

Fall 2021 newsletter



Animal Assisted Therapy

www.loveon4paws.org



LOVE AGAIN

Our dogs and cats all want to get back to work.

"Hey, what's going on with Love On 4 Paws?"

It turns out, quite a lot."

Back in March 2020, Love On 4 Paws had to stop all of our therapy dog and cat visits. The COVID19 virus had shut us down 100% -- no visits at all. Now it's approaching two full years later, so you might well wonder, "Hey, what's going on with Love On 4 Paws?" It turns out, quite a lot.

We created and distributed the May 2020 Love On 4 Paws newsletter.

for new volunteers to join once orientations could resume. The result was an online orientation video, which candidate volunteers can watch from home on their own schedule. This makes the in-person orientation meeting much shorter.

And finally, with restrictions started to ease, we're coming back! Starting in June, our volunteers updated all their



We managed some visits despite the virus. We visited with medical support National Guard members, some who hadn't been home for months.

We visited with Olympic athletes before they left for Tokyo. We even visited at the City of Hope hospital using some very special protocols. All this amounted to only a few visits by our normal standards, but every bit helps.

We worked on our new-volunteer-orientation process. The goal was to make it easier

needed health clearances and started visiting at some of our usual facilities. We held our first orientation to onboard new volunteers in August. And by September, we're visiting at a fair fraction of our normal pace.

We're hopeful that by next year, we will all be back to something near normal. Our dogs and cats all want to get back to work!

~ Suni Cookson



These are some of the excited words that we hear every week around City of Hope from our patients, caregivers, and staff.

Love On 4 Paws has been providing so much joy and comfort to our patients for years, but during this pandemic they have also provided a beacon of light and hope. After all, throughout the majority of 2020 our hospital policy had to prioritize patient safety and not allow most vendors or even patient visitors from coming to any of our locations, including our main campus in Duarte.

For so many of our patients, this amplified the challenges they were already facing— from not physically seeing loved ones to feeling disconnected from an outside world that was looking almost equally as uncertain. Thankfully, by November 2020, we were finally allowed to bring back Pet Therapy under just a few restrictions.

A patient told a handler from Love On 4 Paws and myself recently, that they had “had a dream your dog was watching over me”.

She said that when she was sleeping alone in the hospital, without her daughter, she saw a big reddish brown dog sitting there and guarding her bed. This is just one anecdote of many that illustrates the emotional, mental, and in some cases, spiritual impact Love On 4 Paws has had at City of Hope— and for that we thank you!



**"is today
doggy
day?"**

**"...had a
dream your
dog was
watching over
me".**

Margarita's bonnets for Josie, the cat and friends: Oreo & Kookie

One of the great joys of volunteering with Love On 4 Paws is experiencing the great appreciation that hospital patients express during pet visits. My tabby cat Josie and I have been doing that for four years now. Our primary and favorite destination is White Memorial Medical Center in Boyle Heights.

Some years ago, Josie and I visited an elderly woman, Margarita, in the physical therapy ward. Margarita, who does not speak English, was thrilled by our visit and the love that Josie provided. She hugged Josie tightly, saying "guapa" and "bonita" repeatedly.

On our next visit one week later, one of the rehabilitation nurses presented us with a cat-sized, hand knit pink bonnet as a gift from a grateful patient. Unfortunately, she did not know who made the hat.

We proceeded to visit each room in the rehabilitation ward and when we entered the next room, Margarita, the patient we visited the week before, broke out in tears of joy when she saw Josie wearing the bonnet. We quickly figured out that Margarita was the grateful patient that knit Josie's pink hat.

Fast forward two-and one-half years; Josie and I were visiting the hospital's physical rehabilitation ward and were surprised to see that our friend Margarita was back in the hospital. In anticipation of possible Love On 4 Paws visits, she had knit more bonnets for Josie and her two friends, Oreo and Kookie.

Josie proudly wore one of the new bonnets, and Margarita enjoyed a nice long visit. We returned one week later and once again encountered Margarita. She was again thrilled to see us and immediately pulled out yet another bonnet. Josie now has her choice of three! These experiences demonstrate the power of pet assisted animal therapy and remind both Josie and me



of the importance of our work.

~ John Collinson



HOW WE MEASURE

Success

I was sitting at my desk, when I noticed an unfamiliar car park in front of my house. I watched as two senior women got out of the car and walked toward my front door. Before they could ring my doorbell, I opened the door and greeted them.

I asked, "May I help you," totally convinced they had come to my house by mistake. One of them mentioned she didn't know where to start. "My son was in the hospital..." and she started to cry. I noticed that she had an envelope addressed to Love On 4 Paws and a Love On 4 Paws business card in her hand. She was crying so much, she couldn't continue to speak. I invited the two ladies to come inside my house.

I introduced myself and asked for their names, and they explained they're sisters. Leona was the one trying to explain things.

After a few moments, she told me about her son, Jim, who had been ill and was in and out of the hospital over several months. Through the tears, she related Jim was in his late 40's. He had several surgeries but lost his battle.

She pulled out five instant-type photographs, with several dogs, and our Love On 4 Paw labels on each photo. Slowly she explained that the only joy Jim had in the hospital was the dog visits. If he saw a dog walk down the hallway, he insisted that his mother track the dog down to be sure he would get a visit. He always accepted the offer for a photograph and kept them all. Apparently he looked at them often, especially when he was having a difficult day.



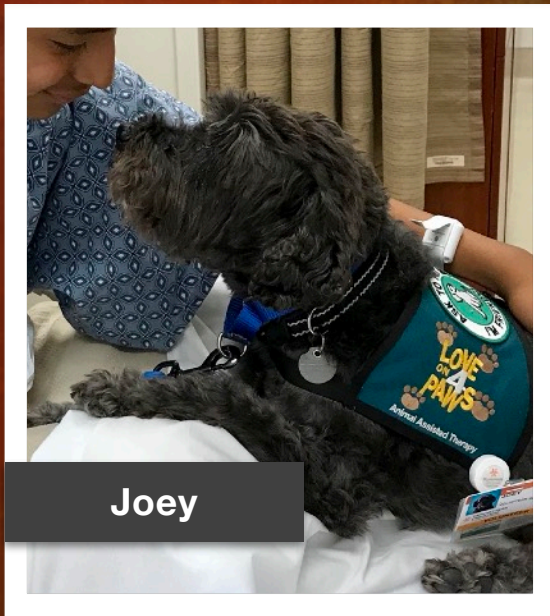
In fact, Jim made her promise that she would make a donation on his behalf to Love On 4 Paws. She went on to explain this was her last errand to run for Jim, and she wanted to write a check to Love On 4 Paws in his memory. I asked permission to take a photo of the pictures she held in her hand, so I could share his story with others, and thank our volunteers. After she left, I started to think about the numerous requests we've submitted to foundations and trusts. One of the questions that's almost always included...how will you measure your success if funds are provided. How can I ever sufficiently put into words how success was measured the day those two unexpected visitors showed up at my doorstep?

***"My son was in the hospital..."
and she started to cry.***

~ Suni Cookson



"Like every other Saturday Joey and I got to California Hospital ready to make a few people happier."



"...a doctor approached us and asked if we could help her with a homeless patient."

Like every other Saturday Joey and I got to California Hospital ready to make a few people happier. Little did I know of the positive impact that Joey would have that day.

When we arrived, a doctor approached us and asked if we could help her with a homeless patient who had been brought in after passing out on the street. He was being verbally aggressive and seemed very distressed. I started to have second thoughts about agreeing to help her, but she promised to stay with me while we visited.

We were just getting out of the elevators when I first heard the screaming; the homeless man was yelling at the nurses because he wanted a pillow. We approached and the doctor asked him if he would like to see a therapy dog. Immediately he stopped yelling and said yes. He started petting Joey and his expression changed completely.

Within five minutes of our arrival, the patient had fallen fast asleep. The doctor and I just looked at each other in disbelief. She explained that he had been so stressed out that the medication wasn't working—being near Joey had helped him to calm down and allowed the medication to fully take effect.

I knew that what we were doing was truly benefiting the patients. It wasn't until that day that I realized how powerful these little ones can be.

~ Janet Algazi



"I realized just how powerful and meaningful our visits can be."

Our visit this day, was at a rehab center. Hazel and I were doing bed visits and visiting staff. An older gentleman agreed for a visit with Hazel. His name was John. It was an ordinary visit, no treats, no tricks, just a bed visit for some snuggle time.

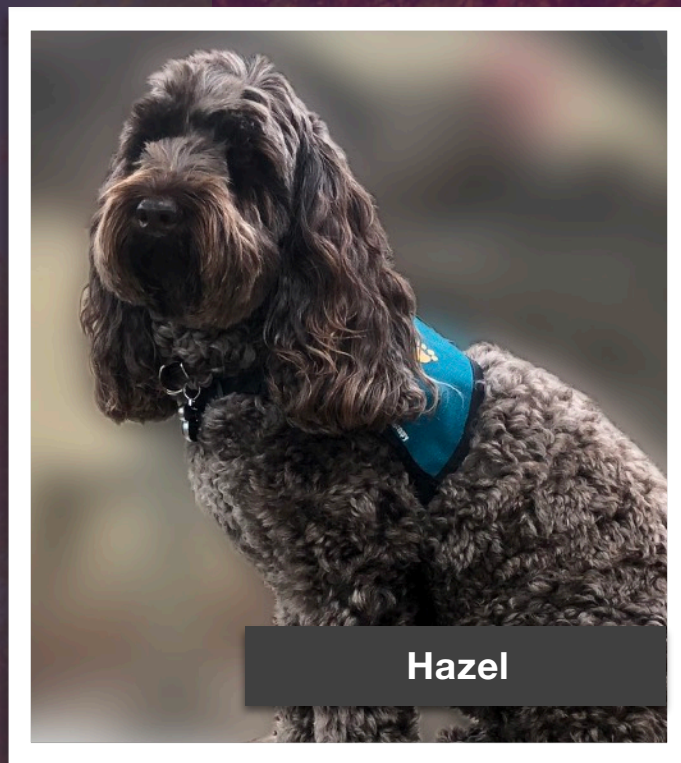
After a while, three members of John's family came to visit him. Since the rooms are never large enough, it was time for Hazel and me to make an exit. There was only one problem. Hazel refused to leave his bed.

Normally, she pops up and jumps off the bed, and it has never been a problem before. I eventually had to physically help her off the bed. The family and I were both amazed that Hazel refused to leave their father. For some reason, Hazel became really attached to John.

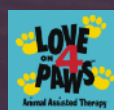
About 6 months later, I found out why Hazel wouldn't leave John. I received a card from John's family. They wanted to thank Hazel and I for visiting their father. Shortly after our visit, John was diagnosed with esophageal cancer. He died two months later. The family said they think Hazel knew their father was quite ill and didn't have that much time left.

After reading their card, I was sad for the family's loss. Their father had spoken to the family, about how much he had enjoyed Hazel's visit. It made me very proud of Hazel. I always knew she was an extra special canine. She has been so different than any dog I have ever owned. It was then, I realized just how powerful and meaningful our visits can be at times. I consider myself to be very fortunate to have such an amazing and wonderful partner in Hazel.

I am able to share this wonderful dog through volunteering with Love On 4 Paws.



~ Michael Tockstein





LOVE

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