



Special Edition

PVAA PRAIRIE TAILS

Welcome to the abridged 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!

WHO or WHAT IS PVAA?

We are Prairieland Visiting Animals Association. Since 1992, PVAA has recruited, evaluated, supported and educated therapy teams throughout Shawnee County. We meet about six times a year, and two or more times annually, we conduct Pet Partners evaluation events for prospective human/animal visitation teams.

Currently we have more than 25 teams providing comfort and support in various facilities in the area. See some visit photos included in this edition.

WARM UP TO READING (by Debby Martin, Reading with Prairieland Dogs Coordinator)

Reading With Prairieland Dogs is a program at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library that consists of 6-week sessions three times a year (February, June & September). We have 3-5 dogs at the library to read with kids on Sundays from 2:00-3:00. We had a record 44 reading sessions on one Sunday in February, 2023.

Problem: During the last session, I had convinced a young man to come read. At the end of his session, he asked for a book to take home. As a retired reading teacher, I was heartbroken to tell him we did not have available books to give out.

Solution: PVAA people have stepped up and donated more than 70 books. Roundtable Bookstore, located in the NOTO Arts and Entertainment District, will supplement the books this session, making sure we have a variety of readability in the books that kids can enjoy at home. Roundtable has committed to helping in the future and we are happy knowing kids will always have books to take home in the future.

Learning to read can be stressful for some children. Therapy dogs can take the stress out of reading. When children smile when they read, they are more likely to read again. And we know our dogs inspire smiles!

**My email password has been hacked.
That's the third time I've had to rename the dog...**

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 am a good dog. This much I know. If I were to ever doubt this, I am reminded by the throngs of patients and medical heroes at Stormont Vail. There is no greater thing than to know you are loved.

Just before Christmas, Tim and I met a 73-year-old woman in her hospital room. I knew we had something in common. She was a greeter at a local sporting goods store. I am a therapy dog. We have similar jobs except that she probably doesn't wear a vest like mine.

She told us that a man entered the store, grabbed a pool cue, and beat her with it. He broke her jaw, her collarbone, lacerated her ear and left her with a concussion so severe that she can no longer hear out of her tattered ear. Humans are one of the few species that preys upon itself.

She moved here a year ago to be with family. Her t-shirt bore the picture of her much adored 200-pound Great Dane. Her recovery will take weeks. She misses her dog. So, a call was put in for a therapy dog team. Maybe I could be her dog for a few minutes.

There is good in this world and there is pure evil. Good lies broken and battered in a hospital room. Evil is charged with 4 felonies and is locked up. After all she's been through, Good says she loves Topeka.

I am a good dog. And today, a good dog made her smile. This much I know.



TIPS FROM TIM THE TRAINER (Yes, I love alliteration, don't you?)

"Look at the way she looks at you."

I get that a lot. Whenever Cheyenne comes to one of my training classes to demonstrate a particular behavior. Her emerald eyes meet mine as if to say, "now what?" It's one of the most beautiful moments of any day I spend on Mother Earth.

Direct eye contact is intimidating and even threatening to some dogs. It comes more naturally to humans. Cheyenne and I spent months forging a relationship that has seen us through over 700 hours as a therapy team. And it all began with teaching and rewarding eye contact.

Cheyenne was resistant at first. She has the nose of a bloodhound. New scents, familiar scents, heck, ANY scent takes her to that nirvana that only dogs know. I was about as interesting as a wet barrel of hair.

Successful interactions in pet therapy begin with eye contact. Dogs with aptitude for this work think everyone is their friend. The reality is that not everyone likes dogs. Hard to fathom, I know. Teach your dog to check in with you first and then be released to say hello.

Eye contact allows you to assess and act upon your dog's emotional state. Eye contact is the switch that lights up a room. It is the power-up button on your device or your TV.

When it comes to creating a human/animal bond, the eyes have it.

WHERE DO WE VISIT?

Stormont Vail & KU St Francis



Businesses



Schools



Events

Covid vaccinations, Stress Relief, Yes—even horses!



KS Rehab



READ with Prairieland dogs at the Library



Juvenile Detention Center



We Support the Following National Therapy Animal Organizations

- **Pet Partners, <https://petpartners.org/>**
- **Alliance of Therapy Dogs <https://www.therapydogs.com/>**

PetSmart Therapy Dog Class

PetSmart offers therapy classes several times a year. They 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 a course for dogs and handlers who have had some basic level of positive training. The cost is \$169. Register and pay for the class in store or on-line at petsmart.com. Therapy classes typically fill up so early registration is encouraged. Contact Tim McHenry (timthetrainer@yahoo.com) for more information.

Training classes are also offered at:

Camo Cross Dog Training - 3526 SE 21st St, Topeka <https://www.camocrossdogtraining.com/group-classes.html>

Helping Hands Humane Society - 5720 SW 21st St, Topeka <https://www.hhhstopeka.org/training-classes/>

Why do dogs make such lousy dance partners? *They have two left feet.*

Just a Reminder...

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.

Pet Partners (petpartners.org) offers online classes to help strengthen the bond between you and your dog. Click the link for more information. <https://petpartners.org/volunteer/volunteer-center/resource-library/>. Alliance of Therapy Dogs ([therapydogs.com](https://www.therapydogs.com)) features online articles that might prove helpful as well.

We hold Pet Partners Evaluation for new or renewing teams multiple times a year, typically on a Saturday. Evaluation dates are shown on our website. Please contact Sharon Fricke at slintonf@gmail.com for assistance.

Julie Hoffman (julieprairielandpp@gmail.com) teaches the Handler's Course required for all Pet Partners registrations. Class dates are shown on our website. The Handlers Course is held at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library. Visit the PVAA website to register when the time comes.

ALLIANCE OF THERAPY DOGS evaluations can be scheduled with Karen Simecka. For more information contact her at ksimecka1@gmail.com.

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