homes, or senior centers to provide an opportunity for a physical encounter supporting the comfort of the participant. Comfort dogs are Canine Good Citizen (CGC) certified. CGC is a designation granted by the American Kennel Club (AKC). **This certification is required for member dogs to visit as part of HPCDs.**

### Therapy Dogs

Therapy dogs are trained to provide affection, comfort and support to people often in hospitals, hospices and nursing home settings. The key requirements include calm temperament and excellent obedience. Most therapy granting organizations require dogs to have a CGC certification as well. AKA Therapy Dog Titles: Novice, Advanced and Excellent. **Though not required, many of our HPCD dogs also have therapy dog certifications.**

Other dog designations not used by HPCDs are listed below for educational interest:

### Service dogs

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the

United States, there is no legal requirement for service dogs to be certified, registered or wear identifying vests. They must, however, be under the control of their handler. Service dogs must only be trained to perform specific tasks related to a person's disability. Working as part of a team with their disabled partners, service dogs help them attain safety and independence. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects the rights of people with disabilities to be accompanied by Service Dogs in public places.

### Disaster Stress Relief (DSRD) dogs

These canines provide comfort to victims of a disaster.

### Facility dogs

These specialized, trained dogs work with a handler in specific environments, such as medical or judicial facilities.

### Emotional Service Animals (ESA)

Like their comfort companions, ESA dogs provide comfort and companionship for their owners to help with emotional and mental health issues. Also, like Comfort Dogs and Therapy Dogs, ESAs are not covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

None of these certifications have the same public accommodations as Service Dogs.



# GOOD DOG

Training Corner

## Seeing Through Your Dog's Eyes

by Matt McNamara

*Matt McNamara is a dog training resource volunteer with HPCD. Since 2021, he has been a dog trainer at Joseph's Obedience in Pocasset. He is also an AKC Canine Good Citizenship evaluator. One of his lessons is about seeing things through your dog's eyes with just 12 steps.*



1. Please be KIND, be FAIR and have REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS of me. Try to see things through my eyes.
2. Please expect PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION.
3. I learn best when my job is broken down into SIMPLE STEPS. Even better with FUN not FRUSTRATION.
4. TEACH ME how to do my job, because either it is new, or it's hard, or sometimes I just forget. Teach me how to CHECK IN for GUIDANCE; that is, if you are watching. Don't make excuses for me, just give me more training.
5. My job should be DOING something in contrast to not doing something. If you don't give me a job to do, I'll just do my own thing, so please don't complain about it later.
6. Because we don't always speak the same language, let's develop a SIMPLE COMMUNICATION system.
7. Please make sure you have my ATTENTION before asking me to do something that you have first taught me to do.
8. I learn best when I get IMMEDIATE POSITIVE FEEDBACK. Let's work out a SIGNAL so I know precisely when I get it right, like maybe say CLICK. Eventually, I'll just know.
9. Please PAY ME APPROPRIATELY for a job well done even when you haven't asked me to do it. I love food. I love to play. But more than anything in the world, I crave your attention. Be careful though, because if I'm doing something goofy and you give me your attention, I'll try hard to be more goofy.
10. I love you, so please don't yell at me as that doesn't help me to learn. I'd rather you be PATIENT and show me a better way when I mess up. When you mess up, I'll still be by your side.
11. I may not do as well in a new environment, or if I don't feel so well, or if you don't feel so well; after all, we are PARTNERS. Stay in TOUCH with me, particularly when I am at the end of the leash.
12. Please keep me SAFE at all times, everywhere I go.

## 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](https://heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org/resources) for additional training information.

| Business                           | Location     | Contact Information                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tail Waggin' Dog Training          | South Dennis | Heather Garre<br>(508) 736-3202<br><a href="http://tailwaggindogtraining.com">tailwaggindogtraining.com</a>                |
| Chatham Dog Club                   | Chatham      | Annie Corrigan<br>(508) 776-5219<br>Facebook: Chatham Dog Club                                                             |
| MJ Obedience                       | Bourne       | Michael McGrath<br>(508) 759-3647<br>(508) 250-5551 (cell)<br><a href="http://www.mjobedience.com">www.mjobedience.com</a> |
| Joseph's Obedience Training        | Pocasset     | Lori<br>(508) 563-1122<br><a href="http://josephsdogtraining.com">josephsdogtraining.com</a>                               |
| Karen Pryor                        | National     | <a href="http://karenpryoracademy.com">karenpryoracademy.com</a>                                                           |
| Tony Cadogan Snug Tail Pet Therapy | Attleboro    | <a href="http://snugpettherapy.org">snugpettherapy.org</a><br>(617) 594-4602                                               |