

Healing, Hope and Happiness at RIC

By Donna Petersen

Diversity and flexibility are the keywords for the Chenny Troupe program at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. For 15 years, one of the beloved, and most challenging, aspects of the RIC program is the diversity of populations that Chenny Troupe volunteers work with each and every week at the facility. On any given Wednesday night, patients will range from age 1 year to 90 years — all eager to interact with one of the dogs. Diagnoses may include traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injuries, amputation, burns, stroke, or any combination of these.

To meet this diversity of patients, the RIC program has a variety of dogs that volunteer week in and week out. From our smallest weighing in at 9 pounds to our largest at 90 pounds and everything in between; we have a Shih Tzu, Miniature Poodle, Standard Poodle, Poodle/Lhasa Apso mix, Poodle/Papillion mix, English Bulldog, American Bulldog, Collie, Labrador Retriever, Golden Retriever, and a “who knows” mix. Who said most therapy dogs are retrievers?

This mix of dogs is needed to be able to best provide therapy for our patients. A small dog may be helping a child on the floor relearn how to sit or stand up, or be the best able to sit in the lap of someone who needs social contact and work their small motor skills by petting or brushing. At the same time, our small dogs can be the most active and keep the patients on their toes! Our larger dogs can play mean games of ball toss — helping someone regain range of motion, large motor function, or the grasp/release reflex, or help them relearn how to walk by patiently heeling at their side.

Daisy, my nine pound Miniature Poodle, exemplifies what it means to volunteer at RIC.

The Young and the Restless

When we first met this little 6-year-old boy, he politely told us his entire name, “Lenny Smith”. Lenny* was curious and a little hesitant, but eager to work with the dogs. And we were ready to help him, knowing he had been through a serious trauma evidenced by his serious burns and missing right arm. At first, Lenny commanded Daisy on her obedience tasks by using hand and voice commands. This was to help Lenny gain strength by raising and lowering his left arm and to help on any memory skills he may need; speech was certainly not a problem, as he kept up a running commentary. By the second week, Lenny’s growing energy needed more of a challenge, so I set up a mini-obstacle course to make the therapy more entertaining. By the end of the session, Lenny was instructing Daisy to come through the tunnel and jump over the hurdle and through the hula-hoop. Then Lenny agreed that a race between Daisy and himself would be a great idea! So Lenny and Daisy raced — Lenny crawling through the tunnel balancing on his one arm as the tunnel swayed back and forth, jumping up at the end and over the hurdle! And Daisy followed right behind him. The one time that Daisy beat him out of the tunnel, she turned around and barked “Woof” as a command for Lenny to “come”. After three weeks, his mom told us that Lenny was going home; that he had already achieved what the doctors predicted would take six months to happen — an active, independent little boy who was ready to face his

whole life that lay ahead of him.

The Strong and The Brave

RIC was one of the first private rehabilitation hospitals to treat soldiers injured in Iraq, many of whom have traumatic brain injury. Daisy was up for the task of working with Jim* in his therapy regime to regain speech and motor skills. To work on these areas, Jim would say “through” to get Daisy to run through the tunnel, “up” to jump through the hoop and “over” so Daisy would jump over the hurdle. We practiced many times so that Jim could remember the sequence without prompting. Then we added the hand signals to get Jim’s body moving. Jim’s concentration was amazing to see. Jim was one of the lucky ones; his dad was with him all of the time. His dad had a great sense of humor and kept everyone laughing with his own infectious laugh, particularly when Jim did better at the commands than did Daisy. The therapy continued even when Jim didn’t realize it; little did he know that when he reached down from his wheelchair to give Daisy a treat — and he had to reach far — he was also doing a therapy exercise for his balance. The session-ending cuddles between the nine pound poodle and the brawny soldier showed what the power of hope can do!

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*



Daisy

Chenny Troupe Honors Record Number of 5-Year Volunteers!

Chenny Troupe has always relied on volunteers to do the lion’s share of our work. Volunteers lead and staff our programs, serve on our Board and committees, write our newsletter, develop and maintain our website, plan special events to raise funds,

and spend hours in the rain, snow and the heat at community events to spread the word about our work. Thousands of lives are enhanced by their work and their commitment to Chenny Troupe’s mission.

This year, we are privileged to introduce the

following volunteers whom we honor for their 5 years of service.

Mary Dellorto and Kali, currently working at Swedish Covenant Hospital. (Mary has volunteered with her dogs since 1994, this is

continued on page 4

Kibbles and Bits

We are proud to introduce our newest Chenny Troupe volunteers **Bruce Bahcall** and **Bogart**, an Irish Setter and **Barbara Zimmerman** and **Otto**, a lab/border collie mix. Both Bogart and Otto are working at Haymarket Center, and Bogart also works at Advocate Lutheran General. We also extend a special welcome to **Nadia Bedricky**, **Faith Burgess**, **Susan Frolichstein** and **Mary Beth Gahan**, new volunteers without dogs.

Congratulations to **Lisa Crossett** and **Michael Sparrow** on their recent engagement! We wish you many, many years of happiness.

Please welcome **Tara Todd Farris**, our new program coordinator. Tara is currently



Bruce, Bogart, Barbara and Otto.

working toward her master's degree in speech and language pathology. If you want to visit a program, or have questions about our work, please feel free to contact Tara in the office.

Baxter Grant in its Second Year! Volunteer teams who complete twenty hours of service to Chenny Troupe between September 1, 2007 and August 31, 2008 may be entitled to receive reimbursement of up to \$200 in veterinary costs. This is the second year of the 3-year grant from Baxter International Foundation. During the first year, 33 volunteer teams qualified for reimbursement!

Chenny Troupe is proud to announce the **Heeling Hearts Giving Circle**. Inaugurated this year, the Heeling Hearts Giving Circle will recognize those individuals who give a

gift of \$500 or more to Chenny Troupe's annual fundraising campaign (does not include the purchase of tickets to special events). Members of the Circle will receive recognition in our newsletter and at the annual benefit, as well as invitations to special programs. In addition, you will know that you are helping to insure the future of Chenny Troupe, supporting our efforts at program development and delivery, research and community service. Please see the enclosed letter for more information.

Planet Dog Celebrates Ten Years of Business with a \$10,000 Grant to Chenny Troupe! On Saturday, October 13, surrounded by the press and visitors to the H.H. Backer Pet Industry Trade Show, a proud group of Chenny Troupe volunteers and Executive Director **Janet Eaton** accepted a giant check from Alex Fisher, Co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer of Planet Dog and Kristen E. Smith, Executive Director of Planet Dog Foundation. **Tag** and **Mary Ann Alexander**, **Toby** and **Linda Carr** and **Spike** and **Birgit Mantilla** showed their appreciation by playing with Planet Dog toys and accepting treats from the press (at least the dogs did!). The mission of the Foundation is to promote and celebrate

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TroupeTalk

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DONATIONS

Donations were made to Chenny Troupe:

In memory of Mr. Peter Gorner by Mr. and Mrs. Steven Novick and Mrs. and Mrs. William Simmons

In Memory of Samuel Rosen by Mrs. Edith Rosen

In memory of Bernice Schwartz by Paulette Newman

In memory of Patsy Steinberg (Mother of volunteer Nancy Golden)

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In honor of Caryl Horn by Sarah Stewart, Jim Cuno and Gus

In honor of Alexa Millman, Dan Jarvis and Sam and in memory of Schnoogie Boogey

Man by Mr. and Mrs. Skip Rosenmutter
In honor of Ann Rohlen by
Dr. and Mrs. Bradford Smart

In memory of "Cody" Clark by Linda and Phil Abrahams

In Memory of "Hershey" by Dr. and Mrs. Charles Anderson

In memory of "Marley" Hanson by Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Antos

In Memory of "Worm" Kolzkopf by Ms. Ginny Beck

In memory of Sabrina Ravin by Mr. Thomas Burdin

In memory of "Burt" Bullaro by Mr. and Mrs. David Hill

In memory of "PJ" by Mrs. Elaine Krauss
In memory of "Maggie" Carpenter by Ms. Wendi Mancini

In memory of "Cassidy" and "Willow" by Marcia and Richard Metzcus

In memory of "Lacey" Mack by Jane and David Perisho

In memory of "Bandit" Cahn Curtis by Alix Salyers

In memory of "Blondie" Barton by Ms. Carolyn Yelton

Making a Connection and a Difference at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital

By Linda Carr

We had already begun the introductions for the session at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital when Claire* and her husband, Roger*, entered the room. Toby, who normally sits next to me until we are assigned a patient, stepped out of the circle and greeted Claire. The connection between them began immediately. Toby sat next to her wheelchair and when it came time for the patients to choose a dog, it was obvious that Claire had already chosen Toby.

Claire had difficulty walking and one arm was very weak, so we worked on hand signals, heeling and throwing a ball for Toby to retrieve. Toby, who doesn't always return the toy to us when we're playing, dropped the ball each time at Claire's feet. We had a great first session!

The following week when Claire arrived, Toby walked me over to her to greet her. Claire told us that she had had a terrible week but was looking forward to seeing Toby. She and Toby worked very hard that night and Claire's spirits seemed much improved.

The next week was our final night at Schwab for the session. When our program leader asked Claire if she would like to work with another dog she replied "I want to work with my Toby, of course." Before the evening ended Roger took pictures of Claire and Toby. Claire told me how much she enjoyed the last few weeks. Toby and I stayed to visit for a little while after the session ended. Roger and Claire walked Toby and me to the elevators to say goodbye.

Later that spring, Roger called to tell me that Claire was very ill and in hospice care. He had found the pictures of Claire and Toby and wanted to let me know about her condition. Shortly after our work together at Schwab had ended, Claire relapsed and was sent to the hospital where her condition deteriorated.

A week later he called to let me know that Claire had passed away. He also wanted to let me know how much Claire had enjoyed working with Toby and me during her stay at Schwab. Of course, I was very saddened by the news but heartened to know that Toby did have some impact on her life and brought Claire happiness while they were together.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*

"Little Snapshots of Miracles" Brought to You by Chenny Troupe Volunteers

By Melissa Kelly



Christine Burback and Sydney

At the recent Volunteer Forum, Ramona Condie recounted some of the "little snapshots of miracles" that Chenny Troupe volunteers have made possible over the years. The size and the impact of the

"snapshots" varies; sometimes it's a smile on the face of a child who has had an extremely difficult day of traditional therapy and sometimes the extra distance that a stroke patient can walk at the end of a program. Here are just a few examples of other snapshots that have occurred in Chenny Troupe programs:

- A child with autism forms simple sentences to guide the therapy dog through an obstacle course.
- A young mother describes the connection between caring for a dog and caring for a child

- All the members of an extended family actively join the therapy dog in helping a stroke patient regain mobility.
- A nonresponsive child takes comfort from the patience of the therapy dog.

By focusing on the needs of the patient and the goals for his or her recovery, Chenny Troupe programs emphasize what the patients can do and how to expand their achievements. The patience of the human and canine volunteers creates an atmosphere that is safe, nurturing, and motivating for patients to work on their therapy goals. Every stride that a patient makes toward recovery is valued progress. The efforts of the volunteers help transform this progress into "snapshots" that can have a lifetime impact on the patients and their families.

Special thanks to volunteer Nancy Golden who chaired the forum, and all the Chenny Troupe volunteers and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and Advocate Lutheran General Children's Hospital therapists who helped make this great forum happen!

Kibbles and Bits, cont. from pg. 2

programs in which dogs serve and support their best friends. Planet Dog, the Foundation's corporate partner, is a socially responsible, globally recognized designer and developer of innovative, high quality, award winning dog products.

Come see us (and Santa Claus) at the Chicago Botanic Gardens on Saturday, December 1 for the fifth annual **Reindog Parade**. The festivities begin at 11 a.m. and the parade and costume judging begin at noon. Visit the Garden's website at www.chicagobotanic.org for more information and to register your dog (there is a fee). It is the only day during the year that dogs may visit the gardens.

SAVE THE DATE: Friday, April 18, 2008. Yes, it's six months away, but this is a date worth saving. Don't miss Chenny Troupe's benefit at the Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum. It will be an out of this world evening! Interested in helping with the plans? Please call the office.



Toby, Spike and Tag

Take Your Dog to Dinner a Success in Every Way

In late August, the City Council of the City of Chicago proclaimed September 10 as Chenny Troupe Take Your Dog To Dinner Day to honor our work with special needs populations. Chenny Troupe volunteers wasted no time switching into high gear for our fourth Annual Take Your Dog to Dinner. In spite of the uncertainty of the proposed ordinance to allow dog dining, 17 fabulous restaurants across the city signed on to welcome canine diners on their patios and help Chenny Troupe raise funds and awareness about animal-assisted therapy. Participating locations included Club Lucky, Crust, Cullen's, Cyrano's Bistrot, Enoteca Roma Ristorante, Gibson's Steakhouse, Hugo's Frog Bar, Le Lan, Oak Street Beachstro, Ranalli's (Andersonville), Schoolyard Tavern, Silver Cloud Supper Club, Smoke Daddy's, Stanley's on Racine, Trader Todd's, Uncommon Ground and Zapatista's.

Sadly, the weather did not cooperate, and we had our first rain- out on September 10. Some hearty souls did venture out; we found dogs enjoying salads at Crust, hiding under the umbrellas at Enoteca Roma, and toughing it out at Silver Cloud Supper Club and Gibson's Steakhouse. But the following Monday was a perfect September day in Chicago, and everyone had a delicious time! Special thanks to Pooch Hotel, Royal Treatment Veterinary Spa and Tails in the City whose generosity helped make Take Your Dog To Dinner a financial success.

We are delighted that on September 5, 2007 the Chicago City Council passed the ordinance that will allow licensed, leashed pets to accompany their humans at sidewalk cafes that have the appropriate dog friendly license. The ordinance will be effective for next year's outdoor dining season. We are grateful to Alderman Gene Schuller,

Alderman Walter Burnett and Alderman Brendan Reilly for their tireless efforts on behalf of the well-mannered pets and people who want to share Chicago's outdoor dining experience.

See you next year on September 8, and we promise, no rain!!



Everyone enjoys dining out!

Volunteers, *cont. from pg. 1*

Kali's 5th year of service). Mary and one of her dogs often serve as the meet and greet dog at testing and represent Chenny Troupe at many community events.

Noelle Gaffney and Tootsie, currently working at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital. Tootsie appeared on the runway at our benefit and shared stories of her work as a Heeling Hearts dog.

Judith Jaffe and Star II, currently working at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. (Judith and her dog Scotchie started work in 2000). Both dogs appear in Chenny Troupe's brochure!

Ginny Beck and Dylan, who enthusiastically participate in outreach activities like Burn Camp since Ginny moved too far away to volunteer in a program. Ginny also serves on every special events committee.

Peggy Brennan and Murphy, who until this fall worked at Somerset House. Declining health has necessitated Murphy's retirement. Peggy and Murphy are famous for hosting the St. Patrick's Day post-parade party in 2003!

John Vranicar and Kate, who worked tirelessly at La Rabida and ICRE inspiring youngsters until her disability necessitated

her early retirement. John serves on the Chenny Troupe Board of Directors.

Julie Muccillo and Matt Pollack, who have designed and redesigned our website and keep it up to date, created our CafePress.com store, designed marketing materials and work on all of our special events. Their rescued St. Bernard Sammie loves Take Your Dog To Dinner.

We are grateful for all of their time, energy and compassion, and know that Chicago is a better place because of each of them.

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