

SPEAK!



Vol. 18, No. 1, Spring 2009 | Canine Therapy Corps newsletter

Gentle Giants Encourage Small Steps



Gus, the Giant Easter Bunny

Sometimes, Canine Therapy Corps dogs are bigger than their clients! Our giants include Emma, the Irish Wolfhound, Bayla and Gus, the Newfoundlands, Spike, the English Mastiff, Ria the Greater Swiss Mountain dog, and Spencer, a Bernese Mountain dog. In addition to being recognized for their large size, these dogs are known for their gentle dispositions, patience, and eagerness to learn to new skills. At Canine Therapy Corps the dogs put these traits to work in our programs and at outreach events. In this issue, we share some of the accomplishments inspired by these big hearted canines.

Overcoming Neurological and Physical Challenges

Sarah Stewart

One of my most memorable experiences was working with a young girl named "Celina" at Schwab as she was recovering from neurological injuries. One of the things that made our experience with Celina special was the way that we were able to get her whole family engaged in the therapy session. Celina was the eldest child in a large family, all of whom were at the session. Her youngest sibling, a 16-month-old toddler, loved to bury his face in Gus' fur. Her brother "Miguel" was the only member of the family who spoke English,

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Spa Night – A Zensational Evening

Neither flooding rains nor cavernous potholes discouraged our guests from attending the second annual Royal Treatment, a Spa Experience for You and Your Dog on February 26. In fact, the torrential downpours served as a pre-swim shower for the many dogs who took advantage of the warmer waters of the temperature controlled pool.

Once again, dual massages by professional human and dog masseuses calmed dogs and their stressed out humans. Rumor has it that a lot of snoring was heard from the examining rooms during the massage sessions. Of course, the massage sessions were fully booked all evening.



Doga

Anastasia the Palm and Paw Reader made a return appearance and offered her insights to curious canine and human guests.

Kristyn Caliendo, who offers regular Doga classes at Royal Treatment Vet Spa, led three introductory sessions to the discipline, which included popular asanas such as the Downward Dog, modified by the Fire Hydrant (an appropriately raised and bent leg).

Elegant food and beverages were provided by Canine Therapy Corps volunteer Stephanie Frey and her catering company Convergence Cuisine, and Melissa Cox. Gourmet dog treats were occasionally mistaken for human cookies!

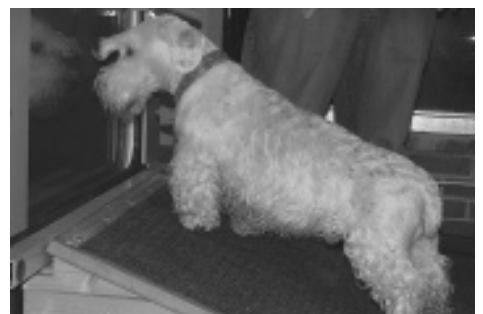
Dr. Barbara Royal and her staff provided demonstrations of the in-water treadmills, used to help dogs recover from injury, increase strength, reduce weight or to offset the ravages of aging. One senior canine observer was so intent on using the treadmill that he waited on the ramp for an hour for a turn.

[See more photos on page 5](#)

All of the guests, no matter the size or species, left the event happy, calm and centered, hoping to maintain the mood as long as possible.

Special thanks to Patti Annis, Lisa Hish, Pam Kuhn and Kimberly Mottlow for their soothing touches, to Anastasia Royal for her vision of our futures, to Kristyn Caliendo for the calming Doga sessions, to the pool assistants for their good humor and to the staff of Royal Treatment Veterinary Spa for making everything run smoothly.

See you next time!



Max waits for the treadmill

Kibbles and Bits

Congratulations to three new volunteer teams who passed the Canine Therapy Corps certification test in January. **Jamee Hill** and her boxer mix, **Pele**, are busy working with the children at Advocate Lutheran General Children's Hospital, where Pele's youthful energy is sure to make him a favorite. Five year volunteer **Toni Janzen** and her black lab **Jakey** are first time testers, even though Toni has worked for five years at the Rice Center without a dog. She and Jakey have already graduated their first group! **Liz Loftus** and **D. Vinci**, a setter mix, are working along side Liz's other certified therapy dog, **P. Casso**, at Haymarket Center. **Joy Schmoll**, a new volunteer has already completed her first assignment as photographer at Spa Night and March practice session!

Congratulations to four new teams who passed the certification test in March: **Nancy Golden** and her fourth CTC dog **Trudy**, a standard poodle, **Roger Lauth** and



Linda Loftus and D. Vinci, Toni Janzen and Jakey and Jamee Hill and Pele



Christine Montet and Snoopy, Nancy Golden and Trudy, Birgit Mantilla and Hero and Roger Lauth and Tucker

his second CTC dog, **Tucker**, a black lab/golden retriever mix, **Birgit Mantilla** and her second CTC English Mastiff, **Hero**, and **Christine Montet** and **Snoopy**, a Shepherd mix, all passed on their first attempt.

Scotch and **Rou Cozzdina**, **Max Van Den Hende**, **Gus Stewart** and **Saffie Toy** greeted surprised movie goers at a preview screening of Hotel for Dogs, a delightful film about two kids on a mission to create a home for homeless dogs in an abandoned hotel. The first dogs to attend a movie at Webster Place, the five therapy dogs enjoyed the movie and the popcorn! The

movie received a unanimous three and a half woofs rating!

Were you at the auto show, and recognized some familiar four footed faces in the crowds? We were on our way to the International Kennel Club winter cluster of dog shows. Canine Therapy Corps volunteers and dogs visited with dog lovers from across the Midwest and shared stories of our successes with special needs populations of all ages. Special thanks to **Birgit Mantilla** and **Spike**, **Kylie McDonald**, **Stephanie** and **Joe Frey** and **Sherman**,

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Donations in memory of, or in honor of, a special person or pet are always welcome and help us continue to provide our programs free of charge. We even have birthday cards for your canine friend's special day. Canine Therapy Corps is a 501(c)(3) organization, and your gift is tax exempt to the extent permitted by law.

Donations were made to Canine Therapy Corps:

In memory of Tag Alexander and Ginger Kadow by Scott Allen Barber

In memory of Thor Hoffman by Mark and Mary Bookman, Janet and Larry Eaton, and Mr. and Mrs. Alan Izbicky

In memory of Milo Abrahams by Carol and Jeff Clark, Geri and Greg Hansen and Janet and Larry Eaton

In memory of Lily Miller by Scott Garland and James Pawelski

In memory of Debby Glixon by Mr. and Mrs. Donald Haider

In memory of Chaz by Mr. and Mrs. John Kinney

In memory of John Alexander and Tag by Mr. and Mrs. William Pross

In memory of Maggie Dugan by Gayle Schor and David Friend

In memory of David Durkin by Mr. and Mrs. Sanford Schulert

In memory of Daisy, Baby, Puss, Plato and Penny and in honor of Daisy by Ellise Steglinski

In honor of Judy Keitz by Cora Adams

In memory of Chessie and Olivia Lawler by Cheryl Willians

In honor of Jill Tabone by Linda Appino and Tom Tabone

In honor of Connie Smith and Rou and Scotch by Gregory Bayles

In honor of Linda Levy by Douglas Benning

In honor of Sarah Stewart and Gus by Mr. and Mrs. Randy Carlton

In honor of Sarah Stewart by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Franke

In honor of the Gress Family by Jennifer Gleason

In honor of Geri and Gregg Hansen and Barbara Hacker and Burley Smith by Gail Kaplan

In honor of Lisa Wiersma, Turner and Dubs by Dr. Susan Wiersma and Dr. Timothy Kinsella

In honor of Morgan by Deanna Rattner

In honor of Perry and Bing by James Ruud and Richard Shoemaker

In honor of Barbara Young Morris by Mr. and Mrs. William Young

Large Breeds *cont. from pg. 1*

and he translated the commands from English to Spanish for the rest of the family. Celina had difficulty remembering and sequencing words. We set up a game where Gus sat at the side of Celina's wheelchair, and one of her siblings threw a ball down the hallway for Gus to fetch. Celina used verbal commands to send Gus to the ball, have him pick it up, bring it back to the wheelchair, and give it to her or one of her siblings. The sessions were difficult for Celina because she had to not only remember the words for the commands but also remember them in order. Yet she was motivated to achieve her therapy goals, and she was encouraged by her whole family, especially Miguel. I was grateful that Gus helped Celina and enabled her and her family to see how much she could achieve.

At Advocate Lutheran General, we have worked with children under outpatient care for neurological and physical needs who are also on the autism spectrum. We have had tremendously rewarding experiences working one-on-one with the children and with their families. One of the most touching moments was during a session with a four year old girl whose therapy goal was to strengthen her abdominal muscles. Gus stood next to her in a stand-stay position while she worked on doing sit-ups. Although the exercise was difficult, she persevered because she intently wanted the reward of being able to reach Gus at the end of her sit-up. Seeing her reach her goal was extraordinary.

Helping children with autism and enabling them to achieve their therapy goals has been particularly rewarding. In the classrooms at Easter Seals Therapeutic School, the children work on skills such as identification by pointing to parts of Gus, such as his nose, ears, and tail, and naming them. We have also been able to help the children work on motor skills by rolling a ball to Gus and having him roll it back to them with his nose.

What the clients in all of our programs have been able to achieve with help from the dogs has truly been remarkable. We are extremely proud to be among the volunteers helping patients become stronger physically, cognitively, and emotionally, and to reach their full potential.



Spike, Ria, Spenser and Bayla

Self Confidence and Pride at Rice Child and Family Center

Kathy Myalls Zettek

The children at Rice come to us with a history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and have deep-rooted trust and relationship issues. Many of them have had multiple failed foster placements and have issues related to attachment and separation. All of them are in a full-time residential facility, away from whatever homes they did have during their short lives, and often overwhelmed by their situations. They come to our first session uncertain of what to expect and are often surprised, frightened, or wary when they see our group of LARGE canine volunteers! My Bernese Mountain Dog, Spenser, is among the smallest of the dogs, and he's 100 pounds!!! Especially for the children who have had no experience with dogs, or whose only experiences have been negative, this can be an intimidating sight!

Each of our 8-week sessions evolves differently because our clients change so dramatically from group to group. Our volunteers work closely with the Rice unit leaders to learn more about the children we serve so that we can target the activities with the dogs to match those needs. Some of our groups progress more slowly, and some move at an amazing pace, where we struggle to come up with new activities challenging enough to keep the group interested and excited about the sessions! Regardless of the differences, we see a remarkable evolution in the children over the course of our program. They develop from a timid, slightly nervous bunch to confident, experienced dog handlers in less than two months! We believe that what we do in the sessions has a positive impact on the children because we see the effects in their interaction with the dogs. We get feedback from the unit leaders that the kids look for-

ward to Tuesday nights when the canine therapy session is scheduled and that it is a major incentive for the boys and girls to work on positive behaviors. Yet we rarely get a glimpse into how the therapy sessions improve their lives outside of the program.

During a recent graduation ceremony, we caught a glimpse of the impact we all hope we have on our young clients. At the end of the eight week sessions, the children participate in a graduation ceremony that is the culmination of the program. The ceremony provides them with an opportunity to show off the skills that they have learned with the dogs and what those skills have taught them about interacting with people, including their peers, families, and teachers. One of the young boys who participated was 12-year-old "Steve," who had been in a group of boys that had been particularly challenging. Steve had difficulty staying focused during the sessions due to his very short attention span, and he was incredibly rambunctious. It was hard for us to fathom that we had had any impact on him at all during those eight weeks, let alone a positive, memorable experience. But what Steve shared that night at graduation was heartwarming and inspiring. He stood in front of the audience that included both his peers and adults, some of whom he had never seen before. He was dressed in a white button-down shirt with a red tie, and blue trousers (instead of the jeans and gym clothes the children usually wear), and spoke without notes to the audience. Steve told us how much the therapy program had meant to him. He told us that when he was having a bad day or he had trouble at school, he thought of what he had learned at canine therapy. He also talked about what he had learned about himself during the sessions and his immense source of pride in what he had accomplished with the dogs. Steve had developed confidence in his abilities, and they shined brightly during his presentation. Hearing him talk was the biggest reward the volunteers could ask for: the knowledge that we are making a positive difference for these children. The smiles on the faces of the Rice boys and girls when they run into the gym every week now tells us volunteers a little more than it did before. We knew they were happy to be in the gym. Now we know they are also happier – even if just a little – when they leave the gym as well.

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Large Breeds *cont. from pg. 3*

Using Communication with Dogs to Help Children Grow

By Lorie Latham

When Bayla and I first heard about Canine Therapy Corps, we were fascinated by the impact that the dogs have on the clients' lives. Now that we are working in a program, we are even more enamored by the efficacy of the programs and how rewarding they are for both the clients and the volunteers (including the dogs). We volunteer at the Rice Center (described above), and every second there has been a truly moving experience. Our goal is to help the kids not only move past painful experiences but also help them develop the social skills they need for positive growth and break the cycle of future abuse.

Our program leaders do a beautiful job of selecting a theme for each session and building in ways of communicating with the dogs to help the children understand how the concepts are parallel to aspects of daily living. Every Tuesday before the session begins, we review what we did in the previous week. It's amazing to see how well the kids remember what commands they learned working with the dogs and how they transfer those concepts to their daily lives with the help of their unit leader. In the process of teaching the dogs, the kids are learning how to be compassionate and care for other living beings, how to be respectful of others, and how to show love for others, including themselves. Sometimes when the kids start out they are a bit fearful of dogs, especially the larger breed dogs, like my dog Bayla, an enthusiastic young Newfoundland. By the second or third session, not only are they no longer afraid of dogs but they have truly acclimated themselves to the dogs. They get to know each dog individually and understand their personalities. The smiles and laughter coming from the children show the bond they have developed with the dogs. What's most rewarding is to know that what's underneath that smile is the path to a loving home and a brighter future.

Helping Young Burn Victims "Just Be Kids"

By Gail Kaplan

One of the most rewarding experiences that Emma and I have had with Canine Therapy Corps was the day that we spent at I Am Me Burn Camp during the summer. Burn Camp is an annual camp sponsored by the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance held for children who have suffered severe burns. The children range in age, but they share a common bond—they are all dealing with the traumas of being burn victims. These traumas include heavy scarring, disfigurement, amputations, and internal injuries. Some of the children are non-ambulatory, and others have limited mobility with the help of a wheelchair.

When we first got to camp, I was a bit uncertain about how the kids might react to Emma due to her size. However, Emma's 185 pounds were of no concern for any of the campers. They warmed up to her immediately. To the kids, Emma was just another 4-year-old full of love and compassion. She did not stare at their injuries or judge them in any way. She enabled the kids forget about their injuries and the difficulties they faced so that they could "just be kids".

During the canine therapy sessions, a small group of kids worked with each of the dogs using agility equipment. Everyone in the group participated—from the kids who could walk alongside Emma independently to the kids who could navigate their wheelchairs around her to the kids who had very limited mobility and could interact only by nuzzling her. What may have seemed like a few minutes of playing or just holding Emma generated a wealth of smiles and strength from kids who have had unimaginable struggles.



Emma makes a friend

The Power of Teamwork and Communication at Schwab

By Birgit Mantilla

One of my most memorable experiences as a volunteer was when Spike, my English Mastiff, and I worked with a timid young woman named "Francesca" at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital. Francesca was recovering from multiple traumas and chronic illnesses, including diabetes. Francesca did not speak English and had very poor eyesight, making the session seem challenging. If the dog was more than a couple of feet away, even as big as Spike is, Francesca had trouble seeing him.

During the session, Spike and I worked with Francesca along with my husband, and another volunteer, Michelle. We meshed as a team: Michelle would explain an exercise to my husband who translated it to Spanish for Francesca. Michelle and I demonstrated hand signals for Spike and Jib, a Portuguese water dog, and Francesca used them while teaching Jib and Spike the commands in Spanish. Even though the therapy seemed particularly difficult for Francesca and she was still a bit apprehensive, she persevered.

The following week at program, I was pleasantly surprised to see Francesca not only joining us again but also beaming with enthusiasm. The gains that Francesca had made were not only on the inside, but they had also flowed outward. She was very animated as she showed her sister, whom she had invited to the program, what she could now do that had not been possible a week ago. During the session, Francesca worked with yet another dog, and taught him some new commands in Spanish. Her sister also participated in the program. While the dogs learned a new language, the most rewarding aspect of the program was the change that had occurred for Francesca. She had increased her ability to communicate, and gained the confidence and the motivation to achieve her therapy goals.

The following reflection was written by a participant in our program at the Rice Child and Family Center.

IT TAKES COURAGE TO ACCOMPLISH MANY THINGS

From my experience it takes courage to do a lot of things.

Courage is admitting when you're wrong and taking responsibility for your actions. It also takes courage to express your feelings, and to genuinely love yourself.

Another form of courage is allowing yourself to be comfortable in your own skin. It takes courage to bite your tongue and not say something even when you really want to.

Courage is respecting and applying the golden rule to your everyday life. Courage is learning from your mistakes, and learning to forgive and forget.

It also takes a lot of courage to read our loud or even give speeches out loud just as I am now.

Most of all it takes courage to learn something new and not be afraid to continue learning something new.

IN MEMORIAM:

It is with great sadness that we report the loss of Trierers, a black lab/golden retriever mix and nine-year Canine Therapy Corps veteran. Trierers, Roger Lauth's devoted and beloved companion, lived for her work. Roger had to hide her Canine Therapy Corps vest or she would sit by the door all day, ready to go. Trierers had the uncanny ability to know when someone was sad or needed a paw. She bonded with and touched people in a heartfelt way. Trierers had an unwaveringly gentle spirit and was incredibly smart. She took to doing tricks readily. Her favorite was to play dead; when someone said "bang," not only would she flop on her side, but she would even close

her eyes. She was a favorite at Somerset Place and Haymarket Center where she worked over the past several years. Trierers spent her last days training her replacement, Tucker, to care for Roger, whom she loved completely. In three short weeks, she taught Tucker to fetch his leash and food bowl, balance a cookie on his nose and much, much more. Tucker hopes to follow Trierers' path and is taking the Canine Therapy Corps test in March. Trierers has left large paw prints for Tucker to fill, and she will be missed.

Canine Therapy Corps Reaches New Populations!

Canine Therapy Corps is proud to be at the forefront of developing new applications for animal assisted therapy program. This spring, volunteers will partner with the Heartland Alliance to work with unaccompanied immigrant youth in a residential setting who have been diagnosed with mental illness, including clinical depression and post traumatic stress disorder. The ultimate goal is to reunite the children with their families. The participants will be between the ages of ten and seventeen, and will work with the therapy dogs on improving language skills, impulse control, self esteem and self confidence.

As Canine Therapy Corps dogs age, the fast paced, interactive nature of most programs can be a dangerous challenge for senior canine citizens. Callie Cozzolino, Program and Outreach Director, is committed to

finding opportunities for these wonderful dogs to continue their important work without taxing their health. In response, Canine Therapy Corps will launch the first program in our Expanded Outreach Initiative. Volunteers and their dogs will visit the Pediatric Oncology Department at Advocate Lutheran General Children's Hospital to help the kids deal with their treatments. Unlike a one-time outreach opportunity like a visit to a school, Canine Therapy Corps will visit the facility every week and offer a warm nose or a soft head to lay on a small knee during treatment. If this pilot is as successful as expected, it will be expanded to include other oncology departments and family waiting areas on surgical floors in partner hospitals.

For more information on either of these programs, please contact the office.

More Spa Night Attendees



A guest enjoys a massage



Heather and Pumkin in downward dog



Joyce and Siena stretch

Kibbles and Bits

cont. from pg. 2

Mary Ann Sornito and **Lily, Jenny Garretson, Linda Carr** and **Toby, Sharon Van Den Hende** and **Max, Liz Loftus** and **Derek Brust** and **D. Vinci** and **P. Casso** who staffed our booth

The Canine Therapy Corps Book Group took a field trip in February to the Pet Show at the Shedd Aquarium. While they refurbish their tanks and the aquatic mammals are temporarily housed at aquariums around the country, the Shedd trainers put their phenomenal skills to work on a lucky selection of rescue dogs from local shelters. Using the same clicker-based positive reinforcement techniques they use with the aquatic mammals, the trainers have created a fabulous show demonstrating the limitless capacity of all canines treated with love, affection and TREATS!! The show continues thru the fall and will knock your paws off!!

On March 20, **Linda Carr** and **Toby, Callie Cozzolino** and **Rou** and **Sarah Stewart** and **Gus** volunteered with Safe Humane Chicago to teach kids about dogs and dog safety at Bethlehem Star M.B. Church on the city's south side. Safe Humane Chicago is an unprecedented community alliance that combats violence by promoting compassion and caring for people and animals. It educates the public about responsible pet ownership and safety by promoting programs that stop violence associated with dog fighting and animal abuse by providing beneficial activities and connecting pet owners to available resources. For more information about Safe

Humane Chicago, please call 312/409.4790.

Join us the Anti-Cruelty Society's 15TH Annual Bark in The Park on May 2 in Lincoln Park at Montrose Harbor. Proceeds benefit the Society's important work, including adoption services, low and no-cost veterinary services, public education and more. Register at anticruelty.org. Interested in spreading the work about our important work to the estimated 3000 dog lovers who will be there? Please call our office at 773.404.6467.

Congratulations to volunteer **Barbara Zimmermann** on her recent marriage to **Ed Moscato. Barb** and her dog **Otto** have worked at Haymarket Center and now lead our program at Keshet.

If you have a Canine Therapy Corps dog, you've met **Wendi Mancini**, a long time volunteer who has attended virtually every practice and test for the past ten years. Please join us in wishing Wendi a speedy recovery from her recent surgery. Let's also send get well wishes to **Eileen Fitzsimons**, a long time volunteer at the Rehabilitation



Lily and Spike at IKC

Institute of Chicago and newly certified program leader, as she recovers from her recent surgery.

Don't have a therapy dog, but have a candidate? Check our website for a new video this spring. It will show you every exercise your dog must successfully complete to pass the test. And you have time to work on that long sit – our next practice and test sessions will be in August.

CORRECTION: In the Winter issue of SPEAK!, we listed the Winners Circle sponsors. We regret that the Members United Credit Union, a Galaxy sponsor, was inadvertently omitted from the list. We are most grateful for their support.



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