



Animal Assisted Therapy

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# SHARING

**UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**

FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

# “Animal Assisted Therapy is back at Keck Medical Center of USC.”

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*by Kaitlin Alderete, Associate Administrator, Patient Experience, Keck Medical Center of USC.*

Love On 4 Paws has been a presence at our Medical Campus for over 8 years. Our Staff, patients and visitors love when they see our four legged furry companions walk by or visit their room or nurses' stations. I have had the wonderful opportunity to accompany some of our pet therapy teams on some particularly difficult patient visits. The incredible power the visits had on the patient and the staff are something I will never forget.

The interaction between a critically or terminal ill patient and the receptiveness of the therapy dog is very hard to describe. It is an overwhelming feeling of comfort and peace. It is truly remarkable how these therapy dogs demonstrate the intense bond between human and animal. It is lasting and unforgettable.

Then the pandemic came along, and we were forced to discontinue these visits. Months followed, and we missed the dogs more and more – staff and patients alike.

Finally, conditions improved enough we could resume those visits. What a change! The energy was celebratory, and our staff members could not wait to get their opportunity to pet these wonderful and compassionate furry beings.

Our patients are again thriving with the option to have a pet visit at their bedside and our staff is energized by the visits. It's been a very difficult past several years for those working in healthcare, and it continues to be difficult. But having therapy dog visits is healing to us all, and I can't say how grateful we are for Love On 4 Paws bringing this incredible service to our campus.



“Pets understand humans better than humans do.”

— Ruchi Prabhu

## April's Visit – the first one in a long time

*by Laura Stout, volunteer with Love On 4 Paws*

Love On 4 Paws has this website where we sign up for hospital visits. But during the pandemic, all the sign-up spots were blank. Months went by. Finally, word was that spots would become available, and I kept watching, and watching, and then jumped on the first one, at Keck Medical Center of USC.

Keck is a very special place, near and dear to my heart. I started visiting Keck years ago with my Spaniel, Charlie. He is retired now, but my new therapy dog, April, is a worthy successor. So, on our first post-pandemic visit, we bravely walked through the door.

I don't think April has ever experienced the overwhelming admiration and joy we received that morning. I can't ever recall that much enthusiasm in all the years I've visited

there. It was truly unbelievable. We heard, "The dogs are back!" and "It's been over two years, we've missed you so much!" from almost every station. A couple of nurses wanted to keep April and were nearly brought to tears.

We don't always fully know the impact of our visits on everyone we greet. But I experienced it first had that first morning back at the hospital. I will never forget the smiles and laughter from the staff and I'll take these memories with me always.



**“The road to my heart is filled with paw prints.”**

~ Unknown Author



## Tinsel's Special Request

by Cristine Yang, volunteer with Love On 4 Paws

Although still considered a "puppy" at one and a half years old, Tinsel has a very calm and loving temperament that seemed very suited to bringing smiles and comforting people. So we signed up to volunteer with Love On 4 Paws to do therapy dog visits.

On one of our first hospital visits we received a request to visit a particular patient. When we got to the patient's room, their family member looked so relieved and happy to see us. As we visited with the patient, Tinsel was placed on the bed and laid down, enjoying the pets and scratches. The patient had a huge smile on her face the entire time.



From the corner of my eye I could see her family member taking photos of the patient with Tinsel, tears of joy filling her eyes as she was trying to capture the moment as much as possible. She told us that it was the first time she has seen her mom smile in over two weeks and it really made both their days!

The patient mentioned how miserable the last few days were for her and how much she missed her own pets. She said the visit really just made her whole week and it was perfect timing as she was feeling down!

We were so happy to bring a smile, joy, and furry love to them in such a meaningful visit.

# MAYA'S VISIT

## at Providence Little Company of Mary

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by Jim Kelly, volunteer with Love On 4 Paws

Let me tell you about my therapy dog Maya.

The reason that Maya is so happy and successful as a therapy dog is because she "get's it". She understands the purpose of the visits that we make and knows exactly how to behave - regardless of the circumstances. People who meet her seem to sense the joy that she brings.

On the day of our visit, I tell her, "Maya, we are working today". She understands and begins to follow me around the house, until I get the vest. When she sees it, she gets so excited, I can't put it on fast enough. Then, she bounds into the car and, we're off!

When we make our visits to the various facilities, I tell people that Maya loves her job - only wanting to spread happiness. She particularly enjoys her visits to Providence Little Company of Mary San Pedro. The staff at the hospital has gotten to know her

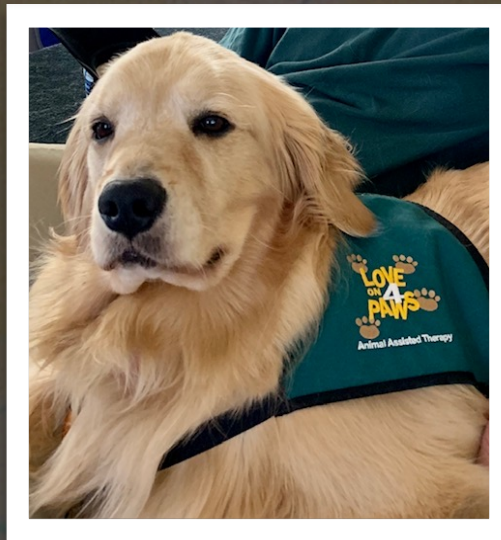
very well.

So, when we get off of the elevator and start walking towards the nurse's station, someone will see Maya and call out, "Maya's here!". That's all she needs to hear. Her ears perk up and her tail starts wagging. She knows her friends and can't wait to greet each one of them. In the course of our visit, different staff members will thank me for bringing Maya and how much she brightens their day.

Then, as we begin to visit patients, she goes right up to each one, so they can pet or hug her. After the greeting, she turns around,

facing me, and actually "poses" for a picture with the patient. To have a picture with Maya is very special.

At the end of a busy visit, on a warm day, I can tell that Maya is tired and ready to go home. But, when a nurse tells us that there is one more patient who wants to visit with Maya, she goes and happily greets the patient, posing for one last pic.



# A Note From A Patient

*by Rachel, a patient visited by Love On 4 Paws*

"Dogs leave paw prints on our hearts."

— Unknown

Hi my name is Rachel & I'm deaf I was in the hospital Marina Del Rey.. I really want to tell you, thank you thank you thank you for bringing the dog to me.. i remember, I felt like I was not lonely. I love her so much.. my favorite is her head was sitting on my shoulder I was like aww and hugs together.. that was so BEST feeling..

Here is picture

