

A Special Monday Night

By Sharon Van Den Hende

Monday nights have been special to me for the past eight years. That's how long I have been working in a Chenny Troupe program with my daughter Karen. When we started at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital, she was just a kid of 11, and we wondered if she was capable of working in the adult environment of a hospital rehabilitation setting. Karen would be exposed to many difficult situations, and see many badly injured people. She proved to be more than capable, she was brilliant.

At first, Karen worked with me and our Labrador retriever, Penny; but when Karen saw the progress that patients were making while working with Chenny Troupe dogs, she wanted to become more involved with her Cairn Terrier, Max. Max, one of the few terriers in Chenny Troupe, passed the test and we became a team – me and Penny, Karen and Max.

My concerns about Karen being too young to work in these settings quickly passed. Like many of the volunteers in Chenny Troupe, and certainly, all of the dogs, she has a gift of looking past people's disabilities into their hearts and souls. We worked with a patient who had lost half of her face due to a failed suicide attempt with a rifle. Karen and Max worked with this patient as if her injuries did not exist, an example of the uncondi-



Max at work at La Rabida

tional love that Chenny Troupe dogs provide and the resolve Chenny Troupe volunteers exhibit week in and week out. That young patient learned that others could see beyond her wounds to the person she was inside, and hopefully, it helped her find a road to recovery. Penny passed away four years ago. Her loss ended our work as a mother-daughter team. We had already been working at La Rabida Children's Hospital and Research Center. La Rabida was a perfect place for Karen to continue her work without Penny and me. Children often trust other young people more than adults when they are in stressful situations, and the kids at La Rabida were no exception.

La Rabida is a special place. Our program is led by Jan Rose and two therapists. The children are very young, some as young as 3

years old, and have physical, developmental and/or emotional issues. The group is intentionally small to allow for very individualized sessions to meet the needs of the children. One recent Monday night, Karen and Max worked with "Amy", an eight-year-old girl who had suffered a stroke as a complication of sickle cell anemia. Amy was not using her right arm as her therapists had wanted her to. It was stiff, it hurt and Amy was very sad. The goal for Amy at that session was to work on exercises that would require Amy to use her arm and really challenge her range of motion limitations. To get Amy motivated, Karen decided to use a hurdle so that Amy would use her arm to signal Max to jump over it. Karen told Amy that the only way to get Max to jump over that hurdle was for her to give him the hand signal for "over" with her right arm. Before anyone could blink twice, her little arm was up into the air and Max was jumping over the hurdle. What an accomplishment for Amy! Karen and Max were thrilled that they had been able to encourage Amy to use her arm, something that the therapists had been unable to do.

We've witnessed so many meaningful breakthroughs over the years. Working with our dogs, and each other, in Chenny Troupe has been one of the most rewarding volunteer experiences that we have had.

Chenny Troupe Program Helps Kids Cope

By Michael Golden

The young residents of the Rice Child and Family Center of the Children's Home and Aid Society struggle with long-term behavior disorders such as fighting, destruction of property and self-injury. Since 2002, the Chenny Troupe program has provided a way for the participants to improve their social, communication and behavior skills as they continue their growth and development into independent adults.

The program at Rice follows the Chenny Troupe award winning curriculum devel-

oped for work with young people in substance abuse rehabilitation. Before each session, the therapists share information about the challenges faced by the participants during the previous week in order to further customize the specific therapeutic goals for each child attending the session. The Rice staff also alerts the volunteers to any potential issues that may arise during the session. Christine Burback, the program leader, agrees with the volunteers that they have seen some amazing improvements in the

children they've worked with.

Take for example, "Patty," who recently completed the Chenny Troupe program at Rice. She is a 13-year-old who struggles with issues of control. She has a history of fighting with staff members as well as the other children and has outbursts of uncontrollable rage. In order to work with the Chenny Troupe dogs, Patty had to earn a specific number of points for positive behavior. According to Rice Center staff,

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Kibbles and Bits

We welcome new volunteer teams **Elizabeth Loftus** and **P. Casso** and **Jordan Matyas** and **Bertha** who passed the certification test in May. Both teams plan to get very busy as soon as our programs resume in the fall.

Summer is a time for kids (and grown-ups) to have fun, and the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance's I Am Me Summer Camp helps make that happen for young victims of fire. In June, a group of volunteers led by **Michelle Schwartz** ran dogs and kids ragged through agility courses, relay races, and group games at YMCA Camp Duncan in Ingleside. The kids learned to guide the dogs over jumps, through hoops, up and

down a ramp, in and out of weave poles and more, having a heck of a time while improving their range of motion and gross motor skills. The campers, many of whom are permanently scarred, physically and mentally by their ordeals, had a chance to forget their difficulties while working with the Chenny Troupe dogs, who are blind to disabilities. Special thanks to **Michelle** and **Mary Ann Alexander** and **Tag, Ginny Beck** and **Dylan, Linda Carr** and **Toby, Mary Dellorto** and **Gemma** and **Kali, Michael Golden** and **Sadie Louise, John** and **Kim Himmel** and **Dean, Birgit Mantilla** and **Spike**, and **Sarah Poeppel** and **Rendy Schwartz**. We've already been invited back next summer, and will be seeing some of our new friends at Burn Survivor Day on August 30 at Chicago's 63rd Street Beach.

Chenny Troupe volunteers **Callie Cozzolino** and **Scotch, Dan Jarvis** and **Sam** and **Birgit Mantilla** and **Spike** joined Executive Director **Janet Eaton** at the National Youth Leadership Conference on Medicine last month to present two introductory sessions about animal assisted therapy. High school students from around the country gather at University of Illinois at Chicago to learn more about careers in medicine, and Chenny Troupe wants all of them to know about the effectiveness of goal directed interactive sessions with a trained therapy dog for both physical and emotional disabilities. The students had an opportunity to work on agility commands, command sequencing and special tricks, including watching Spike, a Mastiff, amble through a VERY SMALL tunnel!



Elizabeth Loftus and P. Casso, and Jordan Matyas and Bertha

Congratulations to **Ida**, a Welsh Pembroke Corgi, for receiving the 2007 Spirit of Planetree Award from Swedish Covenant Hospital for her work in our program there. When Ida is not at work or accepting awards, she lives with **Ramona Condie**, a thirteen-year veteran volunteer and the program leader at Swedish.

Au revoir, Caryl Horn!! As hard as it is to imagine, Caryl, our volunteer coordinator for close to seven years, is leaving Chenny Troupe at the end of August. Caryl and her husband Jerry are moving to Paris, France where Jerry will be teaching graduate architecture students. Caryl has been the first contact with Chenny Troupe for hundreds of people and has insured that everyone has a great volunteer experience with us. Her warmth and kindness has helped to make Chenny Troupe the fantastic organization it is today, and we are grateful for her contribution. We know that she and Jerry will have a fabulous year, and hope to see them at Chenny Troupe events when they return!

TroupeTalk

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A Lucky Day at Oz Park

By Eileen Fitzsimons

It was a lucky day for Chenny Troupe when Mary Dellorto and her dogs ran into Katie Carlson and her dog, Kelly, at Oz Park in 1994. Intrigued by Chenny Troupe's programs, Mary took her chocolate Lab, Erin, and her red Doberman pinscher, Rosie, to the certification test. Both dogs passed the test on the first try, as have Gemma and Kali, the Dobermans that Mary currently works, both of whom have multiple obedience titles to their names. Initially, Mary volunteered with her dogs at the program at Lincoln Park Hospital (formerly Grant Hospital). She was very impressed with the benefits experienced by the patients, many of whom were elderly and terminally ill.

In April 2006, the Lincoln Park Hospital volunteers moved to a new program at Swedish Covenant Hospital to work with patients in physical rehabilitation. Some patients are initially afraid of the Dobermans but soon discover that they are friendly, obedient and gentle dogs. Often patients comment that the Chenny Troupe program night is the highlight of their week. Earlier this summer, Mary, Kali and Gemma joined other Chenny Troupe vol-

unteers at Burn Camp. Mary and her crew enjoyed the day at camp as much as the wonderful kids did, all of whom were delighted by the unconditional acceptance of these caring dogs. Mary and the dogs are actively involved in many of Chenny



Gemma and Kali

Troupe's outreach programs, providing agility and obedience demonstrations at the International Kennel Club show and Pet Expo. After 13 years as a Chenny Troupe volunteer, Mary is still going strong, and the dogs still love the work, attention and treats. Chenny Troupe is lucky to have volunteers like Mary Dellorto and her wonderful dogs, Gemma and Kali.

Program *cont. from pg. 1*

Tuesday nights with Chenny Troupe provided the motivation for this troubled child to work hard to learn new ways to interact with others. Not only did Patty earn enough points, she also showed tremendous improvement.

Patty's favorite dog was Urs, a German shepherd who volunteers with Larry Cohen. It was easy to see that when Patty was working with Urs, she was able to keep her strong feelings in check and maintain control. She listened to instructions and was careful and respectful to both Larry and Urs. While at times her teenage exuberance almost overcame her, she was able to settle down and work on her therapy regimen.

The Rice Center staff was delighted to observe Patty managing herself so well in a social setting. She was able to consistently behave at a higher level when interacting

with the dogs, and the Chenny Troupe sessions helped Patty make appropriate behavioral decisions during the week. While working with Urs, she exercised more self-discipline, showed more caring for others, and demonstrated more good manners than she had done during sessions with her therapists. During quiet time one evening, Patty shared that she felt safe and cared for when working with the dogs. Her insight was an enormous step toward her continued improvement.

It is difficult to measure the impact that animal assisted therapy will have on Patty's ability to consistently make good decisions for herself and while interacting with others. What we do know is that animal assisted therapy gave this young girl an opportunity to feel safe, cared for, and in control of her environment. That is what Chenny Troupe is all about at Rice Center.

An Artful Attraction

By Melissa Kelly

For several years, Chenny Troupe has staffed a booth at the annual Bucktown Arts Festival which celebrates the expression of art and local artists. On a Saturday afternoon four years ago, Dan Jarvis and his American bulldog Sam were strolling through the festival when they were attracted to the Chenny Troupe booth. Several of the Chenny Troupe volunteers waved Dan over to the booth and asked about Sam. Was he a friendly dog? Absolutely. Was he obedient? Usually. Then the volunteers asked Dan if he would be interested in learning about animal assisted therapy and volunteering with Chenny Troupe. Again his answer was "absolutely!"

Dan and Sam are a perfect match for Chenny Troupe. Their easy-going temperament, patience, and concern for others are just a few of the qualities that make them a big hit at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. The therapy patients and the Chenny Troupe volunteers adore Sam and really enjoy working with him and Dan. What do Dan and Sam think about their work with Chenny Troupe? They both love it. What makes volunteering most meaningful for Dan is what the patients get out of the programs. He considers the patients' sense of accomplishment to be the most important aspect of his work with Sam and is proud to be a part of the team that makes it possible.

Dan is a Chicago policeman, and brings his compassion to the streets he helps to protect. He is actively involved in stopping the spread of dog fighting in the city, and has saved many dogs from horrendous lives and equally horrendous deaths. Chenny Troupe is very proud to have Dan and Sam as volunteers, and are grateful for their contributions to the art of healing.



Sam and a young friend

Good News for Chenny Troupe Research Study

The study conducted last year at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago with Chenny Troupe dog/handler teams provided quantifiable evidence of animal-assisted therapy's benefits. Now this good news has been published in the medical press.

Authored by Rita K. Bode, PhD, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University; Brienne Costa, CTRS, Director, Therapeutic Recreation, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago; and Joseph Frey, Vice President, Research, Chenny Troupe, the report of the study appears in the Summer, 2007 issue of the American Journal of Recreation Therapy.

The primary objective of the two-year project was to conduct a pilot study of the effectiveness of AAT on ambulation (walking) as well as to explore the feasibility of conducting such a study. The 23 inpatients included in the study walked with and without a dog and Chenny Troupe volunteer handler in alternate two-night trials, with time and distance walked and speed all measured.

While the results of this pilot study were not "statistically significant," perhaps due to the limited sample of patients, there was a definite trend towards improved ambulation when walking with a dog. The patients were also asked a series of questions after their involvement. Most responded positively to the experience, saying that they liked working with a dog, felt a dog helped them walk better, and that they would work with a dog again if they could.

"Just like in a regular Chenny Troupe session, you could really tell that the patients like working with the dogs," Costa said. "But the data we collected is a first step to show empirically that working with dogs is also effective therapy."

The project was designed from the beginning as a pilot feasibility study, with the aim of conducting a subsequent study on a larger scale. In this, the pilot study was also a rousing success. The lessons learned will make it easier to conduct the larger study, where greater data could potentially provide the statistical significance the pilot study lacked.

The major change suggested in the report is to incorporate any larger study into the patients' regular therapy regime, rather than it being an added activity at the end of the day, as it was in the pilot study. To create a ready and reliable labor pool, it was also suggested in the report that handlers be compensated for their participation in the study.

The results of the study were shared with the public in mid-July on NBC 5 10 p.m. news. Check out their website (www.nbc5.com) to see the interview with Brienne, as well as "Turner" working with RIC patient Bob Luciano.

The study report is entitled "The Impact of Animal-Assisted Therapy on Patient Ambulation: A Feasibility Study." It appears in the American Journal of Recreation Therapy, 2007; 6(3) pages 7 – 19. Copies of the American Journal of Recreation Therapy can be obtained by calling 781-899-2702 or visiting <http://www.pnpco.com/pn10000.html>.

Dog Dining Could Become a Reality!

While the summer café season slips a way, there is a bill awaiting Gov. Blagojevich's signature that would allow Chicago to adopt an ordinance permitting companion dogs to dine al fresco with their humans.

Chenny Troupe has been working closely with Alderman Gene Schuler, Alderman Walter Burnett, Alderman Brendan Reilly and the Illinois Restaurant Association since

early 2006 to legalize what so many people are already doing. Some outdoor locations are already admitting well-behaved four footed diners, or asking their owners to tether them outside the patio fencing, but they do risk receiving a citation.

An ordinance to permit dogs on patios, at the restaurant owners' discretion, is now pending before the License and Consumer

Protection Committee. We hope that the ordinance will be adopted by City Council and that certainly by next year, everyone in Chicago can stop for a snack or dinner while out walking their leashed, licensed well behaved dogs!

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