

OCSPCA/PAWS HOLIDAY PARTY



Our annual OCSPCA/PAWS Potluck Holiday Party was held at the home of Jerry von Talge and Jean Hobart on December 12th. The food was great, with outstanding desserts. Everyone had a wonderful time. The traditional challenge gift exchange was a lot of fun. We were pleased that Susan Cochran was able to join us.

ORANGEWOOD CHILDREN'S HOME



Our PAWS therapy dog visitation to Orangewood Children's Home for abused neglected and abandoned children began sixteen years ago, with Marilyn Graham and Cathy Dixon being coordinators (which they continue today). This article is the first of a series highlighting the facilities that are part of our PAWS therapy dog program.

According to Chantel Santos, the Community Program Specialist at Orangewood, our relationship with them is one of their oldest and most important community partnerships, which they wish to continue. Our PAWS therapy dog visitation programs is one of Orangewood's favorites. Chantel reports that our visitation "...is a big hit with the kids" and that she receives "...wonderful feedback from the kids and the staff."

Orangewood is the only emergency center for children in Orange County, operating under the Orange County Social Services Agency. It takes in children from a few days old up to age eighteen. It is a holding facility, until the children can be given proper placement. In addition to going through a difficult time, the Orangewood children are cut off from their families and the community. Although Orangewood seeks to be an open and loving community, it is still not home. Also, some of the children miss their pets, including dogs.

Chantel sees our therapy dog Orangewood visitation being very therapeutic, bringing smiles to the children's faces. She reports that studies show the benefits of animal interaction, especially dogs, with children, particularly those who are abused, neglected and abandoned. The unconditional love and acceptance by the non-confrontational dogs allows the children to form a beneficial, healing connection with our canine ambassadors. With our therapy dogs, there are no expectations communicated to the child, no pressure, allowing him or her to simply have a good time with our dogs. The child becomes less isolated and more attached to the community. Therapy dog visits let the Orangewood boys and girls know that they are loved and important. Our

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PAWS VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Kathi Wahl



Kathi & Mick

Being a PAWS volunteer is not only an important part of Kathi's life – it is also an important part of who she is. Our OCSPCA/PAWS organization makes it possible for her to give back to the community. She has great respect for our organizations' effectiveness, cohesiveness and its mission (the promotion of animal welfare and serving the community).

Kathi joined PAWS on June 1, 1996, seeing one of our flyers. At that time, her canine companion was Sierra, a chocolate lab, who Kathi says was "... one of the most special dogs in the world." She got him at age 9 weeks. Sierra was extremely outgoing and exuberant, yet very calm. After getting through her "goofy lab puppy stage she became a wonderful therapy dog." She was intuitively drawn to brain injured patients in rehab facilities. Sierra was retired from PAWS in 2005. She developed lung cancer at age 14 ½ and Kathi sat with her as she was put to sleep.

Kathi's current therapy dog, Mick, has become an outstanding therapy dog in his own right. His previous owners lived across the street from Kathi and she played with him a lot and came to love him. When the neighbors got divorced, Kathi rescued Mick, giving him a loving home. He is big, gentle and does things - like lying on his back and holding toys with his paws - that make people laugh.

She has been very active since first joining PAWS. Kathi previously visited Richman Gardens (Alzheimer's facility) and RIO, (brain-injured children and adults). Currently, she visits and coordinates Orange Hills rehab facility (which includes brain injury patients), and the Brea Senior Center. In 2007, Kathi created a new special OCSPCA/PAWS event, "Draw-A-Dog," at the Sunkist Library in Anaheim. The owner/handlers would first talk a little bit about their dogs, then, each child would draw a picture of the dog that he or she had selected. The children have had a great time and some of them gave their artwork to their selected dog. Kathi has also led human-dog team competitive games at our OCSPCA/PAWS picnics.

One of Kathi's most memorable therapy dog experiences was at Orange Hills. While they were walking down a hall, Sierra pulled her sideways into a room where a nurse was sitting next to a young man in a wheelchair. He had been involved in a car accident in which his new wife died and he had sustained massive brain injury. He was paralyzed, and although he could move his face and hands, he had not been responsive to anyone. Sierra went up to

Kathi, continued

the man and put her head in his lap. He knew that she was there for him and responded by wiggling his fingers for the first time. He smiled and there were tears in his eyes. It was so amazing to see this man, whose face has been glazed over, come to life, that the attending nurse was so deeply moved that she began to cry.

Both Sierra and Mick have been personal therapy dogs for Kathi, who has had surgery in her right knee, with resulting nerve damage associated with chronic pain and limited mobility. Her last nerve surgery was in 2008. Before the surgery, she was very active physically, which included playing volleyball, hiking, and back-packing. Being such good companions, Sierra and Mick have helped Kathi get through bouts of unbearable pain.

Kathi has lived in Placentia for the last 20 years. She comes from a large, close-knit family, with four brothers and one sister. Music and politics were big in her family. Unfortunately, Kathi's mother passed away last March. Kathi is single. With her art education background, she was a museum curatorial assistant for the Fullerton and Laguna Art Museums, and the Richard Nixon Presidential Museum, for a total of 15 years. Kathi is also a free-lance artist/illustrator using pen-and-ink and watercolor mediums. She paints pet portraits on jackets and does floral designs for weddings. She has been an art educator for local cities and museums.

Kathi is one of the most enthusiastic supporters for our organization. She continues to promote OCSPCA and PAWS every chance she gets. Kathi sums it all up: "I love what we do and feel so blessed to have been able to share my two wonderful dogs with others."

ORANGWOOD, continued

visits help give some badly-needed consistency to the children's lives.

Chantel appreciates our sensitivity to the needs of the Orangewood children, especially those who are withdrawn or who may be afraid of dogs. From our PAWS visits to Orangewood the children get the message "...that people care about us." Chantel wants all of our PAWS volunteers to know "...what a big impact they have made in our children's lives."



**Under stress?
Walk your dog.**

CANINE LITERACY AT SCHMITT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, WESTMINSTER



In addition to the team volunteers, Barbara Murphy, Dr. Jerry Gargus, the principal, and Camryn Craig, the director of the after school program, are also in the picture

Barbara Murphy has worked very hard to get a Canine Literacy visitation program going this year at Schmitt Elementary School in Westminster, with six visits, beginning on January 13th and ending on February 17th.

This program, in which elementary school children read out loud to a dog, has proved not only to be successful in improving children's reading skills, but also enhances their self-esteem.

Each 1 ½ hour visitation involves 5 reading sessions, with one child reading to one dog for approximately 15 minutes. Word recognition and pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension are emphasized.

At the last session, each participating child was given an achievement certificate, a bookmark with pictures of all 7 therapy dogs, and a book.

The 7 reading teams pictured above were (left to right): Dory Van Weerdenburg & Bo, Candace Brenner & Kodi, Kathy Dixon & JJ, Rich Blough & Tasha, Karl Doyle & Bubba, Jean Hobart & Bella, and coordinator, Jerry von Talge, with Tzu Ling. Substitutes were Kathy Stonebraker & Teddi Barra, and Lorie Raia & Sandy.

Our Canine Literacy was part of the Schmitt after-school program, P.R.I.D.E., standing for "Potential," "Responsibility," "Innovation," "Determination," and "Excellence." According to Dr. Jerry Gargus, the school principal, we did a great job and also some of the older school children saw our therapy dogs and asked for their return for another Canine Literacy series for them. Barbara is in the process of setting something up with Camryn Craig for 3rd-5th grade children, to probably start in April.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

1. Be sure to bathe your dog within 24 hours of each visit.
2. It is important to keep in mind that therapy dogs differ from service dogs. Volunteers should remove PAWS

WACHOVIA VISIT AND DONATIONS



Donna Calkin, OCSPCA president, receiving donation checks from employees at Wachovia



On February 12th, at 10:00 a.m. 7 therapy dog teams, along with Donna Calkin, OCSPCA President, visited Wachovia Dealer Services in Irvine. Wachovia gives our organization a generous contribution every year..

Volunteers pictured above were (left to right): Dory Van Weerdenburg & Bo, Kevin Marlin & Odie, Rich Blough & Tasha, Lauren Fukuoka & Kumo, Karl Doyle & Bubba, Jean Hobart & Bella, and coordinator, Jerry von Talge, with Tzu Ling.

SAVE THE DATE

Therapy dog Evaluation - Sat., March 27th, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. (approximately), at the Irvine Animal Care Center, 6443 Oak Canyon, Irvine



21st Annual AMERICA'S FAMILY PET EXPO

April 16, 17 & 18th, 2010
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.,
10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Saturday

To volunteer with your dog for our OCSPCA booth, contact Stacy Sweeting at ocspca@verizon.net or phone 714-374-7738

IMPORTANT REMINDERS, continued

scarves or vests from their therapy dogs when not on an OCSPCA/PAWS visit or attending an event.

3. Our PAWS tee shirts should not be altered in any way. If you need a new shirt, please contact Stacy in our office. The price is \$8, which is our cost, and postage is \$3.50 if you want it mailed.