



September 2021

# PVAA NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the newest edition of our  
Prairieland Visiting Animals Association newsletter:  
a collection of information, stories, news, events and  
all other things having to do with our favorite subject -  
therapy animals!

## A Little Bit About Us

Prairieland is a friendly group of folks from the heartland who are interested in promoting the human/animal bond. Our group provides human/animal visitation teams to healthcare facilities, schools, and other facilities that can benefit from interactions with animals. We conduct educational seminars and workshops and promote a mentoring program for newly registered teams. The Association meets about six times a year, and two or more times annually, it conducts Pet Partners evaluation events for prospective human/animal visitation teams.

## Name Our Newsletter Contest

Perhaps someone can come up with a better name for our newsletter than PVAA Newsletter... Submit your ideas to [jemknoll@gmail.com](mailto:jemknoll@gmail.com) by October 10th, 2021. The prize? The satisfaction of seeing YOUR newsletter name at the top of future editions.

## Member Spotlight - Sharon and Sami

*Each newsletter will feature a dedicated Prairieland Team. It is not our intent to place any one team's accomplishments over that of another. The goal here is to provide a back story on how the team came together and some of the highlights of their career.*



Grateful.

Loosely defined as feeling an appreciation for kindness. Sharon Fricke is grateful. To Rainbow, one of the first dogs to ever visit the Stormont Vail Cancer Center. To Blue. Not a therapy dog but a treasured companion for many years. To Azul, who continued Rainbow's legacy at the Cancer Center as well as Stormont Vail Hospital and area schools.

And to Sami. A Greyhound rescued from the harsh life of racing. Six years ago, Sharon and Sami started a program that paired residents of the juvenile detention center with therapy teams. Suddenly hard-core kids were feeling grateful for the opportunity to interact with Sami and the dogs that were to follow.

After a thorough screening process, Sami and Sharon were brought into the juvenile court to comfort and support children testifying about the trauma inflicted upon them by trusted adults. And the children were grateful that Sami stood by them.

There were lighter moments too. Like when Sami was asked to be a model in an art class. Sami was always drawn to children. Now they were drawing her.

Sami was released from this life just a few short weeks ago. She and Sharon enjoyed a distinguished career as a therapy team. Sami was a teacher and a healer. A kind and gentle soul we were all grateful to have known.

## Reading with Prairieland Dogs is Back!

After a year's hiatus due to the pandemic, PVAA's highly successful reading enrichment program kicked off Sunday, September 12th at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library and will continue for 3 more Sundays. Thank you, teams, for your enthusiastic response!

### Cheyenne's Waggin' Tales

*This column is dedicated to therapy dogs past and present that have enriched the lives of countless souls throughout the history of Prairieland Visiting Animals Association. May this perspective provide you with unique insights into the power of animal assisted interventions.*



*(I know little of what it means to have a sense of humor, but I am of the considered opinion that puns are the lowest form of it. "Waggin' Tales? Really?")*

His name was Edwin. I imagine him today heading back to high school anticipating all the "firsts" of adolescence. His first car, his first prom, his first heartbreak. Most of all, I picture him alive.

I met him at the hospital when he was 12, though he looked more like 10. I could smell the poison in his blood. The doctors called it leukemia. It left him pale and listless. Edwin liked dogs but his were smaller. To him, I must have looked like my friend Sasha the Mastiff. It took us awhile to hit it off.

Edwin and his mother would come and go from the hospital. When they stayed, it was for days at a time while Edwin got his treatment. He was very weary one day and his mother asked Francine the nurse if I could get in bed with him. She placed a blanket across the bed. Edwin pounded the bed with his hand, and I hopped up. It made him laugh. Me too.

Yes, dogs laugh - mostly at humans.

Edwin passed the time by drawing and reading. One day, he showed us a book of his sketches. They were mostly cartoon characters that he had created. Each face was as unique as a paw print. He liked to read to me when I got in bed with him. Comic books, mostly.

One day we were walking down the corridor towards his room when I heard the familiar pounding of Edwin's hand on the bed. Someone must have tipped him off that we were coming. I pulled ahead and started to whimper, frustrated that I had to remain on leash when Edwin was calling for me. But Francine smiled and said it

would be okay.

The leash dropped to the floor, and I scampered down the hallway, crashing into the door frame as I veered left into Edwin's room (hospital floors are slick!) and launched my body airborne, landing squarely in the middle of Edwin's bed. He squealed and laughed. His mother said it was the first time he had done so all week.

So, this became our routine for a while. Edwin pounded and the humans looked the other way while I tore down the corridor in search of my friend. A short time later, Francine told us Edwin was going home. He was in remission.

On our last day together, he gave us the picture at the top of this article. A sketch he had drawn. Of me. There were tears. Yes, dogs cry too.

### National Therapy Animal Organizations

- Pet Partners, <https://petpartners.org/>
- Love On a Leash, <https://www.loveonaleash.org/>
- Alliance of Therapy Dogs <https://www.therapydogs.com/>

### Summer Picnic has Gone to the Dogs

The annual PVAA summer picnic was held on Saturday, September 18th at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church with 10 humans and 4 dogs in attendance. Good friends, good food, good times!

Why are dogs such lousy dancers? Because they have 2 left feet!

### Volunteer Opportunity (from Carolyn Buono)

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church is having an Oktoberfest event at the church on October 9th from 9 to 3. They would like to have some therapy dog teams there. I would like to honor this request because they allow us to use their building at no charge for our evaluations, picnic and other events.

Since six hours is too long for any one team, perhaps we could have multiple teams doing two hour shifts. I'm going to be out of town and cannot coordinate the event so I'm hoping someone else can. In any event, it would be great to have some teams there to interact with the children and answer questions for people who might be interested in getting involved in doing this work.

Thank you very much for considering it. Please contact Carolyn at [buonocw@cox.net](mailto:buonocw@cox.net).

## Tips from Tim the Trainer (Yes, I love alliteration, don't you?)

My next therapy class at PetSmart will begin on Sunday, October 24 at 4:00 pm. Therapy classes meet for 6 weeks, and each session lasts an hour.

Canine Good Citizenship certification is recommended but not required. Please pass this onto friends and family but tactfully mention that this is not a course for dogs and handlers who have not had some basic level of positive training. The cost is \$129.

Register and pay for the class in store or on-line at <https://www.petsmart.com/>. Therapy classes typically fill up so register earlier than later.

I'd be living large if I had a dollar for each time a pet training student complained that they couldn't socialize their dog or train around distractions because it was too hot, too cold, too wet, too humid, too windy etc.

Hey, it's Kansas. You can count the number of pristine days we get in a year on both hands. If you're not a big fan of the elements, you might consider taking your dog to one of the many businesses that are dog friendly. Here's a short list, let me know if I've left anyone off: PetSmart, Petco, Home Depot, Lowe's (don't try Menard's - we got tossed out on our respective tails), Fairlawn Mall, Ace True Value Hardware. And lest we forget the Wanamaker trifecta - Academy Sports, Jo-Ann Fabrics, and Orscheln Farm and Home.

Perhaps you and your partner will ride an elevator to your destination. I knew this would be the case years ago if we were going to work in the hospital. We practiced for several days in Stormont's parking garage elevator.

Lots of treats every time the thing moved and twice over when she thought the floor was dropping out from underneath. Now she can't wait for the bell that signals the opening of the elevator doors. Then we took a road trip to Olathe and rode the elevator at Bass Pro. Yes, dogs are welcome there, too.

Like I needed another excuse to spend the afternoon at Bass Pro...

## World's Largest Pet Walk Needs Y-O-U!

Join Captain Judy's team representing PVAA for the World's Largest Pet Walk on Saturday, September 25. We'll meet at the Crestview Community Center parking lot (north end), 4801 SW Shunga Drive, at 5:30 p.m. to begin our team walk.

This event is for everyone who wants to enjoy the health benefits of being active with pets, while also supporting Pet Partners! There is no registration fee to participate in the walk; however, team members are encouraged to set up their



own fundraising page. Everyone - pets of all types, family members, friends, and colleagues -- is invited to come out and enjoy the day.

Here's how to sign up for the PVAA team. Click on the link below, then select the green "Join or Start a Team" button and go to "Find an existing team". Type in Prairieland Visiting Animals Association, and our team will come up. You can join with your email or with your social media.

[https://p2p.onecause.com/wlpw/home?\\_ga=2.21234680.2143442184.1632095529-1586491291.1623443103](https://p2p.onecause.com/wlpw/home?_ga=2.21234680.2143442184.1632095529-1586491291.1623443103)

Message Judy Knoll at jemknoll@gmail.com for help or more information.

*What's the difference between a dog and a marine biologist?  
One wags a tail, and the other tags a whale.*

### Now You Know...

Stormont Vail Health reimburses all expenses related to preparing your animal for therapy work through Pet Partners. Special thanks to Stormont Vail Auxiliary, who set up this fund in recognition of former Volunteer Director Beverly Rice.

### Mark Your Calendars!

- Saturday, October 16 - The Next Pet Partners Evaluation for new or current teams at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 3625 SW Wanamaker. Register at <https://petpartners.org/> Navigating the Pet Partners website can be tricky. Contact Sharon Fricke at slintonf@gmail.com for help.
- Saturday, October 2 - The next Pet Partners Handlers Course is being held at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library. Register at <https://petpartners.org/>. Contact Julie Hoffman at julieprairielandpp@gmail.com.
- Tuesday, November 2, at 6:30 pm - The Annual Meeting of the Members, location to be announced. Agenda includes voting for 2022 officers. All PVAA members are encouraged to attend.
- Saturday, December 4 at 5:30 - The annual holiday party is coming up sooner than you think. Once again, the gathering is being hosted by Sharon Fricke at her home. Details to follow. (Just for the two-legged partners. Sorry, pups!)

#### Officers:

Chair: Karen Simecka

Co-Chair: Kathy Schlotterbeck

Secretary: Judy Knoll

Treasurer: Diana Zimmerman

#### Contact us:

[prairielandvisitinganimal@gmail.com](mailto:prairielandvisitinganimal@gmail.com)

#### Website:

<https://www.prairielandvisitinganimals.com/>

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