

Dog B.O.N.E.S. Stories

A celebration of two decades of dogs sharing their love



Therapy Dogs
of Massachusetts

A Non Profit Corporation

Compiled April 2023

PREFACE



1998-2012

Sir Bentley Bear, CGC, TD

Co-founder

And so it began...in 1999 when Bentley, a young golden retriever, on his first birthday, became a therapy dog with me, his human companion. Of course, in 1999 therapy dogs were almost unknown in the United States. As I offered visits, many facilities were not allowing—or would not even consider allowing—dogs to visit. But when one door opened and word spread of the benefit of Bentley's visits to patients/residents, it became impossible for one therapy dog to keep up with the requests.

The organization that Bentley and I were members of could not offer assistance in getting the word to other therapy dogs nor could they offer a list of local therapy dogs who might be available to make visits.

So, with Bentley's support, I went to work on designing an organization to meet the need. In 2002, Dogs Building Opportunities for Nurturing and Emotional Support, better known as Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dogs of Massachusetts, was born.

The idea was simple: evaluate and certify family-owned pets and their human companions, take requests from facilities and individuals who would benefit from visits, and then assist our therapy dog teams in making those connections. The mission was simply “to bring a little fun into someone’s day as they recuperate, rehabilitate or simply live life.”

Twenty plus years later, more than 2100 therapy dog teams have been certified by Dog B.O.N.E.S. These are their stories—stories of love and compassion shared during happy and sad times, with those celebrating and those recuperating, those recovering or simply living their day to day lives.

Our dogs give so much love to us. We are privileged to be able to share their love with anyone who invites us into their lives.

You, our Dog B.O.N.E.S. ambassadors, are Bentley’s legacy. And what a legacy that is. Thank you for sharing yourselves and your wonderful dogs with Dog B.O.N.E.S., and with all those with whom you visit. You truly make this world a better place.

Happy Tails,

Jeanne Brouillette

Founder

These pages are dedicated to our workshop instructors past and present: Ellen Brown, Catherine Cavanaugh, Michaela Collins, Pat Conn, Ellen Finnie, Jack Foley, Marci Goldberg Bill Hooper, Maura Porter, Candy Shostak and Fran Weil and to our web designer for the past 20 years, Peg Shepard, who all believe in the power of dogs.

--Jeanne Brouillette

INTRODUCTION

Dog B.O.N.E.S. has entered its twenty-third year, and to celebrate this now substantial history and to document the impact of more than two decades of therapy dog visits, we have compiled stories from Dog B.O.N.E.S. members.

What you will find here are the words of volunteers who have been making therapy dog visits for many, many years – or for only for a few months*. They have been visiting with their dogs large and small, each with their own personality and approach to visits. The common thread among them is their delight in meeting people, their generous sharing of their love and affection, and the transformative positive impact they have on the people they visit.

As you will read in these pages, Dog B.O.N.E.S. volunteers have been partnering with their dogs in a remarkable array of venues, including many hospitals, nursing homes, hospice programs, rehabilitation centers, psychiatric facilities, schools, libraries, first responder operations, and college campuses. Our volunteers have been engaging with people in all kinds of circumstances, of all ages, who share one thing: benefiting from the comfort and joy of interacting with a therapy dog.

Emily Falcon, who was the recipient of a Dog B.O.N.E.S. visit after surgery, tells us that a visit meant so much to her, “it was the highlight of my life.” Many teams have witnessed the powerful impact they can have, including Dan Ottenheimer, who shares that “there have been more than a dozen instances over

“It’s so amazing to see how much happiness one dog can bring to so many people...” -- rehabilitation facility staff

the years where [our dogs] were able to get a patient to do something they had never done during their recovery... Somehow our Therapy Dogs are able to give these patients that

extra motivation they need to make progress.” Our volunteers see the smiles, and feel the difference they are making.

For many volunteers, the benefit they offer to staff is an added--and sometimes surprising-- dimension of their impact. Beth Mosher echoes what so many volunteers find: “I really don’t know who enjoys the visits we make as a team more: me, the dogs... the clients we are visiting, or the staff.”

Visits also deepen our volunteers’ bonds with their dogs, and their appreciation for what their dogs bring to the world: Marion Jackson offers that “my love and respect for [Jackson] grow as I watch him share his sweet disposition with others.” Annette Sawyer shares that as a result of their visits together, her bond with Myrtle is “the most extraordinary relationship I’ve ever had with a pet.”

Many volunteers observe how much their dogs seem to enjoy the interactions. “I know [Spike] loves being a therapy dog and looks forward to his visiting,” says Rosemary Fournier. “All I need to do is say the word 'visit' and he will run downstairs to pull his leash off the bureau where it's kept and tail wagging, wait for me at the door to get ready to go.”

“When I think back over all the visits we’ve done together, I’m not sure who is enjoying it more, the boys or myself! This is the most rewarding, heartwarming thing I have ever done!” – Sandi Jenks

Our dogs lift spirits with their accepting and loving presence. The impact of this presence is sometimes dramatic— there are stories here of people who were mute or withdrawn, who sing and speak in the presence of a dog; and some who overcome fears— including about reading— through the comforting and loving companionship of a therapy dog. At other times, the effects of visits are more understated but equally significant, as when people gravely ill or at the end of life find quiet comfort and ease in with a dog at their side. Whether dramatic or subtle, it is our beloved dogs sharing their love who make this joy and comfort possible.

In these stories it is apparent that our dogs have a special gift they bring to visits, often sensing more than their handlers do. Jack Foley shares his experiences with his dog Bailey, who always knew exactly which person needed him most, leading Jack to wonder “how could Bailey know to ... respond only to the unknown person we are there for? This mystery is at the heart of my partnership with Bailey, who simply knows so much that I cannot fathom.” This special and ineffable connection our dogs have with people lies at the heart of the transformative power of therapy dog visits.

“It never gets old bearing witness to the magic of these amazing animals.”—Mickey Pescatore

The circle of love that is created through therapy dog visits lifts up all the participants. Many handlers report that visiting with their dogs has been deeply meaningful to them.

As Theresa Delahunt recounts, “working with Dog B.O.N.E.S. has been one of the most fulfilling and transformative experiences I have had in my life. I truly love the work and the deep connections it fosters.” Diane Donovan “had no idea the special work that [visiting would] become.... Not only has it brought so much comfort to the people we visit, but it has also enriched my dogs' life and mine as well.”

All the stories demonstrate in one way or another that, as Maryanne Tackeff concludes, “Dogs make the world a much better place!” We, the volunteers of Dog B.O.N.E.S., add a corollary to this: that Dog B.O.N.E.S. also makes the world a much better place.

As Dog B.O.N.E.S. volunteers, we want to acknowledge that without Jeanne Brouillette’s vision, dedication, and unwavering commitment in creating and sustaining Dog B.O.N.E.S., the transformative visits shared here would not have happened. These stories of comfort and compassion emerge from

Jeanne's having created and nurtured this wonderful organization, which is a remarkable community of caring. In these pages, we share our gratitude, we celebrate, and we honor all those who make Dog B.O.N.E.S. what it is – Jeanne, the handlers, and most of all, our wonderful dogs that make all this possible, and show us the way.

We are “so thankful for the [Dog B.O.N.E.S.] organization! Dogs make the world a much better place!” --Maryanne Tackeff

– Compiler, Ellen Finnie

*Included in this compilation are stories from members whose contributions were solicited a decade ago, through the generosity of long-time member Laurie Feldman. Laurie spearheaded the 2013 project– and amazingly enough was able to find and share the files. These stories are labeled to indicate they are from 2013. In some cases, the volunteers have updated their prior contributions, and that is indicated as well.

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STORIES

Karen Andres and Scout

2013 contribution

My husband and I first met Scout at the age of 10 days old, struggling up and crawling about with 7 other “marsupials”* in a plastic baby pool. She was called “Angel” and wore a tiny light blue collar. At the age of 4 weeks, we chose her – or she chose us – among two other females. We brought her home at exactly 8 weeks. At 8 ½ years old now, she remains our perennial baby.



In 2008, Scout received training as a therapy dog from Cathy Paul at Hebrew Rehabilitation Center. I explain to people that while the training involves skill acquisition, it is primarily a personality test. Scout and one other dog passed. Subsequently she was certified, based on past working experience, through Dog B.O.N.E.S..



Scout loves her job. She is happy to stand still while someone in a wheelchair strokes her. She is happy to give doggy kisses to anyone who asks. I like to take her to places, such as a homeless meal program, where people tend not to receive affection. She doesn't care if someone smells of alcohol or sweat. She is equally affectionate.

Scout is usually not very interested in other dogs, although she will give and accept the requisite front sniff, back sniff to be polite. She loves one dog, Livie, whom she met when they were puppies. They race up and down hill and dale on our Sunday hikes.

We are fortunate to live in an area with open spaces where dogs can run. Scout gets lots and lots of exercise. Maybe this is partly why she sleeps so well at night. She stays in bed after we get up until we are ready for our morning walk. She has a bladder that I envy!

Scout knows a lot of language. She even knows a couple of Yiddish words. My sister-in-law disputed this until I told her that I gave Scout a command in the living room, and she executed it by going into the bedroom.

We are very, very appreciative to the members of the Dog B.O.N.E.S. community.

*Did you ever see a newborn kangaroo crawling out of its mother's body and into the pouch? Newborn puppies and even the human fetus remind me of this.

Annette Baldi and Cody



I have been visiting with Cody, a twelve-year-old Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, for 11 years. In addition to his work as a Reading partner dog at local libraries, Cody has been making therapy dog visits to Boston Children's Hospital for close to 10 years. I have been told he has been an "innovator" at the hospital, being the first dog to make visits to many in-patient areas, including even the Intensive Care Unit. He has also made many visits to out-patient departments, where he has become a favorite visitor of several children who frequently return for treatment.

In his long tenure, he has performed many tasks, such as playing with children during physical therapy sessions by running for a ball that they gleefully throw; to walking with them down the halls for exercise and most comfortably, lying by their side on their bed to break up the monotony of long hospital

stays. Cody has also been called on to distract children in a gentle way, while they are having what may be painful procedures, such as injections, etc.

Cody "knows why he is there and delivers his kindness and comfort where it is needed."

In addition, Cody has been a very welcome visitor of staff members throughout the hospital. As you can imagine, their days can be stressful from time to time, and the comfort that Cody provides is just what's needed to bring a smile to a tense situation experienced by doctors, nurses and other staff while they care for children in many situations.

I have always come away from our visits at BCH with a sense of satisfaction. If Cody has made just one child smile, I feel our mission is complete. I am always so proud of Cody and enjoy watching his interaction with complete strangers. It's as if he knows why he is there and delivers his kindness and comfort where it is needed.

I have made some wonderful friendships during these visits with many staff members as well as a few patients and their families who keep in touch through emails and social media. I have also received many heartfelt thanks along the way from grateful parents after seeing the positive impact Cody's visit has made on their child. My feeling has always been..."That's what it's all about!"

Mara Briere and Max

2013 contribution, with 2023 update

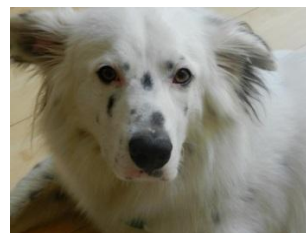
Max, a Pyrenees/Springer Spaniel mix, was trained by his handler, Mara Briere, with the able assistance of Erin Brackett and the staff at the Petsmart in Chelmsford. They also attended a Dog B.O.N.E.S. seminar in the fall of 2011.



Max first began working his magic with Mara in her Family Life Education practice. She works with families who are in need of a variety of services including behavior management, crisis intervention, substance abuse counseling, and coping with mental health issues. Max provides warmth, compassion, and non-critical understanding. His services are offered “free” and often in sessions apart from the services provided by his handler.

Nonetheless, they inform the work and enhance the therapeutic value of what Mara does. For example, Mara worked with the parents of a child with selective mutism, an anxiety based disorder, on their parenting and the special needs of their family, while Mara and Max met separately with the child. She is five years old and loves dogs. At the beginning, she would only speak with her mom. With 6 months of weekly contact, she became more typical in her interactions, speaking regularly and with enthusiasm, even pretending to be Max’s voice!

Max and his handler have volunteered with brain injured adults at Tewksbury Hospital and most recently at the VA Hospital in Lowell with veterans with mental illnesses including PTSD, depression, and schizophrenia. They have also volunteered at one-time events including schools during finals time, a birthday party for a differently abled child, a marketing event at Middlesex Community College, and a memorial event for a deceased client.



Max is young yet insightful, calm, and very sweet. He is especially gentle with children and very protective of them. He is a good barometer of client health, too! He loves doing tricks and totally expects to be loved up so he can love back!

Update from 2023:

After a total of 9 years of service, the pandemic hit and we were forced to retire.

Nonetheless, Max continued to provide comfort to others when

he could. It helped that his last year of life was in a campground in a spacious RV in Littleton, NH. He offered his best to all he connected with while on his “rounds.” He crossed the Rainbow Bridge in January 2021 surrounded by his beloved family. Max made such a difference in people’s lives through being a Dog B.O.N.E.S. ambassador.

Max made such a difference in people’s lives through being a Dog B.O.N.E.S. ambassador.

Tonina Burnham and Boo

Boo, a twelve year old, very docile and sweet male Shih Tzu, is also a reading dog. We started the reading dog program at Hingham Public Library. It has been so rewarding to see children who have read to Boo for several years, develop and improve their reading skills. Also I will run into people when out walking Boo who say “oh Boo helped my child learn to read.”



One family showed me a picture of Boo they had taken and put in place of honor on their mantle!

Being a therapy/reading dog team has been a wonderful activity to do with my dog. It is so rewarding to bring happiness to others together.

Parents say “Boo helped my child learn to read.”

Michaela Anne Collins and Lennox, Porkchop, Trouble & Trigger

Lennox & Trigger were/are Boxers, and Porkchop & Trouble were Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. All told, we have been making visits for 13 years.

Lennox specialized in visiting Hospitals, Nursing Homes, and Rehabs in his time as a therapy dog. We would make 2-3 visits a week in the mornings after our hikes and before I went to work. Whether it was checking on my grandmother in her nursing home and visiting with all of her friends or visiting one of the many facilities that we did, he always knew that his job was to approach softly when invited, sit down and enjoy the petting. He loved being the center of attention. One of my fondest memories is when we were cutting through a rec room and there was a gentleman playing the piano. Lennox paused to listen intently. It was such a beautiful moment and when the gentleman stopped playing to say hello and meet us, we began chatting and I jokingly said that Lennox loves to sing (or woo-wooo) to Christmas Carols. Little did I know that on our next visit there would be a crowd gathered, the



“It's a chance to share the limitless amount of love that they have to give.”

gentleman invited his family and Lennox put on a show singing Jingle Bells with everyone. It was such a joyful experience for everyone and a perfect way to kick off the holiday season.

Porkchop specialized as a Reading Partner who visited libraries and loved having kids read to him, sit with him, and pet him. He also enjoyed making

visits to one particular Assisted Living Community. Twenty or more people would gather to say hello to him, watch him perform a few simple tricks, and then make the rounds for more love and goodbyes. One day we were entering and he seemed a little excited and I couldn't quite figure out why. We walked into the room and EVERYONE was EXTRA excited because it was Tennis Ball Changing Day on their walkers - I couldn't quite place the smell at first. They had saved a few for Porkchop. Everyone knew that tennis balls were his favorite at home, videos had been shared during previous visits and he enjoyed the scent of the room, checking out and approving of each walker (which he'd never even paid attention to in the past) and thanking all of his friends. I'm pretty sure that he would rank that visit as his #1.

Trigger (pictured below) is our newest member and has made all of his visits solely in the classroom. He adores kids of all ages and somehow figures out how to get even the most hesitant, nervous and scared children to come visit with him. Every single visit is a chance to bond with your dog and to see their enjoyment socializing with others. It's a chance to share the limitless amount of love that they have to give with others and to never cease to be amazed by their intuitiveness and instincts.



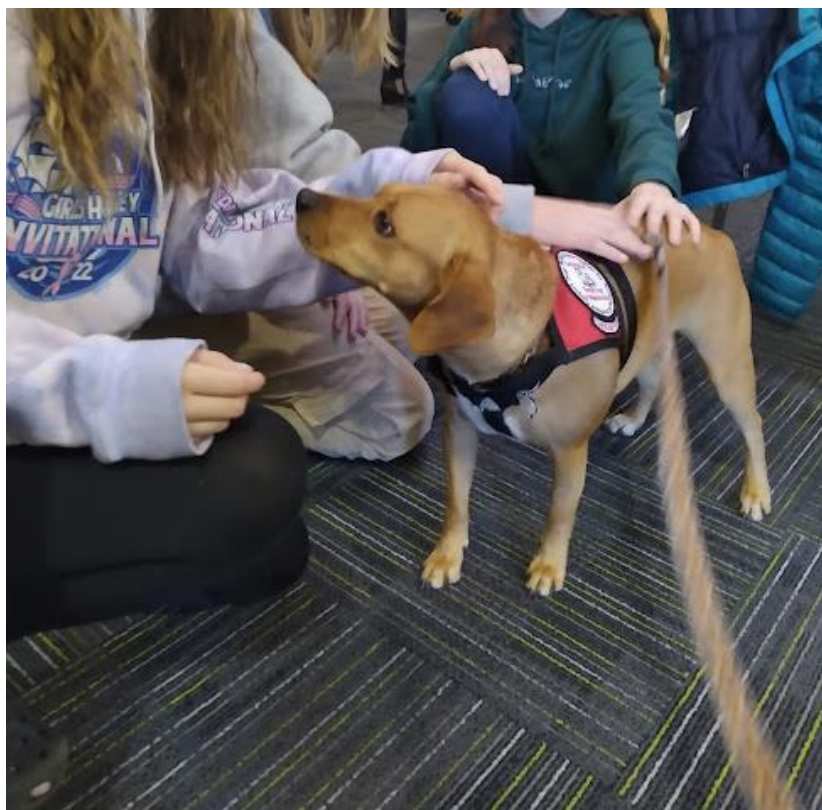
Denise Costin and McGee

My dog McGee is a super-friendly, spunky Beagle mix about 3 years old, and I have had a year of wonderful visits from schools to group homes to nursing homes, and we have all benefited from it immensely. We actually had a woman who didn't want a dog to visit the group home and once they convinced her by showing her videos, she lost her fear of dogs and she was the one that looked forward to seeing us the most.



We have gone to special events, several visits to a nursing home, a middle school/high school, a college, and a group home. I love seeing the joy come across the faces of the people we visit, when he excitedly bounds up to them, tail wagging and a smile on his face as well!

One particularly meaningful and life-changing visit was at the group home we continue to go to. After the first visit the house manager told me that the very woman who seemed the most excited over McGee's visit was the one that had to be convinced to allow him to come to the house because she had a fear of dogs originally. He said after he showed her some videos of other therapy dogs and what they do and then she saw the picture of McGee she agreed. From that moment on she was the most excited to see him; she would greet us with a toy for him and a water that she excitedly before into a little dish for him and then she began cooking chicken and having a piece ready for him every time we came. I just feel like that whole situation is so special and made such a breakthrough with that woman.



Heather Cyr and Tripp

Tripp is a silly, clumsy, almost three-year-old golden retriever. We have been visiting together for two years.



On one particular visit, an elderly man lay sleeping. His daughter was in the room with us, and said he hadn't had much interaction for a few days. She said he loved dogs and actually had had a couple of golden retrievers over the years. Tripp nudged his wet nose under the man's hand, and started affectionately licking his hand. The man gave us the biggest smile, keeping his eyes closed, but letting us know he was enjoying being with a dog. His daughter was so thrilled with his reaction, she said that was the first smile she had seen in weeks and could not wait to tell the family.

“He can sense a patient's needs.”

Every other week Tripp makes the rounds at the Pat Roche Hospice House in Hingham. He greets patients and staff with

excited energy, whether he is wagging his tail uncontrollably, or licking a hand, he knows he is loved and adored as soon as he walks in. He also knows he has an important job to do, bringing happiness and comfort to those who need it most. The smiles and joy he brings to patients is priceless; he truly brightens a day as soon as he walks in a room. He can sense a patient's needs. If they are awake and alert, he is jolly and frisky, making them laugh or smile with his antics. If they are sleepy or quiet, he simply sits by them with his head close to their hand, often giving a gentle kiss or lick. It is a beautiful gift he gives those at the end of their life, he has found his purpose, one smile or lick at a time.



George Clark and Grace, Duncan, Glory

We have visited facilities over a 13-year period with my three Yellow labs, Grace, then Duncan, and now my current 3-year-old lab, Glory. Here I share some observations and stories from my years of visits.



Duncan and Grace

I.

Although I had doubts about Duncan, who I rescued at three years old from a friend at the dog park, he holds a special place in my heart as he was a winner in the game.

I remember how he would lie down and accept the pets from the students when we visited college stress-relief events. The funny thing about Duncan was that he seemed to have this internal clock. After 45 minutes passed, he would let out a single bark to indicate "We're done... aren't we"?

Ellen Finnie, the Dog B.O.N.E.S member and coordinator of the visits at MIT, would have a small treat package after each visit. We seldom got past the quadrangle in front of the dome at MIT before they were depleted.

I believe he learned the way for me.

At MIT there was a student who had been severely burned. I recall he was somewhat timid to approach the dogs there.

I spoke first and asked if he would like to meet Duncan.

I hoped to myself that Duncan would not differentiate this young man, whose burns were beyond description, but no, the magic of Dog is to see past the superficial.

During later visits, we encountered this young man studying in a vestibule at the entrance doors, and greeted him, and he reached and pet Duncan and smiled.

II.

Each dog was different in a good way.

We started our visits at facilities on the South Shore including Weymouth Healthcare, Popes Nursing Home, both in Weymouth, and Queen Anne Healthcare, in Hingham. Our time with a resident varied from a few minutes, to a short sit down conversation, always aware of the residents' desires. A walk through the Physical Therapy room was motivational to those on the rebound.

After about 45 minutes to an hour, we would be on our way.

Later, requests from MIT, BU, Tufts Medical, Bentley, Harvard, Bridgewater State, came for events during their health week or during exam week.

The conversations were of course different in these settings, but similar in that each person had some excitement in talking about this dog or the dogs at home that they missed or once had. It was fascinating connecting with both a past and a future generation during these different visits.

These visits were something I looked so forward to—as well as meeting another Dog B.O.N.E.S. member, Jack Foley with his Golden retriever, Bailey, each time at the MIT campus. We continue to share visits, now each of us with a younger dog.

III.

I would like to share one special story about a particular visit with Grace, which I call "Looks Aren't Always What They Appear."

Grace was my first Therapy Dog.

We had been visiting a long term care facility for several months and now had a regular list of rooms where residents had expressed interest in a visit by a therapy dog team.



As we'd enter each Wednesday, it was a joy to see the smiles brought to nearly every face we passed; even the staff, family visitors, and residents in the corridors.

Making our way down the busy hallways, Grace never forgot which room to stop at, to the degree that if the resident was not ready, Grace would still pause and it would take some convincing to get her to move on. She remembered her stops.

After we visited the rooms, we would make our last stop at a large function room where residents with memory loss would be gathered in their wheelchairs around several tables, usually with a television on—which few watched.

Understanding that not all people may be comfortable with a dog from some earlier experiences they had, and that it may be terrifying, especially when they would be unable to get away given their

condition, I watched closely for reactions after asking "Would you like a visit from a dog?"

Keep in mind that some had lost the ability to speak.

We made the rounds from table to table and like before, it was a great thing to leave smiles on the faces of those who could still smile. Some would share a thought of a dog they once had. Many had forgotten their own stories, but still enjoyed the visit to their chair.

There was one woman whom I had noticed from the first day, when we stopped at the memory function room. She had an expression that one would interpret as great fear; perhaps fear of a dog.



Glory

She followed us around the room with her eyes, seemingly to assure that we were not approaching her space.

I took care not to intrude into her small world. This technique worked.

Some weeks later as we were leaving this group room and almost out of the doorway, I heard a nearly inaudible voice say, "Thank you." It was a word that sounded like it took all of the speaker's effort to form, as it was barely understandable.

I looked back to wave, and heard it again. "Thank you." This time I saw where it came from.

To my disbelief, it came from the woman who I had always believed was terrified of a dog. It was a moment of great learning and understanding about this person.

There was an attendant at the facility who sat in the room. She too heard the

laborious word, and said to me, "Did Barbara just say that?" I said "Yes, it was her!" The attendant said Barbara hadn't spoken a word since Christmas. It was June.

"I was in awe of the power of Dog."

As I left the facility, I was in awe of the power of Dog, and in the following weeks, visited Barbara each time.

From my many years of visits, I learned the visits are certainly teamwork, with the human facilitating a great conversation— and the dog performing magic without words.

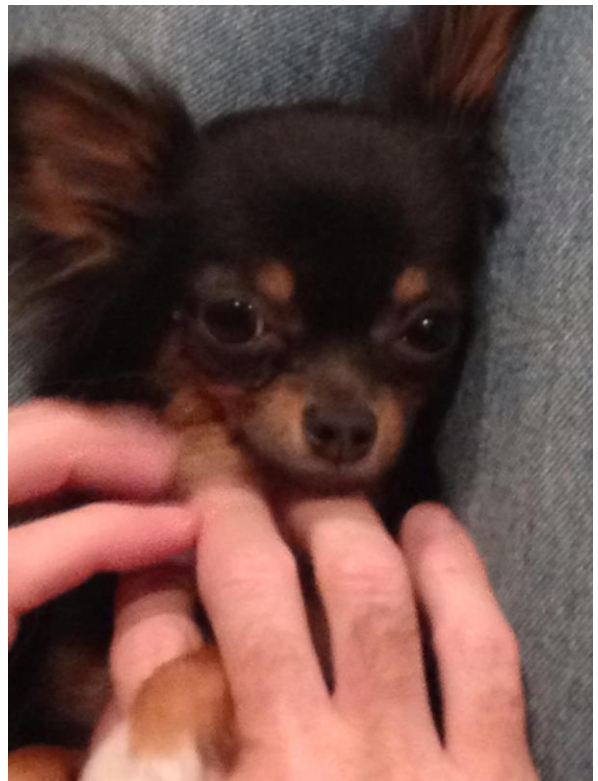
Theresa Delahunt and Spider

2013 contribution, with 2023 update

In 2013, we were a Therapy Dog Team that had been active for about six months.

Spider was just over a year old, and although he is small (about 3 1/2 pounds) he has a big heart and loves to meet new people.

We enjoyed visiting nursing homes, and were looking to spend more time with children, either in a public school or library setting.



Update 2023:

Spider and I have now been a Therapy Dog Team for over ten years.

Spider and I spent a number of years working with the Plymouth Schools in their life skills program for 1st through 5th graders. It was a fabulous experience for all, in which specialists worked with us to provide experiences and interactions that would help with the development challenges each child faced, including, for example, gross motor, language, fine motor, growing empathy, and making eye contact. Our very first visits were to a Memory Care facility in Weymouth, where we visited for almost seven years. They gave Spider wonderful birthday parties, and we developed many special bonds with the residents there.

We have been featured in local papers for our visits to hospice patients and local libraries. I believe some of the articles were featured on the Dog B.O.N.E.S. website.



“Working with Dog B.O.N.E.S. has been one of the most fulfilling and transformative experiences I have had in my life.”

My love for this work prompted me to go through the training and certification process with my two other dogs (Trouble and Ruby), who are working to follow in Spider’s footsteps. They have been certified and we are currently visiting schools

and libraries on a regular basis.

Working with Dog B.O.N.E.S. has been one of the most fulfilling and transformative experiences I have had in my life. I truly love the work and the deep connections it fosters.

Diane Donovan and Syd and Slugger

Syd is a very special Therapy Dog, he gravitates to the people who need comfort the most. He looks like a wolf but wins over everyone with his sweetness and his woos.



The first time I saw him connect with someone was at a rehab facility with an older man, Joe, who was non-communicative with his family and the staff. He would sit in the corner alone. Syd would gravitate towards him and they would have lengthy quiet conversations. Many times it brought the staff to tears seeing Joe react with Syd. They had his family come in to witness this special time when Syd was scheduled to visit.

Another time at the Memory Loss Clinic at Wingate, there was a resident that was very

antisocial, and refused to participate in any activities. This woman was a former staff volunteer at the local animal shelter. We went down to her room and she just lit up when she saw Syd. She would always come to our visits and sit on the floor and Syd would sit in her lap and give her much needed kisses. (I don't normally allow Syd to do this, but they had a special connection).

This has happened countless times on various visits throughout the years. I am very honored to be able to share this special dog with people. He makes me want to follow in his paw prints to be a better person.

“Not only [have our visits] brought so much comfort to the people we visit, but it has also enriched my dogs' lives and mine as well.”



Slugger is a completely different energy and brings so much joy and smiles to people. He is all about getting all the attention and making everyone feel like they are his best friend. He will back into a person and sit on their feet waiting for his pets. He may be in it mostly for himself, but there is no denying the joy he brings to people. Our regular visits now are at Silver Lake High School, and we recently went to

a visit after a traumatizing loss in their community. Seeing the smiles on the staff and kids' faces while he bopped to each one giving kisses and getting pets is irreplaceable. When a child is heartbroken and crying and people have difficulty communicating with them, and your dog walks in and brings a smile to that face, it is beyond words.

When I started this training for Syd, I meant it as a way for him to keep his basic manners training in check, as we own a doggy day care and he is mostly with dogs. He loves people and I wanted to give him an outlet to be able to meet people and keep properly socialized. I had no idea what special work it would become. I am so grateful to be a member with these 2 special dogs.

Syd is having some health issues currently and is on break but hoping to get him back to the high school soon; he misses his visits. When I bring out their vests to prepare, they get so excited. Not only has it brought so much comfort to the people we visit, but it has also enriched my dogs' lives and mine as well.



Syd, TD, CGC, TKN (Novice Trick Dog) is a Siberian Husky, age 10, member of Dog BONES since 2015.

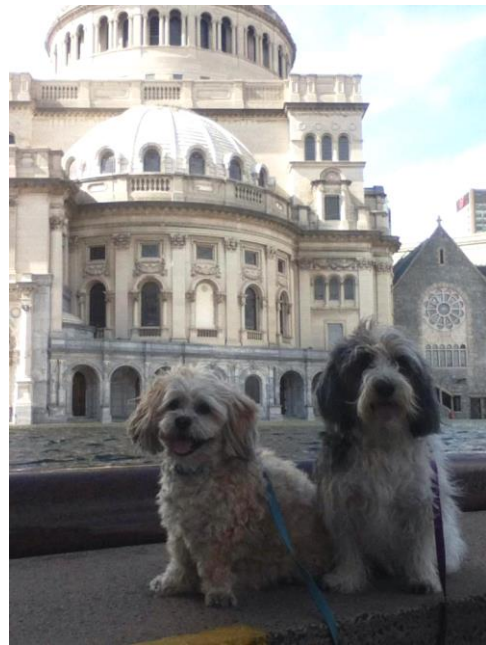
Slugger, TDN, CGC, TKI (Intermediate Trick Dog) is a Papillon, age 8 certified with Dog BONES since 2018.

Sue and Coady Egan - a mother and daughter team, with Rocky and Sadie

2013 contribution

Rocky is a 12-year-old Bichon Frise mix. Rocky enjoys spending time with the quieter individuals on visits, but is very happy to spend time with anyone who wants to sit with him. Rocky has gone on visits to nursing homes, colleges, middle schools, and Read to the Dog programs, but is always willing to try out new adventures. When he's not working, he likes to relax on the couch or play with his squirrel toy. Rocky enjoys doing Agility and, despite his age, is very fast on the obstacles.

Sadie is 6-year-old Petit Basset Griffon Vendeen. Sadie is a retired AKC show dog, but still enjoys going to dog shows and competing in Obedience, Rally, and Agility, and is always happy to run around the ring. Sadie has attended the Meet the Breeds showcase in New York City, and has her own Twitter account. Sadie loves to spend time with anyone willing to say hello to her, and she greets everyone with the same enthusiasm of a happy tail that never stops wagging. Sadie has gone on visits to nursing homes, schools, and Read to the Dog programs. When not working, Sadie enjoys barking and singing at any hour of the day, and also learning new tricks.



Rocky (L) and Sadie (R) in both pictures

Emily Falcon– reflection on visit with Blueberry and Maxi



Emily shares her story of a visit she had from two Dog B.O.N.E.S. therapy dogs. Blueberry's story also appears in this compilation (see Maura Porter's contribution.) She told Dog B.O.N.E.S. that her visit with Blueberry after her surgery "was the highlight of my life."

I do not have a therapy dog, but the dog B.O.N.E.S. therapy dog, Blueberry, came to see me after my surgery and it was the highlight of my life.

For many years on Facebook, I followed two therapy dog pages, Blueberry the Pit Bull Therapy Dog— Changing Minds One Visit at a Time and her friend, Maximus the Certified Therapy Dog. Both dogs were pit bulls, short, with compact muscles, around seventy to eighty pounds. Blueberry was gray and Maxi was tan colored. Blueberry and Maxi visited people who were ill or had experienced trauma. I loved to read their stories about visiting patients and comforting people. Their stories were the highlight of my day.

Whenever I had heart cardioversions and procedures, in the waiting room, I always asked my mother in a joking manner, "Am I sick enough to meet Blueberry?" "No..." she'd sigh. "Blueberry is needed elsewhere, with sicker people."

Blueberry's specialty was visiting people in hospice and nursing homes and providing comfort after terrorist events. It was rare for her to visit hospitals. Maxi visited the same places, but not as often as Blueberry. Before my second open heart surgery in August 2017, my sister asked me what I wanted if the surgery was successful. I told her I wanted to meet Blueberry.

On the morning of September 1st, I got dressed as usual in my button up shirt and baggy jeans. I prepared to go on my daily walk with my father when my family convinced me to go outside with them instead. There to my shock, in my driveway, were Blueberry and Maxi. I couldn't believe it. My favorite

dogs in the entire world were finally in person and here to see *me*! I immediately dropped to my knees and smothered them with hugs and kisses, petting their warm and soft fur. They kissed me back and wagged their tails, extremely well behaved while wearing their working vests.

Their owners, my family and I took the dogs into the basement of my house to play and to get to know each other. Right away, I loved them both even more in person, and their owners were so kind and generous. I cuddled and petted both dogs as long as I wanted and the dogs never tried to get away from me to do something else. Their owners made sure they were gentle and never did more than I could handle and kept them off of my chest. The dogs not only played with me but also my parents and sister.

In the warm weather we took the dogs into the backyard and took off their service vests so they would know they were “off the clock” and could do whatever they pleased. In the fenced yard, they ran free and I ran a small amount, at a slow pace, with them. I sprinkled treats around the yard to get them to

run after me. We played fetch with sticks and catch with tennis balls. I felt as unrestricted as they did, running and playing as I’d always dreamed of doing with them. It also made me feel good about myself when they ran over to me or wanted to spend time



“They gave me emotional strength to continue my recovery.”

with me without being told to do so. They performed their repertoire of tricks and the entire morning was magical.

We took pictures and videos to capture all of the fun we had together during the visit. A while later they returned home. Blueberry and Maxi made all the hardship worth it. They gave me emotional strength to continue my recovery. Whenever I was anxious, I thought of them and I instantly felt gratitude for all I was going through since it meant I got to meet them. A couple of mornings after their visit, I woke up early with a list I made in my mind overnight of all the presents I wanted to buy them to thank them for their visit. For my daily walk that day, full of energy and excitement, I went up and down the aisles at the pet store, loading up on surprises for them, looking forward to mailing them their presents.

Lorna and Jack Fargo and Stella and Penny

We have been visiting with Stella (9 years old), and Penny (6 years old), both female golden retrievers, for 7 years with Stella and 5 years with Penny.



We were visiting at a behavioral healthcare facility, and one woman came over and was patting the dogs and said "Thank you so much for coming today. I almost stopped at the nurse's station because I didn't feel safe with myself, but now, after spending some time with your dogs, I feel 100% better."

The visits have proven that pet therapy is super helpful to people struggling with various issues, which makes me and my husband grateful to be able to provide these visits. Our dogs tend to be able to find those who need it most.

"Our dogs tend to be able to find those who need it most."

Penny:



Laurie Feldman and Emmi and Norah

My name is Laurie Feldman, and I have been a volunteer with Dog B.O.N.E.S. since May, 2006; first for 11+ years with my dog, Emmi (2003-2017); and, following her death, with my dog, Norah (2016-). Both of these wonderful dogs were southern rescue dogs (Emmi, left, from Tennessee and Norah, right, from Mississippi), and both were black Lab-hound mixes that came to me around age 4 months via local rescue organizations.



Emmi (2002-2017)
Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dog 2006 – 2017



Norah (2016 -)
Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dog 2018 -

How did we get involved in pet therapy? Well, from her earliest days with me, Emmi was an incredibly “intuitive” dog, always gravitating to people who were different: people in wheelchairs, children with Down Syndrome, etc., seemingly adjusting her size and activity level to theirs. When my father’s health declined in 2005, Emmi’s behavior toward him changed, and while she was still very much a “wild child” in other scenarios, she was calm and peaceful whenever she was in his immediate presence, trying to get as close to him as possible via the famous “Labrador lean.” After his death, I looked for a way to share Emmi’s talents and, following some searching online, I found information about Dog B.O.N.E.S.. The rest, as they say, is history. Emmi made over 500 visits in her long career, the final one only a week before she died. Together we visited colleges and health care facilities, where Emmi seemed to specialize in one-on-one interactions with dementia patients. For 8 ½ years she did weekly Sunday morning visits with one particular woman, first in assisted living, then in a nursing home, and finally in a locked dementia ward in that nursing home. It is here that Emmi blossomed, truly blossomed, both with “her” patient and with other residents of the floor. On these visits all I could do was follow Emmi’s lead – whatever SHE thought a patient needed is what we did, whether it be leading a “parade” of patients around the floor or her sitting on my lap (all 52 pounds of her) so she could be face-to-face with a patient so that they could talk with her. She could elicit speech/vocalization from patients whom nurses did not know could speak! It was emotionally tiring, humbling and a tremendous honor for me to be Emmi’s assistant in these visits.

Among the other memorable visits with Emmi were those we made to the site of the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013. First daily and then weekly, we were among the teams that circulated on Boylston Street and in the Copley Square area, just “being.” People would come up to Emmi, sink to the ground, and she would absorb from them what they needed to release. We returned to the Marathon finish line the following year, to provide support to the runners there. An amazing experience, but surely one I hope never needs to be repeated.

Emmi’s visits were not always easy for her. She would return home after many of them, retreat to her crate upstairs, and have herself a nice long time-out. She’d emerge when she was ready, and off we’d go on whatever adventure was next.

“She could elicit speech/vocalization from patients whom nurses did not know could speak!”

Emmi’s final therapy “assignment,” at age 13, was at a synagogue preschool, where for several months preceding her death, she was a calming presence in the corner of one classroom. After several visits, a little boy came up to her, sat down and

started crying. He told me his dog had died; the teacher told me that it was his father that had died, several months previous, and that this was this first time the boy had said anything about death. When Emmi died, a week after her final visit to this preschool class, I received a “book” from these preschoolers, made up of pictures they drew of Emmi and her visits (with captions their teachers wrote for them). A treasure beyond measure and a real tribute to Emmi!

Emmi’s death rocked my world, and if I ever had doubts about “the power of dog,” they were put to rest by another Dog B.O.N.E.S. team who visited me in the succeeding days and made sure I kept breathing through the grief. ALL dogs are – or should be – therapy dogs, at least for their owners and, for me at least, the loss of each of my beloved companions has been a tremendous emotional upheaval. Being surrounded by “dog people” at those times has been of great comfort and has helped promote healing.

I also have come to believe that our dogs know what we need and, after their passing, may take part in sending us our next companion. Three weeks after we lost Emmi, in March 2017, a skinny little 4-month-old, runt-of-the-litter, black Lab mix came into my life. Norah was all ears, tail, and legs, and it was love at first sight (at least for me, as this new pup is not as overtly affectionate as Emmi had been). It had been over 13 years since I had raised a puppy and I was 13+ years older, but it didn’t take long to come back to me. Young Norah missed nothing, her vision, hearing and incredible nose made sure of that.....and she seemed to really enjoy people (other dogs she was – and is still – not always all that sure about), and soon we were checking out the greater world together.

Norah and I certified as a Dog B.O.N.E.S. team in January 2018 and began making visits shortly thereafter. Our principal/regular visits are to the Jamaica Plain VA Hospital where, since May 2018, we (with one other Dog B.O.N.E.S. team) make weekly visits to the outpatient Radiation Therapy and Hematology/Oncology clinics; and biweekly visits to a senior apartment complex. We also do occasional college visits, at Wellesley and at Harvard Business School. It is the VA, however, that clearly is Norah’s forte and is the site that has taught both of us the most. Coming of age during the Vietnam War and the attendant anti-war movement, I never knew anyone from my peer group who had been in the Service, voluntarily or via the draft. Visiting a VA hospital was a new world for me. For Norah, visiting the VA first

meant mastering such skills as navigating electric doors, revolving doors, crowded elevators and learning to squeeze into narrow bathroom stalls. The VA meant people in wheelchairs, people with prosthetic limbs (more on that)....and people with their service dogs. I would say Norah has handled everything well....though, admittedly, dealing with “other dogs” has been the greatest challenge, especially the “faux service dogs” who are not trained not to engage her.

In the clinic waiting rooms we keep people company and help ease their anxiety/boredom as they wait for their treatments. Very occasionally, we have been called into a room to calm a patient experiencing anxiety before entering the radiation machines; and occasionally a patient arriving by ambulance has his/her gurney greeted in the hall by one of the two therapy dogs. In the chemotherapy infusion room, we provide a little bit of distraction for patients undergoing lengthy treatments.

Patients may engage with Norah, or they may just look at her, often smile, and sometimes tell stories about their own animals at home. The first time Norah saw a man with a prosthetic leg (he was wearing shorts, so this was something obvious), she went

over to him and, starting at his shoe, sniffed up one leg, across his knees, and down the other leg, ending at his second shoe. Similar story with a patient missing a leg: Norah sniffed his empty pants leg up and down, then just sat waiting to be petted. Mission accomplished....no issue, and that was that.

The greatest “audience” by far for therapy dogs at the VA is the staff. Norah (as well as her therapy partner) is a big hit with the nurses and technicians, and she knows which nurse has biscuits in which drawer or cabinet....and will not move until she gets her treat(s). Since COVID, when visits at the VA were suspended for 21 months, the staff has been particularly grateful and appreciative of our visits and can’t seem to get enough of the dogs. When the VA finally “reopened” to visitors, in February 2022, the therapy dogs and the “coffee cart lady” were the first volunteers invited back! On special occasions the Volunteer Office even provides us with a meal ticket for *the dogs* to have lunch in the canteen.....and smiles abound as people watch Norah and her buddy share a cut-up cheeseburger for a well-earned lunch. To date, Norah has 237 total visits, 132 of them to the VA, under her collar!

I cannot explain adequately all that being at the other end of a therapy dog’s leash has meant to me. Each visit, each different venue, has taught me more about how our dogs impact lives; has had me in greater and greater awe of my own dogs and what they simply, somehow, know how to do; and has helped me grow as a person. I have always considered myself an introvert, never really personally comfortable in large groups, and definitely not comfortable as the center of attention anywhere. While perfectly comfortable (well, mostly so, anyway) in professional settings over my 40+ year career, I would never have given thought to visiting strangers in a hospital or nursing home on my own, never would have considered that I had something to offer. However, as the-other-end-of-the-leash, I could enter a room, or a facility, and feel that I was contributing something and bringing some joy or comfort to others. Whether people knew my name or not is almost immaterial; that they light up when my dog

“Each visit, each different venue, has taught me more about how our dogs impact lives; has had me in greater and greater awe of my own dogs and what they simply, somehow, know how to do; and has helped me grow as a person.”



“I feel as if I get more than I give. My life is richer because of the visits that I make.”

because of the visits that I make.

There is much truth in the statement one of Emmi’s dementia patients repeatedly told me: “Therapy Dogs are angels with hidden wings.” We, at the other end of the leash, are all in the company of angels.

and I come for a visit is something else entirely! In roughly 17 years as a volunteer with Dog B.O.N.E.S., I continue to enjoy being part of this pet therapy community, and I feel as if I get more than I give. My life is richer

Ellen Finnie and Isabel and Jasper

2013 contribution

Isabel, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, and Jasper (Jazz), a Pomeranian, were Dog B.O.N.E.S. therapy dogs for 10 years before retiring in 2012. We visited with the elderly, although Isabel also worked briefly with a child who was dog-phobic – a connection that was very rewarding.

We all loved our visits very much – including four or five years at the Park Avenue Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Arlington, where we made many friends; a couple of years volunteering for a hospice program, through which we made visits and raised spirits at Aberjona nursing home in Winchester and Lexington Health Care Center; and a couple of years at an Alzheimer's unit at Golden Living in Lexington.

“I found great joy in sharing [my dogs'] love.”

reacted with excitement when they saw their Dog B.O.N.E.S. bandanas come out, knowing they were going visiting!

Jasper, at 6 pounds, often rode in a front sack with his head sticking out, much to the amusement of those we visited. Both Isabel and Jasper always

I think very fondly of the many special connections we made together. My dogs helped me overcome my shyness with meeting new people, and I found great joy in sharing their love. I hope to be out there visiting again when the time is right.



Ellen Finnie and Gracie and Leo

2023 contribution

I have been making therapy dog visits with my dogs since 2002. I am currently visiting with my two Golden Retrievers, Gracie, age 9, and Leo, age 2.5. I am delighted they are both now visiting with me.

Gracie has been making visits since she was 10 months old, and with her calm, mild demeanor and friendly personality she has been welcomed at many different sites and with different age groups. Until recently, we focused our visits on youth, as Gracie was very drawn to young people when she herself



was young. We visited a residential school for youth with emotional challenges; a youth vocational program transitioning young people with extra challenges from school to work; and an inpatient psychiatric program for youth. More recently we have shifted to adult populations, through visits to a Veterans Administration hospital, at an inpatient addiction treatment program, and at an assisted living facility. Gracie has worked with a dog-phobic child, and has also made occasional college visits, particularly at MIT.



Among our many heartwarming visits, three stand out for me in particular. One visit that remains so powerful for me is a particular time at the VA hospital, where we visited a small inpatient psychiatric unit. One day a woman was petting Gracie, and we chatted casually back and forth. It went through my mind briefly that it was like being out for tea with a friend, and it was not apparent at all what had led her to be living in the unit. I was somewhat aware of activity behind me in the small common room we were in, as a staff member entered and joined other staff. After we concluded our visit and I was being escorted out, the staff member coordinating the visit told me that the woman I'd been having that

smooth and easy conversation with was typically catatonic, and did not engage or speak with anyone. The reason for the small bit of commotion behind me was that the staff person had gone to find the psychiatrist to witness the transformation that had taken place for this woman, when interacting with Gracie. It was such a remarkable example of the transformative power of the love and acceptance our dogs offer on visits.

Another experience that felt very significant was working over a period of about 6-8 weeks with an elementary school aged child who was fearful of dogs, who found this fear was keeping her from being able to go to parks to play with her friends. Working with a psychologist, this sweet young girl shifted from only being able to be across a large room from Gracie, to hugging her and proudly walking her (while I held another leash). It was a stunning transformation. At the end of our work together, the young child wrote a song for Gracie and recorded it, and drew a portrait of her as well. She was happy and confident around Gracie and her new-found ease was just remarkable; her family was making plans to adopt a puppy.

One other experience with Gracie that stands out was a relationship we developed over many months visiting at a residential program for young women who had behavioral and other challenges, and needed extra support in life. One student in particular was very attached to Gracie. Petting and interacting with Gracie seemed to bring this vibrant young woman ease and joy, in a context where those emotions seemed rare for her. She did not have stability in her life, and when it was determined she would move again to another facility, it was a sad and sober parting with Gracie. I did something I've never done before or since on a visit: we left this student with something to help her remember and carry Gracie's love with her on her journey. We gave her one of Gracie's old license tags on a small chain. It was a long time before I stopped thinking of this young woman most days. I do hope she has found her path.

Sadly, it seems Gracie is telling me it is time for her to retire. It is so hard to let go of our special connection that comes through visits. It is a poignant time, but I'm trying hard to listen to what she's telling me – which is the most important thing we can do for our beloved partners.

I am however relishing new visits with my young guy Leo, who is a sweet, affectionate, loving, and energetic boy. He has been making visits just a few months, since being certified at age 2, but he has already demonstrated how his loving spirit and enthusiasm for life endear him to people, and lift them up. Given his age and energy, we are focusing on visits with youth. Leo is one of two dogs who are the first in a new therapy dog program at a local elementary school.



At the elementary school, Leo meets one on one with children who have anxiety, school phobia, or other challenges at school or at home. He is so happy to see his special friends twice a week. One young girl is so enthusiastic about Leo that she made him a giant paper snowflake for Christmas, and always says “Leo I love you! I wish you could be with me all day!” It warms my heart to see her light up when she has her time with Leo. She is very intuitive about connecting with him, and her problem-solving in working with Leo on various cues seems to energize them both. The warmth between them is palpable, like a river of love flowing in the room!

The staff has referred to Leo’s sessions with some of the children as offering them a “reset” on difficult days, and I am happy to hear of this positive impact. One student who has difficulty reading has become the school’s therapy dog ambassador, going into the classrooms of the youngest children to read a book to them that I had created to introduce Leo at the school. This has helped develop her confidence, and it’s been so successful, other children are now asking to write stories about Leo!



I have found with both Gracie and Leo that it is so important to match their visits to their particular personalities and preferences. Leo can move along if needed, but is also happy to hang out, lean on people, “sing” when he sees his special friends, and be hugged and petted. If a child wants him to, he’ll respond to cues, or participate in a game where they hide a toy and he finds it by scent, or even learn to play basketball, including a successful “slam dunk” that had one young student who’d been having a tough day grinning and alight from his success working with Leo.

Over the many years I have volunteered with Dog B.O.N.E.S., I have seen consistently how the visits benefit and bring joy to those we intersect with, even briefly, and how they also bring joy to me and to my dogs. The visits also build my relationships with them – we visit as a team, and I am always watching to be sure they are supported. Both Gracie and Leo get excited when they see their special vests come out, and wag and show enthusiasm when we get to their visit sites. Making sure that they find joy as well as give joy is a responsibility I take seriously. It is such a privilege to participate in other peoples’ lives in this way, and such a source of happiness; I try to be sure my dear dogs also benefit from our visits.

I have found through the years that on visits, there is a circle of love, including those we visit, the staff at the sites, me, and my dogs too. There’s a sense of shared joy and engagement, where there is no ‘giver’ and no ‘receiver,’ just loving connection. I am deeply grateful to all my dogs, and to Dog B.O.N.E.S., for making these life-affirming and cherished visits possible.

Jack Foley and Bailey

“Bailey the Therapy Dog” is a Golden Retriever who is 11.5 years old, and who has just retired after 11 years of making visits, turning his ‘job’ over to his nephew (for real) Mack, short for Mackerel Cove which is on Bailey Island, ME.



Characteristics: Bailey was always an early and easy learner (he needed NO treats, he just wanted to please me); he understood his size and used this often to adjust his interactions—infants and their mothers instantly trusted him. But he came with some other characteristics, too: he told me when we were about to meet someone afraid of dogs; he could detect someone with low sugar levels and detect drugs; he could identify people with an overload of tension; and more. But he also liked to be a wise guy - he wasn't a big tail wagger except when he intentionally was doing something he would not usually do. Lastly, he watched out for me: he pulled me twice off of a road onto a safe siding; he stopped me from going further into the woods when he knew I wouldn't have enough strength to get back out; and more.

What stands out for me about my long partnership with Bailey is that on visits, he was the one to know who was most in need – and what they needed. I was there to help support and structure the visit so

Bailey could best express his enormous capacity for comforting and aiding people. We were truly a team.

Visits

As Bailey has just retired, my approach here will be to share the very first, the very last, and a few visits in between. What has changed from first to last is that Bailey & I often spent 8 or more hours on the campus of a major Boston area university and would think nothing about the time. Just before COVID, we would spend 3 to 4 hours doing rounds at Beth Israel Deaconess-Milton Hospital and be there for special requests several times a week in addition to rounds. Just before retirement, we were down to 1 to 1.5 hours – more for my benefit than his. While our visits were often longer than what Dog B.O.N.E.S. typically recommends for most dogs, I watched Bailey carefully and followed his lead. He told me how long he wanted to stay on these visits, and from a young age readily accommodated lengthy engagements.

Bailey “was the one to know who was most in need – and what they needed.”

First Visit

Every summer, Boston Public Schools identify about 6 schools and bring in a number of great teachers, for a summer program for children with

Autism. Dog B.O.N.E.S. received a request from the Principal running this summer program for some dogs to come once a week for 4 weeks. As I had had a layman's interest in the development of the brain for more than 30 years at that time, I signed us up immediately.

Several Dog B.O.N.E.S. dog teams showed up. The Principal assigned Bailey & I to the youngest groups, K, 1, & 2. We were to ‘do what we thought was possible’ with the children.

For week 1, I decided this was to be an introduction to the ‘friendly dog’ session. That went very well.

Week 2 was how do you take care of a dog. I brought in combs and brushes. For almost every child, I had to show them how to hold and use the comb and/or brush. Each child had just learned something they could do for a dog and themselves. Bailey & I were rewarded with big smiles and hugs for they had just had a success they had done, not something done for them. It was a great day.

Week 3 was focused on ‘have you ever fed a dog?’ Most of these kids still had to be fed or at least, needed some assistance themselves. Bailey gets Frozen Paws, a nondairy ice cream, as a reward, only after visits. I broke each cup down to 3 cups – don't want too much of a good thing. Similar to the comb/brush, I had to show them how to hold the cup and give it to Bailey. Many Children with Autism love rhythmic repetitive motion. I provided the ice cream; Bailey provided the repetitive motion with his tongue. A great day again.

Week 4 started when we walked in the door of the school and was asked by one of the administrative staff if someone had spoken with us yet. Well, I hadn't been told to go to the principal's office in a long time. Turns out a parent had called in the last few days, all excited. Her son, who had never uttered a sound in his life, was now trying to talk with them. They used a book specifically designed for this where the child points to a topic using pictures. Their son was pointing to a picture of a dog with great excitement and making sounds for the first time.

I decided on the way home that if Bailey and I never made another visit, this made our therapy team a success all by itself.

Our Last Visit

In spring 2022 we visited a high school on the South Shore where a senior about to graduate had just been killed on train tracks. Well liked, with many friends, and with much success in school, the student seemed ready for college, which she had been accepted to, and already chosen. The student body was much disturbed. Given free rein by the administration, Bailey and I, and a few other teams, were asked to roam the halls and walk right into classes, whatever seemed appropriate. Staff were aware of our presence and approved.

We had been moving through the school and as is the case sometimes with teenagers, despite the difficulty of the situation, no one seemed out of sorts – at least to me. We were standing at the intersection of 2 major hallways with a massive number of students passing us in every direction. Thank goodness I had Bailey with me, with his special sense of people.



I was turning my head in every direction to see as many students as possible, when I felt a tug and saw Bailey was looking up at me, and he tugged again. He'd identified someone in need that I couldn't even see. I follow him through a stream of maybe 25 people before we get to a student. "Hi," I asked, "do you know why we are here?" Yes, she said, she did. She revealed that the student who died was one of her best friends. So I asked her "How are you dealing with your emotions, which are probably many?" "OK I guess," she said. So I offered, "I am going to tell you a couple of things but I want you to know first that I am not a trained psychologist or anything of the like. But I do have 3 daughters, and 4 granddaughters. And most importantly, my Golden here, and it was him, not me, who was the one who identified you as someone to talk with. May I continue?" She looked at Bailey and she looked at me. "Yes." she said. So we continued our engagement for some time, Bailey having somehow sensed the need, as he had on so many visits for 11 years. I hope it was helpful.

In Between our first and last visits: a sampling

1. *When you motivate people towards healing*

Bailey & I were requested to come to the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston to visit with a young man who had just graduated from college as an engineer, and who, as a result of a major car accident, had had brain surgery. I was not given any details, so I mostly know about his condition from what I observed. He was wheeled into the area in a wheelchair, unable to speak, and unable to move much of his body.

There were ~25 people watching – doctors, nurses, researchers, other staff, and his mother. Two nurses as part of his immediate care team were close by each holding a sheet of paper – one said “yes” the other “no.” While he could hear and understand, his only way to respond was to look at the paper that matched his response. In the last few weeks, they had gotten him to say just 7 words.

We started talking with him, Bailey making small movements that the young man’s hands and bare feet could feel. I asked if he would like to learn Bailey’s name, and he looked at the “yes” paper. So I said Bailey, Ba ley, pronouncing his name. He responded – “Bailey.” So he had word #8 in less than 10 minutes with Bailey. The young man also worked hard that day so he could grasp Bailey’s leash, with the aim of taking Bailey for a walk.

Everyone in attendance was amazed by Bailey’s impact in motivating this young man to push beyond his limits.

2. When you reach troubled students

Bailey & I made visits within the Boston Public Schools (BPS) for 2 years. We started there to work exclusively with children with Autism, and then were also asked to visit with students with other significant problems. The students were responding to their complex and difficult situations in their own ways. I saw them as wonderful humans, who were smart and were always very respectful to ‘Mr. Jack’. Each child came to us individually for ~30 minutes. The students made real progress when working with Bailey (I’ve changed their names.) Here are a few examples:

“Abe,” built like a fireplug, solved all issues with his fists quite well. But working with Bailey, he stopped that. When reading a book with me about a girl with a similar issue, I asked him: “do you know anyone who used to behave that way?” “While pointing to his head: “me, Mr. Jack.”

“Bob” would rather be anywhere but school. But he had perfect attendance after we started. When asked why the change, he said: “I don’t want to miss my time with Bailey.”

“Charlie” liked to research stuff. On our first visit, he rattled off a bunch of characteristics about the Golden Retriever. He knew a lot – he was very smart, though it was hard for him to focus for long. After a while, teachers reported marked improvement in attention.

“Carla” had her own unique problems. She had cognitive challenges and was legally blind – and could only make out Bailey’s general shape, so she touched him all over. He immediately stood perfectly still until she was finished. She and Bailey got along famously.

My most prized possession from any visit, is a picture, taken from behind, of Carla at the blackboard drawing something. She was assisted by Bailey standing at the blackboard right beside her, with front paws on the chalk tray. He knew he was in the picture.

Like many people with significant challenges, they often have a strong area. But I have found that you have to 'dig' for that strength and be willing to find a way for the person to express that capability. With Carla, I learned she loved to create and tell stories. Each day we would meet, Carla would come in and say: "I have a story I want to tell you." The story, always with Bailey at the center of it, was well constructed, with lots of detail, different each time, and interesting. I had the sense I was in the presence of a children's book author, and shared my impressions with the staff.

At the end of each school year, BPS brings together a lot of senior people in the system and invites those who have created something new, or changed something, that made a big difference. Bailey and I were invited to speak. That probably says as much about our time in the Boston Public Schools as anything.

3. When your dog knows who is in significant need - Two examples

Bailey and I had just finished our rounds and were behind the Welcome desk at Beth Israel Deaconess hospital getting ready to leave. We were near the opening to the main hall when a woman came running out the main glass doors. Not long afterwards, she came back in at a fast walk. Bailey yanked me behind him and stopped directly in front of the woman, stopping her literally in her tracks. I said to her "my dog tells me that you are under a tremendous amount of stress right now. Can we be of any help to you?" She revealed that her mother had just died a few minutes before, upstairs. She quickly agreed that having Bailey visit with her family would be helpful, and we followed her to the room where they were gathered around her mother, making a quiet visit in a time of grief.

In another case, an active parishioner of a Boston Episcopal church had recently had her dog cross 'Rainbow Bridge.' The dog was not only her companion but was also considered by the parish to be a parishioner.

In talking with her, she asked if I would be able to accompany her to church for the first time after losing her dog. I said I would be glad to. She apologized that she is habitually late for everything but would find me, as Bailey would be the only dog there.

Bailey and I sat in a pew against the rear stone wall. Men, women, and children temporarily sat beside me to view where they wanted to sit for the service. They came, they left, and Bailey never greeted anyone. Then this woman sits down and



"Bailey had an unfailing sense of how to meet each person in the way they needed, and a huge capacity to do so."



before I can turn my head towards her, Bailey is up to greet her and giving her kisses. My question was, how could Bailey know to ignore others and respond only to the unknown person we are there for? This mystery is at the heart of my partnership with Bailey, who simply knows so much that I cannot fathom. In our many years of visits, like this one, he would read a situation with such insight and nuance that I could only watch in awe.

Bailey had an unfailing sense of how to meet each person in the way they needed, and a huge capacity to do so. Looking back on our many years of visiting, touching the lives of literally thousands of people, what I can say is that we had an impact beyond what I ever expected or dreamed of when I stood proudly with Bailey as he completed his Dog B.O.N.E.S. workshop 11 years ago.

Bailey, my buddy, my teammate, I salute you.

Rosemary Fournier and Spike

2013 contribution with 2023 update

My beloved dog was a sweet little Maltese called Spike. He started visiting at age two and continued until a couple of months before he passed on at fifteen and a half.



Spike visited through a Hospice Program at a local Rehabilitation and Nursing Home facility. Here he especially visited with the Hospice patients, but as anyone with a therapy dog knows, once you go into a facility, you basically visit with everyone there who wants to see you. So Spike made many friends at the nursing home.

The other place he visited each week was the psychiatric unit at our local Community Hospital. Here he brought lots of joy to the patients and staff at the unit. Plus as we went into the hospital, we were stopped and

greeted by many people along the way who wanted to see him, and learn about the therapy dog program. He was the first therapy dog at this hospital so he was quite the pioneer too.

There were a couple of visits that Spike and I made that stay in my mind in particular because of the interaction and results.

The first of these was with one of our Hospice patients, an elderly man who we visited weekly and Spike dearly loved to snuggle up in his arms and settle in for a while. The gentleman loved this and had such a smile on his face each time and even shared a little about himself, though the staff said he had rarely spoken. As we were leaving one time, he looked me straight in the eyes as I picked up Spike and said "I hope you know, this is not just a dog, he's some kind of angel!" That meant so much to me, and was very insightful as Spike really did have that sixth sense as to what people needed.

The other visit was more dramatic. I went to the psychiatric unit as usual but it was in quite an upheaval. There was a young female patient who had been admitted the day before and apparently since then she had kept up a never ending stream of yelling and screaming and no amount of intervention or calming medication had helped and the staff were totally frazzled and at their wits end. The head nurse asked if I felt comfortable talking to her and seeing if she wanted to visit with Spike. Since I'd worked in mental health this did not faze me, so we gave it a try. We gingerly approached her and I took her flailing hand and touched it to his fur on his back ready to remove him quickly if necessary. But a transformation - she reached out to pet his head and rub his ears and soon I felt comfortable enough for him to sit on her lap. She quieted down quickly and the staff were so happy and asked if I'd stay for a little. A few

minutes later she fell asleep and Spike, who normally got a bit wriggly after ten minutes or so, settled right in for more than a half hour.

The staff were so grateful to have some peace! When she did wake, she was much calmer and they were able to communicate with her and really start her treatment.

“Spike really did have that sixth sense as to what people needed.”

Spike was always a sweet natured, friendly and happy boy who was more than happy to spend time with anyone who paid him some attention and petted him.

I know he loved being a therapy dog and looked forward to his visiting. All I needed to do was say the word 'visit' and he would run downstairs to pull his leash off the bureau where it was kept, and, tail wagging, wait for me at the door to get ready to go.

I was just the person at the other end of the leash, and Spike is the one who did all the 'work' though neither of us thought of our visits that way. It was a pleasure for us both and brought us much happiness and fulfillment too.

Marcy Frankel and Cobby

I have been making visits for 1.5 years with Cobby, my Australian Cobberdog, whose breeder particularly focuses on developing Therapy and Service dogs! Cobby is loving, friendly, and loyal.



Cobby loves going into schools to be admired, pet and loved by children. My pup is so human like. He knows exactly what's going on and on his best behavior on his visits. We have a very close relationship but this has brought us even closer.



"We have a very close relationship but [therapy dog visiting] has brought us even closer."

Susan Garbose-Brown and Charlie Brown

First, comments from Charlie Brown!



Hi I'm Charlie Brown, a 7-year-old long haired German Shepherd. I visit in the ICU department of the local hospital that we go to once a week. We were asked to go to the ICU for the staff. I'm a Therapy Dog from Dog B.O.N.E.S.. I love to let people pet me and give them joy. My team consists of my Mom Sue and my Dad Steve. We're thrilled to be a new First Responder Therapy Dog team. We live in Plymouth MA which is known as America's Hometown. I won America's Hometown Hound out of 226 other dogs. I also go to fire stations, Spaulding Rehabilitation in Sandwich, and Head Start.

Then, comments from Susan!

Charlie Brown and I have been doing visits for 4 years. We go to many places. Just recently we joined several teams at Silver Lake High School to help students cope with the death of a classmate. It was really touching. We also visit with EMT's, schools and particularly special education programs.

One particular story stands out for me. Last year we were at the hospital in Plymouth and we saw the Catholic Priest Bob leaving a room. There were 2 gentlemen and a woman crying. I knew that it meant the person in the room was receiving last rites. One of the men asked if Charlie and I would stay while he went to get his two teenage daughters. I said of course, that's what we're here for. They came up and were crying. I gave them a treat to give to Charlie and told them they could hug him, so they hugged and petted him. They weren't crying anymore, but were on the floor with him getting and giving each other love. I told them that Charlie's therapy was to let them pet him and get some joy that he brings.

We left, and knew we had done a good thing. Then a few months later we went to vote at our local fire station and took Charlie. We introduced Charlie to the police officer, Jay, who was standing outside guarding the poll. He asked, “is this Charlie Brown?” And he said that “my family was just talking about him and how much he helped our family when our Nana was dying.” I was blown away. He thanked us for what we did. I gave him our card and said if the family ever needed us we would come.

“Their tears were replaced by smiles.”

changed every 15 minutes. When we were done I went down to the parking lot where personnel from fire, local and state police, and EMT’s were. Charlie met the State Police comfort dog Margaux. While we were standing there, a female EMT approached us and asked me if I remembered her. She told me that she was Nana’s daughter and had met us outside of Nana’s room. She thanked us for what we did for her family. I was blown away! In over 4 years of visits, we have many stories but this one really stood out. I was so touched that we could help.

Last week we were on our way to the ICU for a visit, and I stopped at the waiting room and introduced Charlie, and said that his therapy was to let people pet him and give them joy. The people waiting were all in a circle and Charlie worked the room. Their tears were replaced by smiles– at least temporarily.

Later that season, Charlie and I were at a South Middle School, which we had been to before, to visit with students in special education. It was called Namas Days, a take on Namaste. We were outside as a therapy dog station, along with many other stations. The children could pick 3 stations they wanted to visit and they





We also go to the joint military base at Otis. We were asked to be at family day on 9/11 for the ceremony and for the families. The Commander, whom we had met previously and who loved Charlie, came up to us to thank us for being there. I responded that it was our honor to be there.

As you can tell I have many stories. Paws up!

Louise Gerhart and Peanut

Peanut was a handsome tricolor (black, white, and brown) Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. While many breeds are “working” dogs bred for tasks such as hunting, retrieving, and herding, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels are known as “comforter” spaniels – lap dogs who love to be with people. Peanut was not a hunter – a rabbit could pass within a foot of him without a reaction – but he loved being near people, and always presented to them his calm, friendly, sweet demeanor.

Peanut was a therapy dog with Dog B.O.N.E.S. for 13 years. He was certified at age 1, and continued with therapy assignments until a year before his passing at almost 14. He “worked” therapy assignments at nursing homes, colleges, and Special Olympics events.



Peanut’s favorite assignment was at MIT. MIT is a very high stress environment, and the therapy dog program for students is an outlet to mitigate this stress. Peanut was often surrounded by crowds of students, and he loved all of them. A student photographer for the MIT newspaper captured Peanut surrounded by students. This photograph was later published in the MIT Alumni magazine. The MIT Libraries program served both undergraduate and graduate students. Many of the graduate students were not able to go home during the holidays and did not have family in the immediate area. Peanut comforted these students and filled a void for them. We frequently stayed after our assigned time slot with these students.

Wellesley College was another favorite college assignment. The women of Wellesley were gracious hosts. A Wellesley guide met us at the parking lot and guided us across the campus, to the library. Peanut loved meeting with the

young women, and they smothered him with hugs. After the first visit to Wellesley, the women created a poster with pictures and brief descriptions to publicize the event. On the second (and subsequent) visits to the

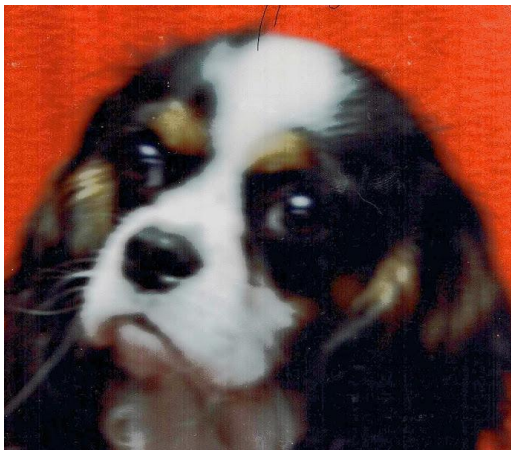
“Peanut comforted these students and filled a void for them.”

Wellesley library, Peanut had “rock star” status. He was met by a crowd of young women, waiting for him on the steps of the library.

Later in his “career” as a therapy dog, Peanut became a reading dog. At the time, the reading certification required a written test, directed at training the handler. However, since I know how to read, I decided that Peanut should at least sit on the sofa with me and listen to me read the questions. Well, that worked well until my husband entered the nearby kitchen, and Peanut abandoned me to get a treat. I did finish the questionnaire, and submitted my answers. Peanut received his reading certification.

Peanut worked as a reading dog at both the Sudbury and Carlisle libraries. At Sudbury, one of the children selected a book written in Spanish, and Peanut became a multi-lingual reading dog. He reacted the same way when listening to English or Spanish! Most of the students at these reading sessions were excellent readers with abilities above their grade levels. They enjoyed interacting with Peanut, and he calmly absorbed their love.

Peanut’s most challenging reading assignment at the Home for Little Wanderers, serving their community outreach program. Our sessions were short (30 minutes). Peanut’s first reading assignment was with a child about age 7. This child was extremely reclusive and anxious outside his family environment. However, he was fascinated by three nature books on spiders, insects, frogs, and snakes. The child never read the simple captions on the pictures, and he was initially frightened by Peanut, who rested calmly on a blanket. After several sessions over three weeks, the child would tentatively pet Peanut. When the family moved out of the Boston area, they dropped out of the outreach program, but hopefully the “reading” sessions had a positive impact on this child.



Peanut’s next reading assignment at Home for Little Wanderers was completely different! The second child, about 9 years old, was very outgoing and extremely active. He would read to Peanut for about 15 minutes but could not sit still or stay focused. Out of desperation, I tried to get this child to focus on communicating with Peanut for treats. Even Peanut, who would do anything for a treat, could not understand the child’s directions. Peanut would tilt his head with a puzzled look, “What do you want me to do??” We went through this routine for several weeks during the summer with limited progress on both reading and communicating. At our final session, the social worker

invited his parents for a party outside. The child wanted to show his parents how he worked with Peanut. For the first time, he managed to communicate his cues clearly to Peanut, and Peanut responded immediately to sit, stay, come, and roll over!!! What a pleasant surprise!

Peanut’s last assignment with Dog B.O.N.E.S. was with a psychologist who had requested help for a 10-year-old boy. The boy had undergone cancer treatment, which had left him with both physical and emotional scars. He felt awkward and anxious about interacting with the other children at his school. The dog therapy session was supposed to be only a 15-minute portion of the hour-long session with the psychologist. The boy and Peanut bonded immediately. The child’s parents joined us too. For the remainder of the time, the boy asked many excellent questions about training and caring for a therapy

dog. The boy really wanted his own support dog who could accompany him to school, and he showed that he would be a responsible caregiver. We never met with the psychologist and boy again, but this one session was a very powerful experience, which demonstrated the emotional

bonds between a therapy dog and the young cancer survivor. I think about the boy often and imagine him with his own canine companion.

“this one session was a very powerful experience, which demonstrated the emotional bonds between a therapy dog and the young cancer survivor.”

Heather Guzzi and Otis



Otis is a 2-year-old male Golden Retriever, who is calm, quiet, and gentle. We are a new team, and have only just started making visits.

We went to Brandeis and the students were so happy to see Otis. They came over to pet him and give him belly rubs and he reminded them of their dogs they were missing at home.

I see that Otis is truly a great fit as a therapy dog. We visited a newsroom where the staff is under a lot of pressure, and Otis brought happiness and joy to all. They couldn't believe how wonderful he is.

We are off to a great start as a team and look forward to many more visits!



Otis on a visit at NBC

Bonnie Hobbs and Riley; Mike Boston and Winnie; Barbara Healy and Henry – making joint visits



Bonnie Hobbs

Riley is an 8-year-old male miniature poodle, a happy little guy. We have been visiting for 5 years.

Mike Boston

Winnie is a 7-year-old female Leonberger, a gentle giant. We have been visiting for 5 years.



Barbara Healy

Henry is a 7-year-old male black lab mix, a gentle soul. We have been visiting for 4 years.

Stories – as told by Bonnie

Mike & Winnie, Barbara & Henry and Riley & I have been visiting the Peabody Community High School (an alternative high school) and a special

needs class there at the high school once a week for the past 5 years.

One Wednesday we entered the school as usual and walked into their morning community meeting. The meeting had already started so we stood in the back with our dogs just sitting or lying down. As we

were leaving, a teacher came up to us. It seems there had been a huge fight between some girls with ice coffee thrown everywhere. The teacher commented that as soon as the dogs walked into the community meeting, they could feel the tension ease and the atmosphere change. No pats or hugs needed. Just the calming presence of the dogs was enough. The power of our therapy dogs.

Mike & Winnie and Riley & I visited the Salem Prep (an alternative high school) once a week for a couple of years. We usually meet with the students/teachers in their common

room. One Monday as we walked in I was approached by a counselor and asked if I would come to her office to help a girl who was having a rough day.

“Just the calming presence of the dogs was enough.”

When Riley and I entered the office, we found the girl hiding under a table. Riley being his happy, wiggly self, went right under the table and started giving the girl kisses. What could she do but come out from under the table. She said she really liked big dogs. I told her Winnie (a big dog) was in the common room and would love for the girl to give her a hug. We walked down together. When we entered the room, I nodded to Mike and he immediately asked Winnie to sit. The girl walked over to Winnie and started hugging her. Mike and the girl spent the rest of our time there in gentle conversations about her pets as she continued hugging Winnie.

As we were walking out, the counselor thanked us. It turned out that it was the anniversary of the death of the girl’s mother.

We never know what is going on with the students our dogs meet, and we don’t need to know. What is important is that the dogs seem to know, and we take our cue from them as they give their unconditional “love on a leash.”

“...the dogs seem to know, and we take our cue from them as they give their unconditional ‘love on a leash.’”

There is a benefit to working with two or three other therapy dog teams in settings where there are students with special challenges. Each dog brings their own special talents. Winnie is big, soft and huggable, Henry knows who needs extra snuggles, and Riley is a happy little

guy who loves everyone. Between all three dogs, there is a dog who can fill the need of each student. Working with other teams, we share our observations on the visit and talk about the small successes.

There was the girl who was only brave enough to pat Henry. After months, she would pat Winnie, and finally— just recently— Riley. Or the boy who would not come into the classroom and is now standing just inside the door watching the dogs. The goal by the end of the school year was for him to pat a dog. For

some reason he likes Riley. On his most recent visits, this boy who would only look into the classroom gave Winnie one pat, and the next week it was two pats. Everyone cheers his bravery.

For these students with special challenges, it is very important to maintain the routine of our weekly visits. Having several teams allows us the flexibility if one of us must miss a week.

Kate Hodgins and Tucker

Tucker is approximately 13 years old, and he is a “super mutt.” We have been making therapy dog visits for 11 to 12 years.



Tucker dog has been coming to work with me for the last 12 years. I work with students, and it's always so fun to see the students rolling around on the floor with Tucker, or just playing. You can visibly see the students decompressing by spending time with him. The students are in a very intense program, and having a dog allows them to take a breath, give lots of scratcher-scratches, and just have fun.

It brings me so much joy to share Tucker with the world. He's not home alone all day, which is a huge benefit to me, and to him! The students love coming into the office to play with him or bring him treats. Just to see the smiles on peoples' faces and hear them start talking "baby" or "doggie" talk is very heartwarming. I feel truly blessed to have the best dog and to be able to share him with such a large audience.

“You can visibly see the students decompressing by spending time with him.”

Anne Hollesen and Blue

Blue, a five-year-old Golden Retriever, and I have been a therapy team at a local Rehabilitation hospital for about 9 months. It is an amazing experience, he loves it and everyone is so happy to see him. Both staff and patients look forward to our visits.

Blue is perfect in the role; he is not worried about any ailments, or artificial voice boxes- he loves everyone.

Below I share comments from staff at the facility, and the photo is Blue's 5th birthday party the rehab team had for him. So fun!!

Comments from staff:

"I have been frequently taking patients to see Blue. Everyone loves that he is very friendly and gentle. He makes it a point to visit every patient in the room. He provides patients more encouragement to get out of their beds since they are excited to meet Blue. They play fetch with him or pet him which in turn helps them [with] improving sitting tolerance and core strength. He provides calmness to our patients who are anxious. We love to see his tail wagging for the whole hour that he is here. He is such a happy dog and we are glad to have him here."

"Blue is the highlight of Fridays at Encompass and the whole week is spent looking forward to his visit. The staff members alone flock to see him to see what toy he brought and get some pats in, all leaving with a smile. Beyond that though, and more importantly, the patients absolutely light up when we talk about him coming and when we bring them to visit. It is heartwarming to see the patients participate more, smile, cry happy tears, and say 'this made my day.' We owe that all to Blue and Anne."



Staff say "It is heartwarming to see the patients participate more, smile, cry happy tears, and say 'this made my day.' We owe that all to Blue and Anne."

"It's so amazing to see how much happiness one dog can bring to so many people. Immediately upon seeing him patients smile, cry, laugh, they get so happy! He brings back memories and stories from patients of their own pets or their family's pets. They just get so happy. Blue is amazing."

"Blue and Anne are part of our team at Encompass now! They bring so much joy to the patients and staff just by walking in the building. We always look forward to their visits."

Sandi Jenks with Remington and Tucker

2013 contribution with update from 2023

2013: My name is Sandi Jenks. I live in Plaistow NH and I have 2 English Labs. My chocolate is Remington and my Yellow is Tucker. Remi and Tuck have been doing therapy dog work since December of 2011. Since that time, both of the boys have earned their AKC THD titles by doing over 50 visits, and they both also have their AKC CGC titles.

They do have their regular facilities that they visit which are Tewksbury Hospital, Tewksbury MA; Northeast Rehab Hospital in Salem, NH; and Tucker visits Nevins Nursing Home in Methuen, MA. Besides regular facilities that I have just mentioned, Remington and Tucker have also gone to a Girl Scout Pet Fair, they've been to MIT a couple times, and Tufts and the Boston Childrens' Museum.



“I’m not sure who is enjoying it more, the boys or myself! This is the most rewarding, heartwarming thing I have

When I think back over all the visits we’ve done together. I’m not sure who is enjoying it more, the boys or myself! This is the most rewarding, heartwarming thing I have ever done! The boys? They just love seeing so many different people and getting all the attention and love they can. I am so glad that I took the Dog B.O.N.E.S. workshop!

Update from 2023:

Before retiring from therapy dog visits, Remi and Tuck each logged over 100 visits.

Remington



Tucker

Phyllis Kassels and Daisy (as told to Ellen Finnie)

Phyllis visited hospitals and college campuses with her miniature poodle Daisy for several years until Daisy's ultimately death in 2022. Phyllis was interested to try therapy dog visits as a Dog B.O.N.E.S. therapy dog team because she loves meeting people, and she quickly found that Daisy clearly enjoyed



engaging with people, too – she relished the attention and interactions on visits. The two enjoyed their visits tremendously, and lifted the hearts of so many people in their years as a therapy dog team.

At Mount Auburn and Beth Israel hospitals, Phyllis and Daisy visited a variety of inpatient units, including geriatric psychiatric units as well as patient visits on a variety of medical and surgical units. Daisy was always dressed for her visits to reflect the holiday, season, or event, and Phyllis would dress to match her. The sight of a therapy dog in a hospital made every visit a happier time—especially when dressed in a matching ensemble for the occasion! Phyllis found that Daisy made every visit a party atmosphere, with her perky and endearing personality and willingness to dress up, pose, jump up on beds when patients invited her, show tricks, and enthusiastically engage with people to suit the circumstances.

Phyllis found the visits to hospitals particularly meaningful; she and Daisy loved visiting pediatric patients as well as adult patients. One visit that stands out particularly for Phyllis was a time when, as she and Daisy approached a visiting area, she heard the strained, loud voice of a distressed patient. The individual was shouting “no more doctors! No more nurses!” But when the staff asked if she wanted to meet a therapy dog, her voice changed immediately and completely. Suddenly she softened, quieted, and calmly met Daisy.

This particular story captures so much of what Phyllis found rewarding about visits with Daisy – having such a cute, small dog in a hospital completely changed the dynamics of a sterile hospital room and gave patients such

“more than one mom said the time with Daisy was the best thing in their childrens’ lives” while they were at the inpatient program.

joy. Phyllis and Daisy also visited the Walden Behavioral Center in Dedham, primarily focusing on youth ages 11-18, and on other units, college age and older. For these young patients (primarily female), visits with Daisy were access to something normal. Many of them missed their own dogs, and interacting with Daisy was a welcome respite. The patients' mothers would thank Phyllis for bringing Daisy, and more than one mom said the time with Daisy was the best thing in their children's lives while at Walden.



Phyllis would often observe patients and family members sending pictures to relatives of their visits with Daisy. They remembered these visits months later – one young girl later wrote through Daisy's Instagram account that in honor of Daisy she had named her new dog Daisy! An additional surprise was

that Phyllis found Daisy's love and joy meant just as much to the hospital staff as to the patients. Visits with Daisy would totally change a staff person's day. When staff discussed a difficult case, they would ask therapy dogs to be there, and the staff found that Daisy's presence would increase attendance at any meeting.

Phyllis found that with all their visits, whether rolling on the floor with Harvard Business School students, or gently engaging with hospital patients, she came home feeling she and Daisy were a *team*. She would tell Daisy "I'm so proud of what you did today!" Sometimes Phyllis and Daisy took the subway to visits, and while that made both of them very tired, it also made Phyllis feel so proud of Daisy. Daisy just loved going anywhere and everywhere with her "mom" Phyllis.

Phyllis' beloved Daisy died one month shy of 9 - a devastating loss. But Phyllis knows Daisy made such a

difference in the lives of all the patients and students she visited in her years as a therapy dog. Phyllis says that she is so proud of Daisy, and finds solace in knowing that Daisy "did good in the world." So many people



"Daisy's love and joy meant just as much to the hospital staff as to the patients."

wrote notes to Phyllis saying what great work Daisy did and how much she helped them get through some really bad days.

Phyllis is so happy that her poodle puppy Juliette is now following in Daisy's pawsteps! At ten months she is already certified as a Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dog, and has passed the CGC test. She is now visiting hospital patients. Phyllis says "Way to go Juliette!" and is so proud of her and of their partnership.

Michael Katin and Bodhi and Beni

I started doing Dog B.O.N.E.S. visits with Bodhi, our Portuguese Water Dog, in 2014. One of our favorite venues was Spaulding Rehab's Cambridge facility where we frequently teamed up with another Dog B.O.N.E.S. team: Luna, a Great Pyrenees, and her humans, Dan and Sara (whose story appears in this compilation). Bodhi and Luna became very good friends and worked very well together. Unfortunately, we lost our beloved Bodhi to lung cancer in 2021. As bereft as I was about the loss of Bodhi, I knew that I wanted/needed to somehow continue making visits as soon as possible. Just a month after Bodhi passed, I began looking for a puppy. In two months, we found Beni, a mini-golden doodle. During his early socialization and training, Beni's intelligence and sweet disposition led us to believe that he would be ready for therapy dog work at a young age, as we had hoped for. Sure enough, he did very well at his Dog B.O.N.E.S training and he graduated at the ripe old age of 10 months.

We were able to start working at Spaulding by the time of Beni's first birthday. He did quite well but there were some rough edges. In particular, he did not want to get up onto the lobby couches and chairs so as to make him more accessible to patients in wheelchairs.

Then came December 5, 2022. Dan brought Luna in for a visit so that Beni and she could work together. This was to be the last visit for Luna before undergoing surgery. Dan had Luna climb on to one of the couches. Beni saw this and realized that this was actually a good thing to do.



Beni on right, with Luna

Now that Beni knew he could elevate to make patient access easier, he put his new talent to work the very same day. We went into a room where the patient was just a day or two post-brain surgery. Beni got up onto the bed and laid down at the edge close to the patient who was in his wheelchair next to the bed. The therapist put the patient's hand on Beni and the patient moved his fingers in order to pet him....this was the first movement that the patient had been able to make since his surgery. Then the therapist told the patient Beni's name and asked if he could say it. The patient said "Beni" ...his first spoken word since the surgery.

As we left the room, the therapist and I realized we were both shedding tears.

The way I see it, this whole chain of events started with Luna

leading the way. Bodhi wasn't around to show Beni the ropes but Luna came through big time. We are very happy that Luna's surgery went well, so Beni and will have more opportunities to work together. I will be forever grateful to what she added to Beni's success as a Dog B.O.N.E.S. therapy dog.

"The patient said 'Beni' ...his first spoken word since the surgery."



And just when you thought this appreciation couldn't get any more inspirational, the day I wrote this, Beni and I went for a walk with our friend Brian, who is an Alzheimer's patient who attended Beni's training with me so that he could be part of Dog B.O.N.E.S. We walked along the Charles River in Watertown and witnessed the most beautiful sunset.

Deb LeClair and Dexter

2013 Contribution with updated pictures



Dexter was a rescue puppy from Ohio, and he was lovingly trained by Anne LeClair.

Dexter is 4 years old and has been a certified therapy dog with the Dog B.O.N.E.S organization for 3 years.

Dexter and his handler, Deb LeClair, currently make regular visits to a group home in Newton and will serve as Reading Partners at the Medfield Library beginning Fall

2013.



Dexter also visits Wellesley College Students during Finals week each Fall and Spring.

Past engagements also include participation in Critter Day at the Boston Children's Museum, and presentation at the JCC. In addition to Dexter's Canine Good Citizen award, he also completed the Autism Awareness

program and is a certified Reading Partner.

When Dex is not "on duty" as a therapy dog, he enjoys meeting up with his doggie friends during beach romps at Nantasket Beach, and walking through the woods at Elm Bank.



Arthur Liao and Ziva and Scout

I have been making therapy dog visits for five years with my two Australian Shepherds, Ziva and Scout.



We love visiting the memory care units and seeing how happy, engaging and receptive they are with the dogs. The nurses always tell us how the patients / residents do a "complete 180" when we are there and are so full of life and joy.



The three of us love making therapy dog visits and also just connecting with those we visit. It makes me feel super blessed that I'm able to share them with others and it is very fulfilling knowing they bring as much joy to me as to those we visit.

Maria Miller Larson and Ana

I

Ana and I made weekly visits to a residential facility for people with memory disorders. That's where Ana met Joe, a long-time resident, and it's where their friendship began. I fell into a pattern of arriving 20 minutes early so Ana and Joe could spend extra time together. She made a beeline for him every time. Due to his dementia, Joe had fallen silent years earlier. Watching their friendship bloom from the other end of the leash, I occasionally commented to break the silence, knowing Joe could not respond. He connected with Ana by stroking her fur and belly rubs - her favorite.

During one such visit with Joe, I mentioned how much I loved a particular song that was playing for a

"I glanced at the staff, their mouths agape - hands over hearts, in sheer astonishment. They had never heard him utter a sound in his years as a resident."

nearby group of residents during their weekly music hour. Almost immediately, Joe began singing along with the song in a beautiful, strong tenor. I glanced at the staff, their mouths agape - hands over hearts, in sheer astonishment. They had never heard him utter a sound in his years as

a resident. Some staff reached for one another's hand to share the moment, while others ran to get other staff members to experience it for themselves.

Meanwhile, Joe did not stop stroking Ana or shift his gaze from her. It was as if the peacefulness and affection he was experiencing bypassed the affected part of his brain, moving through him, and turned it into euphonious song.





II

Ana and I worked as a reading companion team at a local elementary school. That's where we met Maya, although our first meeting didn't go as expected. Maya entered the library for our first session sobbing and shuffling at a snail's pace. At first, I worried that she was afraid of dogs, but I quickly realized that wasn't the case when she curled up with Ana to take comfort. She was afraid to read. We let her hang out with Ana instead of reading for her first session. She was calm and smiling by the time she returned to her classroom.

On our next visit, Maya brought books to read to Ana, but she was very embarrassed and self-deprecating when she made mistakes or didn't know a word. I would

deflect by asking her if she thought Ana knew the meaning or pronunciation of these challenging words. Maya giggled as I explained them to Ana. Soon Maya, reveling in her accomplishments, would pump her fists in the air as she walked back to her classroom. We were making progress.

As Maya became more relaxed, her reading improved, and she started bringing us the books and later lists of books she had read independently. By the end of the school year, Maya had become an excellent and avid reader and had started voicing the characters in the books. She read aloud—loudly and proudly.

“By the end of the school year, Maya had become an excellent and avid reader.”

Dogs are emotionally intelligent, and their abilities contribute in many ways to society. Healing, nurturing, and creating a sense of calm are among their skills.



Beth Mosher with Cosmo and Nellie

2013 contribution

I was so excited to learn about the Dog B.O.N.E.S. organization and the classes that they offered to certify my two dogs, Nellie and Cosmo.

Since I have two dogs, we alternate visits because a Team is one person/one dog. Each dog has its own personality that is presented at visits, but each one is always welcomed. Our visits started out at Adult Day Health Centers. This was so much fun, as I really enjoy working with the elderly. Plus, the response of the seniors is so heartwarming. They love petting the

dogs and giving them treats...and when Nellie goes down for a belly rub they are thrilled.

We have progressed in our visits to Hospice, Nursing Homes, and a Day Hab for developmentally disabled adults who range in age from 22 to 70. The Day Hab is our newest venture and I am so happy to say that the dogs have really made me proud. It is a little more stressful for them as they get so much loving, and I really need to help them along. But the laughter and smiles of the clients here is so great.

"I really don't know who enjoys the visits we make as a team more: me, the dogs... the clients we are visiting, or the staff."

We have also attended college stress relief days to help students through the exam periods. One of the most fun experiences we've had was a day at the Boston Children's Museum to introduce children to different dogs. Often when visiting different establishments, I spend a fair amount of time with staff members hugging and putting the dogs. Everyone has a little stress in their lives and the dogs are the best stress busters.

I really don't know who enjoys the visits we make as a team more: me, the dogs (lots of attention and extra treats), the clients we are visiting, or the staff. All and all, Therapy Dog visits are such a needed and welcome part of a person's day.

David Murray and Lucy

I visited with Lucy weekly with seniors at Lifecare in Scituate for 11 years as of July 2023. We visited for four months in Norwell with a special needs student, four months at a Headstart center with pre-Kindergarten kids, and also participated in reading partners visits at a local library, as well and a few other single visits over the years, including a visit to a Boston University counselor with the aim to help a youngster overcome fear of dogs (which was ultimately not successful). I almost feel guilty how much she enjoys people, and how they universally respond so well to her. It's very nice to see all who respond to her and have their day brightened.

“she enjoys people, and... they universally respond so well to her.”



On a sad note Lucy is aging out, and I can't visit folks without her. (She has cancer).

After submitting this story, David shared that “Sadly, Lucy passed on, on 2/21/23, of cancer, at age 13+.”



Dan Ottenheimer and Sara Weber and Luna

Luna is a 75-pound Great Pyrenees mix who is 12.5 (and will be 13 in July 2023). We are in our 11th year of visits; she was certified in December 2012. We adopted Luna in August of 2011 when she was one year old, and we quickly noticed how much she liked to meet strangers. Whenever we went for a walk in our nearby park, Luna would gently and slowly walk over to anyone sitting on a bench or blanket, make eye contact, and wait to be patted. We realized that she would make a great Therapy Dog; so after doing some online research, we attended a December 2012 Dog B.O.N.E.S. workshop – when Luna was 2.5 years old.

Luna's first few visits were to local colleges and senior living facilities.

One of Luna's initial visits stands out in particular: a visit to MIT on April 22, 2013. This was a very traumatic period for the MIT community; 4 days earlier, on April 18th, MIT Campus Police Officer Sean Collier had been shot and killed on campus by two suspects wanted for the April 15th Boston Marathon terrorist bomb attack. On April 22nd, Luna and 26 other Dog B.O.N.E.S. therapy dogs spent the afternoon [outside MIT's Student Center](#), greeting the community and helping them de-stress. The entire "Kresge Oval" was filled with happy dogs, students, and other MIT community members.



Over the years, Luna has made several visits to the Mugar Library at Boston University. These visits, which take place at the end of the semester, are very organized. Students sign up for 15-minute timeslots, and 8 students at a time are given access to a Therapy Dog. Fortunately, Luna is large enough that she can be patted by eight people at once!

In 2014, Luna signed up to be part of the Therapy Dog program at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Cambridge. This is now the place that she visits most often. The patients at Spaulding typically spend weeks or months at the facility, recovering from serious health issues. And although they often have visits from family members, they rarely see their pets. So both the patients and their families are usually thrilled to get a visit from a Therapy Dog.

For several years Luna's visited at the same time as Bodhi, another Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dog. The two dogs were very different: Bodhi would do all sorts of tricks to entertain the patients and their families; Luna would just sit there and watch Bodhi and let people pat her incredibly soft, long, white

fur. After Bodhi passed away, his owner got another dog – Beni – who is now visiting Spaulding. (Bodhi and Beni’s stories appear in this compilation as well.)

Many of the patients at Spaulding are partially paralyzed, and/or have difficulty speaking. The therapists at Spaulding spend many hours coaxing and encouraging these patients to perform simple tasks and speak a few words. There have been more than a dozen instances over the years where we were able to get a patient to do something they had never done during their recovery, by bringing a dog into their room and encouraging the patient to pat the dog, or say something to the dog, or give a treat to the dog. Somehow our Therapy Dogs are able to give these patients that extra motivation they need to make progress. Beni’s owner has shared the story about the patient whose first spoken words at the facility was “Beni;” and the second word that patient spoke was “Luna.”

One of the patients that Luna visited several times was at Spaulding to recover from a lung transplant. She really appreciated being visited by Luna. And right before she was discharged, the patient informed us that she had decided to name her new lung “Luna.”

“There have been more than a dozen instances over the years where we were able to get a patient to do something they had never done during their recovery, by bringing a dog into their room...”

Over the years, many college students have told us how much they appreciated patting Luna, and how it made them feel happier and less stressed. Many students have pets at home that they haven’t seen for months.

And we (Sara and I) feel happier after a visit as well. We think that Luna is such a wonderful creature – she is a gift that we feel needs to be shared with others, and we feel happy when we see that she is making other people feel happy.

Mickey Pescatore and Duffy, Kennedy, and Flynn

My name is Mickey Pescatore and I have been affiliated with Dog B.O.N.E.S. for over 10 years. Duffy and Kennedy, both Great Pyrenees, were my first introduction to Therapy work and I now have Flynn, a Leonberger, who's a rookie at 2 years.

Duffy and Kennedy



We've done just about every kind of visit that there is over the years...assisted living, libraries, Boston Children's Hospital, grade schools, universities, wellness events, the aftermath of the Marathon bombings, end of life visits, High School proms, and pediatric psychiatric units, just to name a few.

It never gets old bearing witness to the magic of these

amazing animals.

Kennedy was asked to visit a pediatric ICU patient who had been mauled by a dog. The parent, who requested the visit, wanted the child to have a positive experience after the

recent trauma that had occurred only days before. Bear in mind that Kennedy was, at the time, over 120 pounds, so extra large, pure white and very fluffy, resembling more a polar bear than a dog. Under the supervision of hospital staff, we were asked to start in the hallway, slowly make our way to the doorway and, with permission, to progress to the end of the bed, all the while checking in with Mom that everything was okay. By the end of our visit, Kennedy was nestled in bed next to this little pint of peanuts. Twice her size, she never disturbed a lead or catheter and managed to find a spot right next to this sweet little girl so they could nap together.

This isn't something that you can teach a dog.

"It never gets old bearing witness to the magic of these amazing animals."

Duffy and I visited Oncology infusion units where he would sit with patients while they received their chemotherapy. On one occasion, a young man was seated in the waiting room, alone. This was unusual because typically patients are accompanied by a family member or friend. Most people enthusiastically greeted Duffy because he was such a handsome, XL fellow. Like Kennedy, solid white and a very fluffy 140-pound dude. Ordinarily, he would make his rounds in the waiting room saying “hello” to all of the regulars before heading into the infusion room, but on this particular day he noticed the young man sitting alone and immediately walked over and sat next to him. The patient didn’t make eye contact or reach out so, after a few minutes, Duffy scooted closer and rested his head on his knee. With that, the patient started to stroke Duffy and, within minutes, bent over at the waist and buried himself in my sweet boy. After a few quiet moments, he raised his head and mouthed “thank you.”

Again, not something that you can teach a dog.

Flynn has only been “working” for a year, primarily visiting the psychiatric unit at Boston Children’s Hospital and recently certified to participate in Animal Assisted Therapy to team with occupational and physical therapists as part of their treatment plan. She also is the Lexington High School Therapy Dog and visits every week for Tail Waggin’ Tuesdays. As a young pup, and novice, she’s a hoot. The kids love her and invited her to the Senior Prom last year.

Quite simply, I am blessed. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as an escort for these magnificent creatures. To hold the other end of the leash while they do the work sometimes feels intrusive. My language is necessary to introduce ourselves and to answer questions, but they communicate on a whole different level, no words required.



“To hold the other end of the leash while they do the work sometimes feels intrusive...they communicate on a whole different level.”

A lifetime is never enough. Duffy and Kennedy have passed, so now Flynn carries on with the mission. She is a wonderful companion and best friend. I’m beyond grateful for every day she allows me to share her gentle, funny, kind spirit with those among us. She exudes joy and happiness and, from what I have witnessed, it’s quite contagious.

Be well ~

Maura Porter and Blueberry

When we visit our hospice patients, we visit other non-hospice residents who are in that facility as well. One gentleman had been a puzzle to me. For months we had stopped in, he would pet Blueberry over and over, then just as quickly he would turn and watch television and we then would leave. He never spoke to me when we were there, and although I thought he liked visiting with Blueberry, I was never really sure.

We kept visiting of course, but I never felt as if we made a difference.

“Sometimes happiness can only be felt and not seen, but it was there all the time.”



One day recently, we entered his room and his family was there packing up his belongings. He had passed away. I gave my condolences and told them that Blueberry had been visiting him for months when all of a sudden there was a burst of screams and clapping and simultaneous comments: "Blueberry? This is the dog? OMG this is THE dog! This is the fruit dog!" And then lots of laughter.

Well it seems their father couldn't remember Blueberry's name, but he remembered that she was named after a fruit, so he and his family had referred to Blueberry as 'Peaches.' They told me he spoke of "Peaches" visits often, and his daughter said, "Dad told us that Peaches' visits made him happy."

Sometimes happiness can only be felt and not seen, but it was there all the time. Love, Blueberry....aka Peaches.

A story about a visit Blueberry had with Emily Falcon also appears in this collection.

Cathy Quinn and Tobey, Cubby, and Sandy



2013 contribution with update from 2023

Tobey was part of Dog B.O.N.E.S. from about April 2008 until he passed away in Aug 2012. A big mutt, Tobey loved visits and particularly enjoyed college visits. What a great match college students and Tobey were as he missed his own boy, who was in North Carolina in college, and so many students miss their animals when they are living in dorms.

Tobey was a member of Thunder Hill 4H and was part of the first class of Thunder Hill 4H members and their dogs to become part of Dog B.O.N.E.S.

Cubby is a French Bulldog who has been part of Dog B.O.N.E.S. since his puppy days in April 2011. He enjoys college visits the most, as he loves kids. He has recently become a reading partner. Cubby was well trained in his therapy work by his buddy, Tobey. With his friend Maggie, Cubby did many events around the Boston Marathon bombing, memorials and anniversaries.

Cubby is part of Thunder Hill Canine Encounters 4H. He attends 4H meetings and participates in lots of community service events with his club. He is shown here at 4H dog camp with some of his club mates, all of whom are also part of Dog B.O.N.E.S.

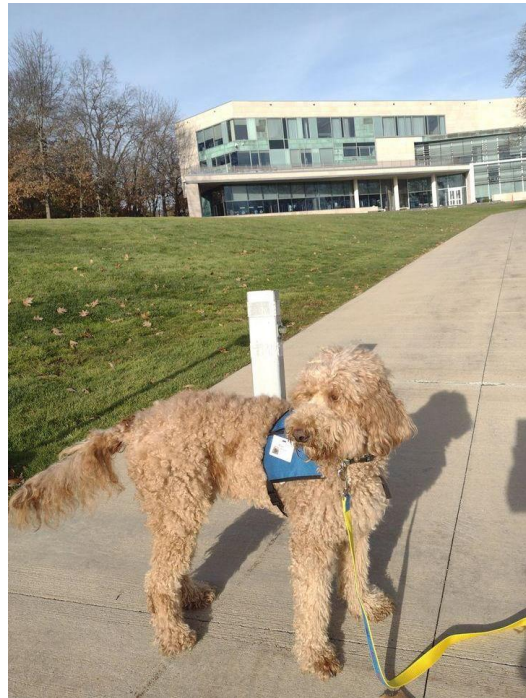
(Cubby passed away in December 2019.)



Update 2023:

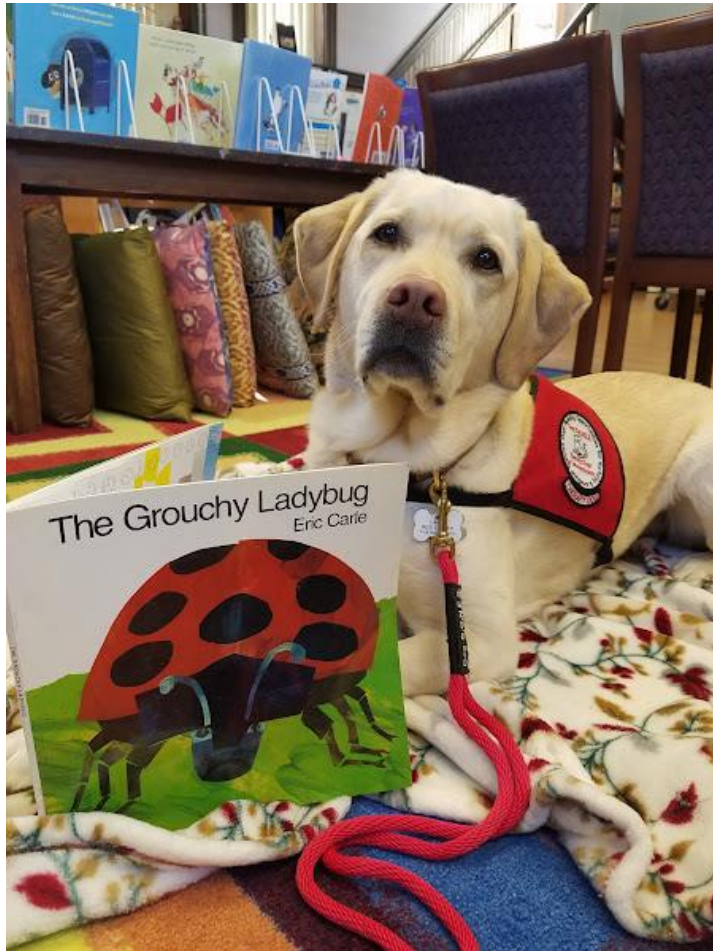
Sandy is an Irish Goldendoodle (aka mutt). He thinks going on visits to High Schools and Colleges is the best thing. What better than to be told how handsome he is and have a fuss made over him by kids! He started making visits at our local High School in 2021 to a “zen den” aimed at helping school avoidant kids as they navigated post- COVID schooling. Sandy still makes weekly visits to a High School, while adding college visits to his schedule.

He is a member of Thunder Hill Canine Encounters 4H where he participates in weekly meetings with youth and their dogs.



Carolyn Rannacher and Lemonade Lynn

I have been visiting for about five years with Lemonade Lynn, my 7-year-old female Yellow Lab.



Lynn was released at an early age from a service dog program that provides service dogs to veterans and first responders. Our first and most meaningful visit for us was the one in which we visited a former first responder with Parkinson's disease. He was a former State Policeman and K9 officer, who by coincidence had labs, trained labs, and adores labs. The visit with him was special and also allowed us to discuss his potentially applying for a service dog from the very organization from which Lynn came. We also enjoyed reading dog visits to the library.

Therapy dog visits provide such a meaningful purpose for both the dog and owner. Visits allow social interaction that Lynn so loves. And I once took a lovely photo of Lynn sitting on a bench in a park. On the bench was inscribed "for all to enjoy." It couldn't have said it better - these visits allow us to share our very good dogs and bring an important purpose to their lives.

Marion Russell and Jackson

I have been visiting for two years with my 4-year-old Male Black Labrador, Jackson.

“My love and respect for him grow as I watch him share his sweet disposition with others.”

My favorite visits with Jackson are to schools where he immediately brightens everyone's day. Since he was a puppy I knew he had incredible therapeutic potential as I worked in a college health center and his visits brought so much joy to the students and staff. His gentle, loving presence draws kids in and my favorite moments are seeing him basking in the warmth of the group as he lays on the floor getting belly rubs from a group of smiling kids.

Jackson brightens everyone's day and brings a feeling of calm and joy to those who interact with him. My love and respect for him grow as I watch him share his sweet disposition with others.



Annette Sawyer and Myrtle

Myrtle, my young Pug, is particularly drawn to elders. We visit Mount Auburn Geriatric psychiatric ward and/or assisted living facilities once a week. Myrtle never gets in other people's laps, she's incredibly respectful and gentle with the visits. But there is always one man we visit, and only recently I learned he has a kind of dementia where he is losing his sight. I believe she knew he couldn't see her before I did. Now the two sit together on the couch for these visits.



For me, watching her make connections with people who speak so little and having her intimate connection and speech with those in the assisted living facilities has brought me to tears.

Myrtle came to the family during the Covid-19 pandemic and it has been a gift to have her companionship for me, and now for others. It's the most extraordinary relationship I've ever had with a pet, and more times than often I end up saying after our visits, "what a good girl, I'm gonna get you an Uber. You don't have to take the bus home."

"It's the most extraordinary relationship I've ever had with a pet."

Sandra Schiller and Rudy

Rudy, a 4-year-old black lab, and I have been making therapy dog visits since July 2022.

The visits with patients at Sachem Rehab Center in East Bridgewater are always special due to the connections I witness on each visit.

There are long-term patients who know Rudy and look for him on the days we visit. Last week, we visited a woman who lit up and became emotional when she was petting Rudy. She asked if he had a good life, and she was so happy to know that he is living his best life. I have seen how Rudy figures out how to get closer to a patient whether in a bed, wheelchair or walking with a cane. He has progressed so much since his first visit, and he truly loves connecting with these patients. It's beautiful to see.

“he truly loves connecting with these patients. It's beautiful to see.”



I also love to watch his interaction with young readers at Billerica Public Library. He becomes so relaxed listening to them that he will sometimes rest his head on a lap or put his paw on the child reading to him. It's so heartwarming to watch the interaction.

I leave every visit learning a lesson and grateful for the experiences.

Rudy is my second therapy dog and his journey is extra special as my sister Linda found Rudy for me. Linda was the founder of Eleventh Hour Rescue in New Jersey, a thriving rescue organization that was her life's passion. Linda passed away in October 2020, and she brought Rudy into my life in April 2020. She made sure she paired me with a dog who had the potential to become a therapy dog, knowing this was so important to me. She reached out to her connections across the country and found Rudy through a rescue in Texas. The rest is history.



I also want to acknowledge the impact of my first therapy dog Joe, who was the best teacher I ever had. The important life lessons came from watching him in every situation with every human and animal. He was pure goodness and compassion. Therapy dogs are the best and they have enriched my life as well as the folks they have visited. What a beautiful gift to just "be with someone and connect in such a pure way."



Candy Shostak and Tribble and Teo

2013 contribution, updated

Tribble, age 10, and Teo, age 7, were Portuguese Water Dogs who visited as a team. Both began in the P.U.P.S program (Practicing Until Properly Socialized) at eight months.



the Mt. Auburn Hospital.

Tribble's early visits began in 2005. He spent a year with Alzheimer/dementia patients in a nursing home in Marlborough. He also made weekly visits to a classroom for multiply-handicapped students at the Umana Middle School Academy in East Boston.

When Teo was old enough, he joined Tribble in the visits. Both continued to visit the Umana, and served as Reading Partners in special education classrooms. – a residential school for adolescent girls with emotional issues.

For more than six years, the dogs were weekly guests at the Browning Unit at The Germaine Lawrence School. The dogs also had regularly scheduled visits to the Wyman Unit for Adult Mental Health at

Teo and Tribble retired from visits, but through all their years as a team, they loved attention and were always the happiest when being cuddled and patted.

Stacy Siegal and Bailey

Bailey, age 4, is a male Maltipoo. He graduated from Dog B.O.N.E.S. in Oct 2021, and started with Read To A Dog visits a few months later.



Bailey is a happy boy who exudes joy. I love being able to share him with others. We have been visiting the Adams Street Branch of the Boston Public Library monthly for the Read to A Dog Program since April 2022. Bailey loves all humans – especially children, and they love him so I thought this program would be a good fit. It gives children an opportunity to practice their reading skills in an encouraging environment. At first I thought it would just be fun, but from the first visit I found that there was more to it.

One of the parents told me that her daughter struggled with reading and did not enjoy it, but reading to a dog has made it fun for her and her reading skills and confidence improved and she is doing better in school. Another parent told me that her daughter was depressed & that seeing Bailey was therapeutic and comforting for her.

I like being able to provide each child with one on one time and at the end of each session, I give the kids stickers as a thank you for reading a story. I think this makes them feel special & happy which in turn makes me feel good that I

am able to provide a positive, fun experience and make someone smile.

In a busy and often challenging world with COVID, war, political strife, uncertain economy, etc., it is really nice to be able to be a part of a group that is bringing positivity and happiness to others. I am so grateful to Bailey and Dog B.O.N.E.S. to be able to participate in this program.

“At first I thought it would just be fun, but from the first visit I found that there was more to it.”



Anne Stoma and Mariah and Jacoby

2013 contribution

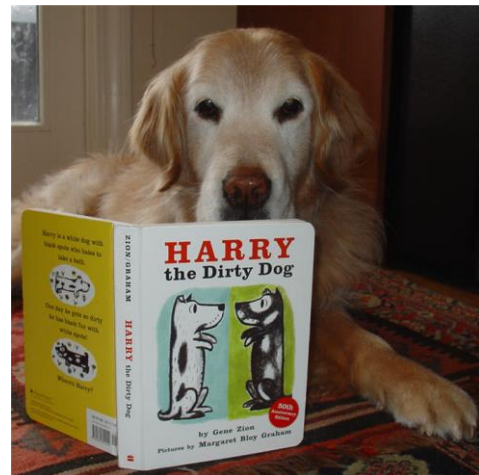
Mariah is thirteen year old Golden Retriever, who was adopted when she was eight years old. Mariah's elderly owner was unable to take care of her due to his declining health. Mariah was adopted shortly after her owners had adopted Jacoby, also a thirteen year old Golden. Jacoby was found as a stray in New Hampshire. Both dogs were adopted from Yankee Golden Retriever rescue. Having adopted many dogs from YGRR over the years, these two are very special adoptees. Although older, they have been very active dogs. Mariah has completed her Canine Good Citizen test as well as her therapy dog certification with Dog B.O.N.E.S. Mariah is also certified as Reading Partner with Dog B.O.N.E.S. Jacoby also has the same qualifications but in addition, he has his Sassy Senior Beginners' and his Novice Canine Freestyle titles.

Mariah and Jacoby have retired, but when they were "working" both dogs visited at Metro West Medical Center as part of their Dog Therapy Program. Mariah was an active reading partner at the Winchester, Wellesley and Watertown libraries. Both dogs visited several of the area colleges during mid-term and final weeks. Jacoby really enjoyed his college visits.



SaveTFP held a stress-relieving dog-petting study break in V20-407 yesterday. Dozens of students attended and pampered the six dogs.

Jacoby at MIT - June 2012



Mariah reading one of her favorite stories

Anne Stoma and Kyrie and Sophie

2023 contribution:

Kyrie, age 10 ½, is a stunning cream female Golden Retriever. She is one of the 3000 dogs in the Golden Retriever Lifetime Study. She is #313. The Golden Retriever Lifetime Study is one of the largest, most comprehensive prospective canine health studies in the United States. The Study's purpose is to identify the nutritional, environmental, lifestyle and genetic risk factors for cancer and other diseases in dogs. Our therapy dogs give so much.

I took one of the first classes that Dog B.O.N.E.S offered, and I remember graduating on my birthday in December with Butternut. What a special birthday! I have had Butternut, Mariah, Jacoby, Kyrie and Sophie registered with Dog B.O.N.E.S over the past 23 years. What joy and happiness I experience on all these visits and how very different my dogs have been on visits.

“Any visit is a bonding experience.”

was enthusiastic about these visits and we did them for several years. Once I adopted Sophie, Kyrie semi-retired. Recently, Kyrie had to fill in at the VA Medical Center in Jamaica Plain. She had a great time at the VA and the patients just loved her enthusiasm. I realized that Kyrie needs a visit that involves her moving from patient to patient as well as covering a physical distance. Kyrie will resume a more active schedule and visit the VA in Boston.

Any visit is a bonding experience. My dogs depends on me to support them and to know when to encourage them during the visit and when to end the visit. As I found out with Kyrie, it is important to match the location with the type of visit that you and your dog will enjoy. I just love how walking in the hallways and riding on the elevator bring a smile to so many faces. I am grateful that I can share Kyrie with others. She is a gift that helps them smile.

Kyrie at MIT



Sophie, age 7, is a petite female golden retriever born on Valentine's Day. She is an international rescue from Turkey, who was adopted from Yankee Golden Retriever Rescue. Sophie weighs 33 pounds. Sophie graduated from Dog B.O.N.E.S in January 2018 and started her visiting career in 2018.

In her training class at Dog B.O.N.E.S was a petite lab mix named Norah (Norah's story also appears in this compilation). Norah's Mom and Sophie's Mom had done visits together with their dogs Kyrie and

Emmi and hoped that they could do visits with their new dogs. An opportunity soon presented itself. The VA Medical Center (Radiation Unit) in Jamaica Plain was interested in having teams visit on Tuesday mornings at 10:00. This day and time were selected because it was the orientation visit for new patients. The hope was that the dogs could “distract” the patients while they waited for their appointment. Sophie and Norah are still doing visits to the VA every week. One advantage of the “team” approach is that someone is available to visit even if the other part of the team is sick or on holiday. For Norah and Sophie, the team approach has expanded to visits at the Harvard Business School, Wellesley College and other wellness type visits. Each dog has its own special visits. Sophie is a Countway Cuddles Dog as well as a reading partner at the local library.

For me, the Veterans Administration hospital is one of the most rewarding experiences. Sophie and Norah are well known and well respected at the VA. It wasn’t long after starting at the Radiation Unit, that the dogs were asked to visit the Hematology Oncology unit. This has been an amazing journey. I



“This has been an amazing journey. I have seen the healing powers of the dogs so many times.”

have seen the healing powers of the dogs so many times. Sophie once refused to leave a patient having chemotherapy. She would not budge and finally climbed into his lap. He hugged her and whispered; how did you know I was having a terrible day?

The medical team was able to adjust

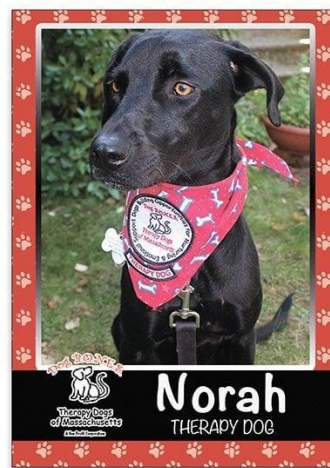
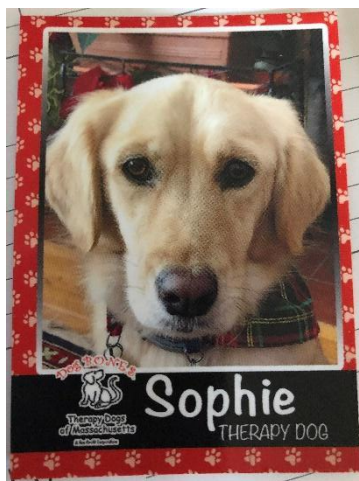
his protocols and his healing continued. Seeing Sophie in that man’s lap, with the entire medical staff with tears in their eyes, I realized just how powerful a visit could be. That isn’t the first time; she has climbed into beds and snuggled with patients until they fell asleep. She continues to know just who needs an extra cuddle from her. Recently, a man told me that when Sophie climbed over the chairs to reach him, he knew everything was going to be all right.

Everyone comments on how much they love to see the dogs working. I love to see the patients and staff with smiles as we walk the halls of the VA. Our dogs are a bright light for everyone. Even during COVID, when we could not visit in person, the dogs “sent” notes or pictures of their activities. It was amazing to see those pictures and notes on the bulletin boards when we returned to visiting in person. We have been visiting since 2018 and I feel that we aren’t just volunteers but friends to the patients and staff.

Sophie is a very special dog that loves to cuddle.



"Our dogs are a bright light for everyone."



Maryanne Tackeff and Cooper



Cooper, my 11-year-old Yellow lab and I have been making visits for 9 years. We are part of the Boston Children's Hospital Paw Prints Team. We visit the hospital once a week, and visit patients and staff. A dog visit at Children's Hospital is a welcome diversion for what is usually a traumatic visit for children. We meet people from all over the world, and they love meeting Coop. Many of the nurses at the hospital make their schedules coincide with Cooper's visits. He even won the Puppy Pageant a few years back. He looks forward to these visits as much as I do.

We also visit the Countway Library at Harvard Medical School. As you can imagine, there is a very high stress level for the students. I call Cooper my "Walmart Greeter," as he welcomes each

person who comes into the library. Most students will come and spend their lunch hour playing with him.

We owe our commitment to Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy, and are so thankful for the organization! Dogs make the world a much better place!

We are "so thankful for the organization! Dogs make the world a much better place!"

Katharine Turner and Kyss

Kyss is a 3-year-old female - Bernese Mountain Dog - a fluffy teddy bear. The breed is known as "the gentle giants" in the dog world. Kyss, being female and just under 100 pounds, is on the smaller size, but still can be a bit daunting when sitting or standing. Kyss is an amazing ambassador to both her breed and to the Dog B.O.N.E.S. program. We are very new to this as we started visits last summer.



When we got our pup she seemed very relaxed and calm around any situation. I like to call her an old soul in a puppy. Watching her interact with my dad and also mother-in-law, it seemed that perhaps she would do great as a therapy pup. So we continued training with this as our goal.

Kyss is an official "COVID" puppy. She was born 2/20/2020, so getting socialization was hard given the pandemic. And the world was full of masked people. We would go see my in-laws who were, at the time, in a rehab facility, and though it was not an official visit, it gave Kyss experience with the older generation. We have gone on visits to specific individuals and also nursing homes and nothing seemed to faze her.

Our first official visit was to my preschool. My coworkers knew we were doing this program so we set up a date! Newly

graduated, groomed, and extremely nervous, we went. I didn't know how it would go or how she would do. If this was going to work –and worse, what if it didn't. Those fears were calmed as soon as we walked into the room. You would have thought she was a pro, sitting patiently while the children approached, and soon she was asking for belly rubs and getting hugs!!

I think she knows when I get her vest out that she is going to "work." It's a tough job, being adored by the masses, but hey, someone has to do it. This program has helped the both of us, along with the people we meet and although starting slowly, we are looking forward to more to come.



We went before our church's council, we have a large group of elderly, and I thought it might be a great fit. We explained the process that we went through and it was decided that visits with Kyss would indeed be a good match. She now goes with me, and sits in the choir loft as official greeter and during the coffee hour after, we go around to see everyone.

Our library was looking for a pup to come and interact with the children, and now we go every other week to have the children read or just pet her. We usually get as many adults as kids. Kyss has been embraced by the group. Even with loud noises, plastic pizza and buildings being constructed around her, she just observes all and loves the attention.

We have just started visiting the local college as part of a Wellness study. It's so rewarding to have the students walk by and stop to pet and even hug her. We are in the process with our town's Council of Aging to start visitations there.

Together, with each visit, we are both gaining confidence, and everyone leaves just a bit calmer and happier (except maybe the person who gets to vacuum the area after these sessions are over).

“everyone leaves just a bit calmer and happier.... This has been such an amazing journey and we both can't wait for the next adventure.”

We have been fortunate to meet other therapy pups and it still amazes me how a room with a group of pups and there is no barking or commotion. The people we meet have all been so positive. Especially when a student or a parent of a child explains about a "bad" experience with a dog, I feel that everyone, including me, walks away feeling better.

We are continuing our training and plan to increase our visits as time goes on. This has been such an amazing journey and we both can't wait for the next adventure.

Jane Tyler and Abby

Abby (Caryhill's Seamist Dancer, BN, RE, THDX, CGCA, TKI) is my 13-year-old English Springer Spaniel. She has been doing therapy dog visits for 11 years for various home health agencies, rehabilitation facilities, and hospice organizations. Many of these encounters took her to hospitals, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and private homes.



There is a visit I would like to share.

I was called by a memory care facility to help get an elderly woman out of her room and to interact with the other residents on the floor. She had been staying in her room for 2 weeks and refused to come out. After talking with staff, they told me she loved dogs and was sad that she could no longer have her dog at the place where she now resides. I was asked by the social worker to come and do a therapy

dog visit with Abby to see if she would connect with the dog and then hopefully come out of her room.

On arrival the nurse introduced me to the resident, who had dementia, and I asked her if Abby and I could come in and visit her. She immediately was interested, especially when she saw the dog. I spent about 10 minutes talking with her about her dog and asked her to help me teach Abby how to decorate a Christmas tree (this was the activity of the day for the rest of the residents) as **I couldn't remember**. She informed me that **she knew what it was like not to remember** and told me she didn't know where all "her friends" (residents on the floor) had gone but she knew how to decorate a tree. I asked for her help to teach Abby, and out she came from her apartment. I took her over to the tree, which was being decorated by other residents, and she said, "There you all are. I have been looking for you for days." I brought Abby over to the tree and for the next 20 minutes this resident showed Abby how she used to decorate her tree at home. Following this activity, she hugged Abby and said "**Don't worry if you can't remember, someone will show you the way.**" The staff was in tears and this resident never had a problem coming out of her room again.

"These therapy dogs know who needs some support and we need to pay attention to them."



Many “can benefit from a visit from a dog.... a family member in distress, a staff member who may have lost a patient, or even a person walking in the parking lot that has had a tough day.”

Abby and I went back to visit her about every other week until her passing 3 months later. This was a visit for me to remember, demonstrating the amazing work these dogs can do to help others.

There are some lessons I have learned about therapy dog visits. When I first started off doing visits, I was so excited to visit with the assigned residents that at first, I by-passed the staff and family members to be sure to give enough time to those I was designated to visit. The immediate learning curve for me was that there are several people that can benefit from a visit from a dog.... a family member in distress, a staff member who may have lost a patient, or even a person walking in the parking lot that has had a tough day. These therapy dogs know who needs some support and we need to pay attention to them.

Following any visits, Abby and I go to a fun place ... the woods, the beach or we just play with a favorite toy. Visits have to be stressful for them and we need to help them through their hard work.

Mark Wagner and Willow (as told to Ellen Finnie)

Mark has been making therapy dog visits with his nearly five-year-old Bernese Mountain Dog, Willow, for almost a year, having been certified as a team in the spring of 2022. Mark and Willow have been very active in their first months as a new team, visiting multiple schools and hospitals.



Mark notes that because of Willow's sweet and loving temperament, and how accepting she is of every kind of setting and all kinds of people, including children, they have been able to make visits in a wide range of places. In their first year as a team, Mark has already witnessed the positive impact Willow has on people. Indeed, the visits have been so rewarding that Mark had trouble choosing among many heartwarming stories to tell.

But there are particular visits that stand out, capturing the impact that he sees Willow having on their visits—including the very first visit Mark and Willow made. It was at an elementary school, meeting with children that needed a little extra support, due to challenges in their home life or the impact of COVID or other issues. One little girl took a particular liking to Willow on that first visit. But it was

two weeks before she saw Willow again, because of April vacation. When Mark and Willow came back for their second visit, the young girl gave Willow a note with a flower in it. Clearly, Willow had made an impression. As the end of school year approached, this student would always visit Willow, and on their last visit, Mark asked if she wanted to take a picture of Willow to remember her. She said "Don't worry, I took one on the first visit!" Mark says this kind of connection "really captures your heart."

Another visit, at a school in Dorchester, also stands out for Mark. The drive was 1.25 hours each way from Mark's house, so he'd planned to go just once. He and Willow visited in a big classroom, and there was a student with special needs in the class. She tried numerous times to walk up and touch Willow, until finally she felt comfortable with her, and was able to pet Willow. When Mark and Willow were getting ready to leave, this young child—who had been so afraid—presented a paper necklace to Willow

as a special gift she had made. In another class, after Mark and Willow had been there about half hour and were getting ready to leave, there was one young boy who seemed particularly drawn to Willow. He began crying when he heard Willow was leaving. At that point, despite the long drive, Mark told them all he would bring Willow back. “How could I not?” he asks.

“It makes you so happy to do this and give this. Especially with the way the world is right now, the kids need so much...”

Mark marvels at what Willow has been able to do for kids, in just a few months. Mark says “it makes you happy that you can give back and see the impact on the students.”

Willow has also been visiting at a hospital. Mark and Willow started volunteering there because he was walking Willow near the hospital, and the volunteer program coordinator saw them and recruited them on the spot to come to the hospital. Mark and Willow have been visiting patients as well as staff, including on the rehab floor, and greeting people in the atrium. One day a woman was walking by there, crying, and asked if she could pet Willow. Mark explained that was what they were there for, and the woman spent time petting Willow and being with her. When she was parting, she said “Thank you, you made what was a bad day something nice.”

Mark says he has so many stories like that. While his friends say “you’re doing something good,” Mark says “it’s not me, I’m just Willow’s taxi driver.” He “doesn’t want to take credit,” because it’s Willow’s wonderful temperament that makes these visits possible. Mark also sees that Willow enjoys the experience, too. She seems to smile during her encounters.

Mark has taken time to observe Willow carefully to understand what it is she really enjoys. He tried visiting a nursing home with her, and realized that what Willow loves is the fuller engagement possible with children. He says she “has more energy with the children,” and seems to really love the stimulation of the interaction with young people. He also decided to shift away from visits where Willow was exposed to dropped food in one setting, which caused digestive problems for her sensitive stomach. This kind of careful observation and support of Willow is central to Mark’s approach as a therapy dog team with Willow.

In under a year, Mark and Willow have found their visits so rewarding. He says he “always gets thanks,” and that he is glad he “can give back.” Mark’s deceased wife spent 10 years in and out of the hospital, and they would sneak in their dogs. Mark saw how she benefited so much from having dogs visit, and this motivated Mark to bring that comfort to others, too. Now he finds that it’s not only a benefit to those they visit, but that “It makes you so happy to do this and give this. Especially with the way the world is right now, the kids need so much right now.” When visiting in the rehab setting, he could see that even when Willow was in a room less than 5 minutes, the patients were still so appreciative, and always thanked them. He says “it makes you feel you are doing something good, that you are making someone’s life happy.”

Something Mark finds is that the visits are very much a team activity – that he and Willow operate closely together, and are still learning as they go. Mark appreciates how the team element was emphasized in the Dog B.O.N.E.S. workshop, and how Dog B.O.N.E.S. connects members with sites in need of visits. Having attempted therapy dog visits previously on his own, using the Canine Good Citizen designation, he found he had trouble finding places to visit. So he really appreciates what Dog B.O.N.E.S. offers its members, particularly in identifying places that need and want visits. All in all, Mark says, their first year of visits as a team, Mark is pleased he has the flexibility in retirement to make visits, that so many places now recognize the clear benefit of therapy dogs, and that he feels he and Willow are making a real difference for those they visit.



Margaret Wall

My name is Margaret Wall and I am an alumni of Thunderhill Canine Encounters 4H Dog Club. I got my miniature dachshund, Peanut, certified to be a therapy dog through Dog B.O.N.E.S., and would love to share a bit about our experience:



My dog Peanut is a brown short-haired miniature dachshund who became certified as a therapy dog through Dog B.O.N.E.S. when he was 10 years old. We made therapy dog visits together throughout the next 8 years! During our time as a therapy dog and handler team, Peanut and I were able to comfort and entertain people at many local Special Needs Fun Days, homes of elderly individuals in our community, and nursing homes. Our favorite place to visit, however, was the ARC Center in Westwood for adults with developmental delays. Seeing the faces of the clients at the ARC light up when they got to hold, pet, feed, talk to, and take pictures with Peanut always reminded me of the healing power of a dog's love.

These therapy visits were extremely rewarding for Peanut

and I as they provided us the opportunity to forge friendships with the people we worked with, teach those we interacted with about caring for animals, and ultimately spend more quality time together as a dog and owner.

Some of my fondest memories took place when Peanut and I visited the ARC around the holiday season, when each year we dressed him up as Santa Claus, and everyone wanted to sing carols to him and get their picture taken celebrating with "Santa Paws" himself! During these visits, the festive decorations, holiday music, and smiles of all of the clients in each of the ARC classrooms always filled me with cheer; at the center of the joyous scene though was always Peanut in his floppy Santa getting snuggled and praised by everyone who saw him. I will always remember witnessing the special moments the clients shared with Peanut as they told him about their favorite Christmas movie or about what presents they hoped for. There's no better feeling than knowing you just made someone else's day!

"Seeing the faces of the clients ... light up when they got to hold, pet, feed, talk to, and take pictures with Peanut always reminded me of the healing power of a dog's love."

Therapy Dog visits are also a fantastic way to strengthen your relationship with your dog. In addition to having fun together during visits, Peanut and I built up a lot of trust in one another. I even feel that Peanut's work as a therapy dog made him more patient, sociable, and sweet overall! Completing the certification class and doing Therapy Dog visits with Peanut helped me achieve greater self-confidence, scores of new friends, and countless happy memories with my furry best friend!



Melissa Weiksnar and Puppy and River

2013 Contribution with 2023 update

2013: Puppy has been a therapy dog since October 2011. She was originally a Katrina rescue, who I adopted at age 5-1/2 in early 2011. Puppy especially enjoys helping college students relax before their finals and other high-stress times. She is a smaller lab mix (~43 pounds) who loves to chase chipmunks and roll in the grass, but does not care for the water.



Puppy

River Jr. has been a therapy dog since May 2013. I adopted him from Texas around age 5 in fall 2012. We'll never know why he only has 3 legs -- the vet's guess is that he had some traumatic injury where the most cost-effective alternative was amputation (it wasn't cancer or a birth condition). For all the trauma he has been through, all he wants to do is give and receive love. We hope that he will find a special calling among people who have been through trauma, but likes everybody!

He LOVES to run (most people don't even notice he's missing a back leg). He's a medium-sized lab (~60 pounds) and loves the water, no matter how dirty.

Update 2023:

Puppy and River became beloved visitors at the continuing care community where my parents lived. My dad died in June 2018, River about a year later, Puppy in February 2021, and my mom 2 months later. I could go on and on about how the dogs made a difference. Here is just one example:

One day when I went up to memory care, Mrs. J was singing along to a boombox CD of "Elder Songs." She held the lyrics handout, following the words to another song with her finger, but singing the words of the actual song perfectly. Mr. B was sitting next to her, hunched over in silence. River came up to him, nuzzled his hands, and Mr. B started petting him -- then started whistling the song to River. It was all I could do to hold back the tears.



River Jr.

Fran Weil and Paxton

It's All About Love: Paxton the Therapy Dog

He was a plucky and self-reliant Westie -- feisty and self-assured by breed -- designed to hunt and kill vermin to clear land for farmers in Scotland.

But Paxton's generous heart followed another path, serving others who needed him by offering the gifts of love and comfort as an accomplished Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dog.



Recently, Paxton was sent gently home to God's garden and his person, Fran Weil, a Dog B.O.N.E.S. certification instructor and pet loss bereavement counselor, wrote a tribute to her much-loved animal friend in the Perfect Paws Pet Ministry Newsletter. It appears below:

"Paxton, 14, was an 18-pound Westie of great stature and heart. This gifted therapy dog and cherished companion of Fran Weil and Gail Arnold, was celebrated home to God on Sunday, February 12 following a sudden health decline.

In his snappy blue Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dogs vest, Paxton traveled to 20 different venues during his nine years of service on the north shore of Boston, visiting hospitals, pre- and elementary schools, high schools, colleges and libraries – where he helped beginner and reluctant readers gain confidence – and

during his weekly visits to two alternative high schools, where he loved connecting with reticent young adults with social emotional learning disorders.

Through his visits and extracurricular activities on the north shore, many people knew Paxton. He “wrote” a children’s book, “Paxton the Therapy Dog: It’s All About Love,” (available on Amazon) whose proceeds go to Perfect Paws, and in 2017, appeared on Danvers Community Access Television (DCAT) to promote Dog B.O.N.E.S. -- and blithely stole the show. He was such a hit that the station manager and staff awarded him the Golden Onion Award for the “cutest guest.” Paxton also won the 2020 Outstanding Volunteer Partner Award from Danvers High School’s DanversCares organization in honor of his many visits with students in classes and at de-stressing gatherings during midterm and final exams. In that year, Paxton accepted a request from Salem Prep High School to offer a commencement address to cheer up students in COVID lockdown whom he visited each week prior to the pandemic. (Video available here: <https://youtu.be/U8EITdM15uk>). The students and faculty loved it!

Ellen Finnie, who certified him as a Dog B.O.N.E.S. therapy dog in 2014 and knew his “work,” generously offered on Pax’s Circle of Prayer death notice on Facebook: “What an irreplaceable loving spirit and dear, dear boy -- an ambassador for his breed and for therapy dogs. Such a peppy, happy, sweet fellow, so open to the world. What a gift to all who met him and felt his love.”

Craig Macarelli, a principal at the alternative schools we visited shared this response to Pax’s passing:

“Fran,

I am so terribly sorry for your loss of Pax. I can remember him trotting in with you the first time visiting the Community High School like it was yesterday. Those paw steps have left an indelible mark on me and the work that I do, and more meaningfully, they have left an invaluable mark on the lives of the kids Kevin and I serve. I feel so grateful and honored to have met you and Pax on his journey, and I know he'll rest peacefully with all the good he has given in his time.

“Paxton’s “paw steps have left an indelible mark on me and the work that I do, and more meaningfully, they have left an invaluable mark on the lives of the kids.. [we] serve.”

I know this grief all too well, a type of sadness that can't be described. I know you do too. But nonetheless, if I can offer some wise words, albeit from a Marvel Comics TV show, these have helped me over the last couple of years since losing my Bane. ‘What is grief, if not love persevering?’ -Vision

Thanks for letting us know, and I hope to see you soon. May Pax rest in the very sweetest peace. -Craig”



Paxton leaves a rich legacy of service. His two-and-a-half-year-old Westie sibling, Brodie has embarked on a similar trajectory as a B.O.N.E.S. certified therapy dog. With glee and attitude, she visits Lahey Hospital Peabody on a weekly basis, touring all the floors and departments, eliciting delight from clinicians, staff and patients alike -- even on the elevators!. What a gift these canines are.

David White and Benny



Benny the Therapy Dog

Benny is a dog who found his true calling as a therapy dog. We have had a number of Tibetan Terriers over the years, and they have all been very sweet and fairly laid-back fellows. But Benny is exceptionally outgoing and wants to greet everyone. We took him to puppy kindergarten where he was most interested in socializing. We tried agility next, but he didn't really take to it (too laid-back). So, we thought what's a good career for this guy? And being a therapy dog seemed like the right match.

We connected with Dog B.O.N.E.S. and enrolled him in a training course which he sailed through – although he was, I believe the smallest guy in the class of mostly goldens and labs. Once registered with Dog B.O.N.E.S. in 2014 we started to get notices of requests and went out on the road. Benny has a real rapport with young people, and we made a lot of visits to

schools and colleges. We also took the Reading Dog training and Benny was a regular feature at the local library.

Benny's longest gig was at MIT. Many students there are far away from home and family – and their dogs. It can also be a very stressful environment. Several years ago, there were some student suicides and Benny went to the special dog events that were organized in response to that. That transitioned to roughly monthly doggy meets and greets where students could come and de-stress with a variety of friendly dogs. Unfortunately, with COVID that ended as did most other therapy dog events everywhere.

Over the years Benny and I have gotten to meet and interact with many people we might not have otherwise met. It's a great social and community building experience

Visits are “a great social and community building experience for everyone.”

for everyone. Benny is still doing well at 12 but has less energy now and has retired from therapy dog work. It's a good career for the right dog, and maybe we'll try again with our next puppy.



Benny at MIT

Pam White and Bella

Bella, a 13-year-old Schnoodle, and I have been making visits for 8 years. We visit the Village memory care in Duxbury regularly. Bella is well behaved and is welcome on most of the residents' laps. She will hop up, turn to look them in the eye and then sit with her back to them as if saying, "Ok, I am here, start patting me." It can be seen in the way many of the resident's pat Bella, that they 'go back to the past' and appear to become very calm and will start talking about the past. I have learned so much from these people who had amazing careers and lives well spent.

Bella also has participated in the county 4H program with Cathy Acampora going into the local schools to teach the students about animal adaptations. Last February we went to a school in Marshfield to a session for 3rd graders. My daughter also has a Schnoodle who also is Dog B.O.N.E.S certified, and both dogs were present along with about 4 other dogs. Fast forward to June, I was at the Marshfield pet hospital with Bella for a check up when a mother and daughter came in with their dog, a Labrador Retriever. The little girl just kind of stared at us while we were sitting in the lobby waiting to be called. She finally said, "Is that Bella or Sassy?" I was stunned. I didn't know how she would have known our dogs. I told her it was Bella and I asked her how she knew their



names. She said they came to her school and she knew they were part schnauzer and part poodle, and her dog was a Labrador Retriever so she had webbed feet to help her swim. This is what the program taught her and it made quite an impression on this 3rd grader.

My other favorite place to take Bella is the Pembroke Library once a month for Puppy Dog Tales. Children come and read to Bella and speaking on Bella's behalf I let the reader know how much Bella liked the book,

how she liked how well they read or how they used 'voices' while they read and added interest to the reading. As a past teacher, through Bella, I encourage new and emerging readers through Bella.

I honestly feel like I get more out of the visits than the residents of the Village. Bella is usually exhausted after the visits, but all I have to do is say, "Who wants to go visit?" and hold up her vest and she comes running, wagging her tail and can't wait to get in the car to go.

I love going into the schools because the students respond so well to 'hands on' learning and are engaged and excited. The story above proves that at least one student learned from that particular session but I know many more do as well.



"I honestly feel like I get more out of the visits than the residents"