



Short Paws

The Official Newsletter of Furry Friends P.A.T.S.

Spring 2016

My Experience with Furry Friends

By Dee Niemann

I have been a member of PATS [Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services] since 1992 and consider it one of the most enjoyable experiences I have ever had; to this day, I'm enjoying each visit. I am on my 4th Furry Friend - two Cocker/Poodle mixes, one Cocker Spaniel, and at this time I have a Pomeranian/Poodle mix. I

am captain of two teams also. I have visited nursing homes, hospitals, college stress relief, Reading Buddies visits and many other special events. My dog is my child and I have been so proud of them for all the joy they give. When I see the smile that comes on faces when people are petting my dog, it is worth all the effort I put into it.

Giving back for all the blessing I have had in my life is only part of the reason why I still do pet therapy. I remember one time when I was on the Lucille Packard team, one of the siblings of a patient was scared of dogs, and by the time the visit ended that day he was petting all the dogs and smiling. He went to all of the pets with his brother who was the patient. They enjoyed the experience together. I can think of so many happy moments while doing pet therapy work. I also have met so many wonderful PATS members and share a bond with them that can only happen when you meet their pet and they meet yours. I always enjoy hearing their pet stories. Growing up our family had pets and I loved teaching them and playing with them. To all who I



Honey (Cocker Spaniel)



Cody is a sweet boy & loves all PATS events

have shared PATS and pet moments with, I thank you for your friendship. We pet people are special people. I know a good dog, in my case, can break down barriers between volunteers.

Some of the volunteers I have met along the way have moved, or joined a new team as their schedule changed, but I remember them and the time we shared when I see old pictures with them in it. So many memories to enjoy that nobody can take from me. To all who have served as board members, administrators, and the pet behaviorist I thank you for all your time and effort. We notice what you do but don't thank you enough for it.

I am retired now and PATS is even a bigger part of my life than it was when I was working. Instead of slowing down I plan to give as much of my time as I can to the volunteer organization that I love. Lastly I thank my dogs who have earned their wings, Dudley, Josey, Honey, you were a special gift to many. My Cody who is so giving to me and all he meets now.

Furry Friends

Pet Assisted Therapy Services

Our mission is to consistently facilitate delivery of the love and affection of our volunteers and their pets. We enhance the lives and touch the hearts of people with special needs.

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Just a reminder...

When we visit a Furry Friends site we are visiting with the elderly, sick folks, kids in crisis and others. Furry Friends gives them a little time to be absorbed in something other than the things in their lives that aren't so terrific, such as an illness, and they can forget about those things while we are there. It's truly a privilege that we are able to provide this service with our wonderful pets during what may be a difficult time for those we are visiting.

During our visits, we need to refrain from asking any questions relating to their illnesses or life situations. Not only does this remind them of something they would like to get away from for a few minutes, but it is truly none of our business. Of course, some will offer information about what is going on in their lives, and we can/should listen and let them talk. But as soon as the opportunity arises, a good plan is to redirect the conversation to something else, such as asking if they have any pets. Likewise, we should not be volunteering personal information about ourselves or our families. If asked a question, respond as broadly/generically as possible and, again, redirect the conversation.

Thank you for observing the boundaries!



Do we have your
correct
E-mail Address?

If in DOUBT....

Send an email to
admin@furryfriends.org

Send your name and
your current e-mail address

*Pets that have
earned their wings*



Bailey Kim

Jack Gelatos

Katy Alpers

Lucy Gjers

Arashi Kuchlenz

Quinn McQueen

Mia Allen

Thor Heller

Sasha Yastishock

A Message from Furry Friends

It is so exciting how much we have grown over the past year. Not only are we growing in numbers we are also increasing in our numbers of sites. Studies have shown that our visits make a very positive impact on the well being of our different clients.

As the new year starts, I can't help but to look at all the sites that are not being served. There are multiple sites in need of volunteers. As such, I am encouraging everyone to look at our FF website and look at the different sites that are open. Unfortunately I can't name just a few sites because there are multiple sites requesting volunteers.

We are so appreciative of all FF volunteers. We know your time is valuable and are so grateful you choose to spend your time extending love to our community.

Please reach Loree at admin@furryfriends.org if you are available to join an additional team.

Basically I am requesting help with sites for our senior clients. These senior sites are extremely valuable to the people in attendance so if there is any way you can fit these sites into your schedule, it would be greatly appreciated.

Please also let us know if you have any ideas that you believe will help the popularity of these sites.

We've partnered with Cafe Press to bring you more choices in Furry Friends logo items

The best part....a portion of the proceeds from all items sold on our site goes directly to Furry Friends!! The revenue earned from the store helps to ensure that our organization will be able to continue its mission and to expand our ability to provide Pet Therapy services to those in need.

<http://www.cafepress.com/FurryFriendsPetAssistedTherapy>



The new store features many exciting choices:

- Men's & Women's Apparel
- Pet items
- Travel & Technology
- Car accessories

All items ship from Cafe Press and Cafe Press handles any service, return or order questions.

Thank you as always for your continued dedication and support of Furry Friends!!

ID Cards...

About 10 years ago we started making ID cards for our volunteers and their pets. It is a way to identify any of us at a site visit as a member of Pet Assisted Therapy Services. We were lucky that an individual asked us if there was something that he could help us get through a donation. We said, yes, an ID Card machine and program. He wrote us a check to cover the cost of both items. So we had ID cards and decided that along with the person and pet's name we would also put in the expiration of the person's membership and the expiration of the pet's vaccines.



Currently we have about 95% of the members and pets pictures. We would really like this to go up to 100%. If you do not have a card, please have someone take a picture of you, save it as a JPG and put your name in the title (ie Johnsmith.jpg) and email it to me and I will get a card out to you. If you have a pet that doesn't have a picture (there are few of those) please do the same. If you are a captain and not all your members have cards, please take a picture or get another member to help and send them to us.

Thank you.

Randee McQueen- Treasurer and the card maker - email to projects@com-ctl.com

Attention Furry Friends Captains!

Please take a moment to check the information for your site(s) on our full site listing page, <http://www.furryfriends.org/patsites.html>. If the days/times shown are not correct, please email Loree McQueen, admin@furryfriends.org, with the updates.

On that site listing page, selecting the site name links to our Site Description page. This page contains a brief description of each site, describing the facility itself and how the visits run. If the information for your site is not correct, send an update to Loree. If there is no description for your site at all, it's because we never got one! So please write something up and, again, send it to Loree, admin@furryfriends.org

Remember – we rely on information from YOU to ensure that the database and web site are correct! If we don't know about it, we can't keep our information current.

Reminder!!

Furry Friends volunteers, please remember to let us know if your phone number, email address, or mailing address change, or if you are no longer able to do your visits. We don't know unless you tell us! To update your information, contact Loree McQueen, admin@furryfriends.org.

Sites Needing Volunteers

New sites are opening all the time. Please check new sites needing volunteers on the website at <http://www.furryfriends.org/patsiteNeed.html> for additional sites that are currently looking for new volunteers!

If you would like to join or would like more information, email admin@furryfriends.org. Please note that some may have restrictions, or be looking for specific types of pets.

SPECIAL VISITS

– Steve Wincor, VP Furry Friends PATS

All of you know that Furry Friends PATS gets requests all the time for visits, but did you know that sometimes we get so many that we actually have to turn the requests down! Its True! We get requests all the time from Schools, Colleges, Special Functions, Health Fairs, etc. to have our Furry Friends show up. The Board ensures that the request matches to our Mission Statement, otherwise we turn the request down. To refresh your memory: “Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services' mission is to consistently facilitate delivery of the love and affection of our volunteers and their pets. We enhance the lives and touch the hearts of people with special needs.” Many of these visits require complex coordination and take a lot of time.

The Board has come up with some guidelines to smooth the process out for the visits. On our New Site page requestors can now find our guidelines as well as a Special Visit form. Guidelines include a 60 day notice for the visit, prearranged parking and other details, shelter in case of extreme weather, and details about number and type of animals. We have also added a request for a donation as part of the request. Those of us who have coordinated some of these events can attest to the many hours it takes to coordinate and carry out a visit. So if you know of a place looking for a Stress Relief visit, or a school wanting us for a Health Fair let them know about our Special Visit Process it will certainly make things easier to make it happen successfully!

<http://www.furryfriends.org/FFSpecialVisitRequestForm.pdf>

Gift Wrapping

Furry Friends participated in holiday gift wrapping again this year, at the Barnes and Noble bookstore at 5353 Almaden Expressway. We had two days of wrapping, Friday, December 18 and Sunday, December 20, from 9am to 4pm each day. B&N allowed us to bring our Furry Friends again this year, and having the pets there was a big hit with all the shoppers. This could probably qualify as a stress relief visit too – after all, holiday shopping IS pretty stressful!

Thanks to the following volunteers, whose efforts allowed us to raise \$500 in donations for our organization. Great job!

Lisa Hettler-Smith and Ditto, Rhonda Hardy, Connie Dowler, Beverly Canon, Erin Iverson and Caye, Karen Pressprich, Patty Guthrie and Mokey, Yasmine and Maryam Hedayati, Lisa Hirano, Vicki Small, Mary Martinez and Luna, Yvonne Kwong, Joan Peterson, Rozanne Schiro, Kathy Noether and Meko, Anne Tiry, Kathy Harris, and Loree McQueen and Oliver.

Who Can Attend Furry Friends Visits?



We are often asked if another family member, friend, or out-of-town visitor may attend your Furry Friends visit with you. Unfortunately, our insurance does not permit that. Only Furry Friends volunteers who are on our membership roster and who have attended the etiquette class may attend the visits. So please resist the impulse to bring anyone else with you on your visit.



Critter Doctor Column

JULIE C. BOND, M.S., ANIMAL BEHAVIORIST

Seems like this time of year, it is all about what I like to call “New Year, New You!” Even if you aren’t the kind of person who makes resolutions in January, it is true that this is a good time to reflect on where you are, what you are doing, and what you could do better. So how does this apply to all of us as volunteers with pets in Furry Friends?

Given that we just paid our membership dues for 2016, I think that all of us, new and seasoned volunteers, should take a moment to assess our pets who are actively attending visits. Take a really good look at them. Are they getting a little older? Should you be thinking about reducing the number of visits they do a month? Maybe you are noticing that your pet is a little slower, or maybe sleeping more at home. It’s never a bad idea to get a physical exam for an older pet to determine if they might be experiencing pain (something that they might not be showing you on a daily basis). For example, there is an easy fix for a dog who is having trouble walking on the slick, hospital flooring....foot wax. How about the dog who just can’t stand bedside or chair-side as long as he used to? Get him a rug to sit or lay down on during visits. Maybe your pet seems anxious and you are noticing more panting, yawning, and looking at the door ready to leave. For this pet, try reducing the length of the visit and providing water/potty breaks midway through. If, however, your dog is experiencing significant pain, anxiety, or distress, don’t take them on your visit! Better to err on the side of caution and see if this is a transient situation or something indicative of needing to retire your animal from visits. The one thing you don’t want to do is push your animal to continue doing visits if it isn’t something they enjoy anymore. This isn’t safe for your pet, nor for the people we visit in the community.

Conversely, maybe you are visiting with a young, healthy pet. Perhaps this pet needs an increase in exercise before visits to be more effective. It might also be the case that this young, active pet isn’t suitable for a quiet nursing home visit, but would instead be better on an active visit with younger seniors, or maybe one of our visits with teens or children. Often, people automatically assume that a young animal is best for kids and teens, but that isn’t always the case. Sometimes, young animals do better with slower-moving, quiet seniors who don’t rile the dog up. And sometimes, senior pets do better with young kids as their natural laid back, slower moving demeanor quiets and soothes anxious children. While we all feel like we know our animals the best, it is also the case that our personal desires and biases influence the choices we make for them. Please make sure you are making good choices...don’t push a young dog to sit quietly for an hour when that is not comfortable for him. Conversely, don’t push an older pet to do an entire hour visit when really 30 minutes is what is best for them.

And what about you? Are you enjoying your visits? Do they still fit comfortably into your schedule? It is always a good idea to check out our website for new sites and sites seeking additional volunteers. There

is nothing wrong with changing sites to fit your needs and the needs of your animal. If you need help selecting a site, please don't hesitate to ask. Are you receiving the emails from Loree regarding new sites, sites seeking volunteers, and special, one-time visits at schools and universities in the area? If not, check your email settings and make sure that Loree has your current email address on file.

And now, the hard part. We are all grownups. While you are correct that no one can *make* you wear your Furry Friends t-shirt and badge, or use the purple leash, we would really appreciate it if you did. We are proud of our organization and it's continued growth. We are well-known for our compassion, professionalism, and service to the community. Wearing our shirts and badges helps to promote our organization and identifies us as volunteers. Remember...if you hate the t-shirt, you can get whatever you are more comfortable wearing off of our website. There are long sleeved shirts, sweatshirts, hats, etc. I have been told more than once by volunteers that they feel our organization has too many rules and restrictions. I simply do not agree. Any large group needs rules and guidelines in order to better represent the needs of the group as a whole. I have sat in on many a board meeting...these people are volunteers too and they welcome your input and constructive feedback. They are always looking for fresh ideas and new board members are welcome.

As always, I look forward to serving your behavior needs in our organization. I hope to see you in class, at special events, and at the volunteer appreciation dinner. I love catching up with you on how you are doing and hear about the quality of your visits. If you have questions for me, are concerned about your pet's behavior or the behavior of another pet on your visits, or need more info on assessing your pet's mental health, please don't hesitate to contact me. May you all have a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Furry Friends is on FACEBOOK!



If you have a Facebook account, you can find Furry Friends as a group by searching for Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services. Furry Friends is also listed as a Cause Too! You will need the "Causes" app installed on your account. To find Furry Friends, open up the Causes app and search for Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services. Yes, we are in the digital age!



Support Pet Assisted Therapy Services by shopping at AmazonSmile.

[smile.amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com)

When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate to Pet Assisted Therapy Services. Support us every time you shop.



Furry Friends participated again this year in the annual Los Gatos holiday parade, which is held on the first Saturday in December, December 5 for 2015. We had around 30 volunteers and pets, including a miniature horse! It was a beautiful day, no rain in site, and although it was cold in the morning, by parade time, it was quite nice. This is always a fun event to do, and helps get everyone in the holiday spirit. A big THANK YOU goes out to everyone who participated!

A graphic with a teal background. On the left, there is a white dollar sign. To the right of the dollar sign, the text 'Increase Your Donation' is written in white on a dark teal banner, and 'Matching Gifts' is written in white below it. On the far left, there is a photograph of a golden retriever puppy and a small black and white kitten.

Does Your Employer Have a Gift Matching Program?

Many employers in the Bay area have a gift matching program, where they will match charitable donations made by their employees, up to a certain dollar value. Does your employer have such a program? If so, keep that in mind when making your tax deductible donations to Furry Friends!