



December 2021

PVAA PRAIRIE TAILS

Welcome to the December 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!

Name Our Newsletter Contest

Kudo's to Lisa Horn who submitted the winning entry for our newsletter. A close second was "Paw Prints" but since almost all therapy animals have tails, we decided to use the more inclusive title. Can you name the one Pet Partners species without a tail?

It's a Wrap!!

Reading With Prairieland Dogs ended its 4-week fall session on Oct. 3. Several teams participated and were greeted enthusiastically by scores of readers each week.

This highly successful program will continue into 2022 with 6-week sessions beginning in February, June, and September. Contact Karen Simecka for more information.

Member Spotlight - Carolyn & Jasmine

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 highlights from their career.



Judging from the picture, you'd think that Carolyn Buono and Jasmine had been together since the dawn of time. But this image was captured on the first day they met, and Jasmine was already 3 years old.

"We hit it off right away, Carolyn said. We began eight months of private session dog training almost immediately. Jasmine had some issues with sounds and was not familiar with being petted. My other current therapy pet at the time, Abbey, became her mentor."

The Kansas District of the Lutheran Church financed the purchasing of Jasmine, and she was soon put to work as a Comfort Dog in Training. Jasmine and Abbey started visiting Lutheran Elementary Schools in Kansas. Visits often began with chapel services.

Carolyn and Jasmine attended many conferences, including local and regional events for the church as well as national and regional conferences for Parents of Murdered Children and the military's Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) and for Extra Mile K9 Ministry. Their TAPS work focused on helping families grieving for the loss of their family member to suicide.

This training prepared Carolyn and Jasmine to work with victims of disasters and other tragedies. Carolyn and Jasmine answered the call when Lutheran churches in this part of the State wanted a team to support members who were

experiencing losses.

"But the District also wanted us to be involved in Disaster Response", Carolyn added. "They trained us to respond with LERT (Lutheran Early Response Teams) following disasters. They sent us to conferences and training to prepare us for that."

Carolyn had previously been certified with Animal Assisted Crisis Response with her first therapy pet, Riley and also Abbey. In 2017, she decided to do the preliminary training and evaluation with Jasmine. To do so, they had to travel to Anchorage, AK. This is now known as the National Crisis Response Canines.

Soon after obtaining the certification with National Crisis Response Canines, Hurricane Harvey hit Texas. Jasmine and Carolyn were deployed with three other teams. They spent two weeks traveling throughout Texas providing comfort and support to hurricane victims.

In 2018, Carolyn and Jasmine, along with PVAA member Sheri Jones, responded after Hurricane Michael.

Prior to Covid 19, Jasmine and Carolyn visited regularly at Plaza West and Aldersgate Village for Great Lakes Caring Hospice patients, family members and staff. They also made weekly trips to the VA in Topeka in the Stress Disorder Treatment Unit.

Now that most Covid restrictions have been lifted, Carolyn and Jasmine respond to calls from the DA's office at the Shawnee County Courthouse to help young people with testimony preparation. Recently this tireless team became volunteers at Stormont Vail and are visiting the Cancer Center and the Pediatric Unit.

Jasmine is 11 now. Carolyn hopes to have Jasmine mentor her young dog Joy so she can start a visiting career soon with Presbyterian Manor and then perhaps the hospital as well. Soon, the torch shall be passed.

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/>

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 call them "my girls", but they're not mine at all. Or anyone else's, really. They are cared for by some dedicated adults paid to keep them safe and warm.

But they hurt. You can see it in their eyes. And you can smell it. At least dogs can, anyway. It's not the hurt that comes from having your tail slammed in the door. The damage here is to the soul.

I visit my girls every other Friday. The familiar ones rush to me as if I were a long-lost friend. The new arrivals stay back in the shadows. But I visit them all and even the timid ones come around after a while.

They tell us about their pets and how much they miss them. Some of my girls are only a short walk from home. Others live in places far, far away. Some get visitors. Others get something called a "pass" which allows them to return home for a short time.

Still there are others who rarely get visitors and never get a pass. There is a pervasive sadness about them. It's all I can do to relieve them of it, if only for a moment.

When the weather is warm, we go for hikes. I wear two leashes on those days so my girls can take turns holding one while my partner holds the other. Other days we play in the courtyard. Fetch isn't my favorite game, but I'll chase the silly ball a few times just for them.

My girls like tricks, especially when I show them the three words I can read. "Sit, down, spin." They think it's magic. But if I were really a magician, I would take them to a place where people loved them as I am loved by those I meet on this incredible journey.

Now that would truly be magical!

Why didn't the dog want to play football? It was a Boxer...

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

"Can I pet your dog?"

It might seem like a rhetorical question when it comes to therapy dogs. I do appreciate it when people ask. For one, it takes away the "ambush" factor. We've all been there. A group of overly exuberant 10-year olds playing in a park suddenly abandon their hand-held devices (that's what kids do on the playground nowadays) and rush your dog. You quickly check for signs of stress, and find your dog staring at the well-intended creatures as if they were an approaching tsunami.

There's an acronym I throw around to my therapy classes in the first week. It's TEAM. How apropos. The "T" stands for "touch", the kind that reassures your dog. "E" is for eye contact. Set your dog up for success by having them look at you before initiating a greeting or whenever they are feeling low levels of stress. The "A" in TEAM means articulate - as in communicate your protocols for the interaction (like where and how and when to touch your dog.) Finally, the "M" stands for management. Successful interactions are based on your ability to manage not only your dog but the environment around you.

One day, Cheyenne and I were walking the streets of downtown Lawrence when an inebriated man came stumbling out of a bar and awkwardly asked if he could pet my dog. Cheyenne dropped to the ground spread eagled. Her ears were pinned back and her eyes were like saucers. She looked to me for help (eye contact, check!). I gently massaged her ears to reassure and asked the man to wait while I re-evaluated the situation (articulate and management) while he stammered something about my dog "having a problem."

Nothing changed. Cheyenne looked like a hairy speed bump. After practicing TEAM, I decided that the answer to the question "can I pet your dog?"

Was no.

HOLIDAY PARTY! MISTLETOE PROVIDED!

The PVAA annual holiday party is this Saturday, December 4 at 5:30. This event is a PVAA tradition and is graciously hosted by Sharon Fricke in her home. Contact Sharon @ slintonf@gmail.com if you haven't already RSVP'd. Sharon reminds us that she is not a caterer, so let her know what you will be bringing to the table when you call. Two-legged partners only, sorry pups!

PVAA'S PET WALK TEAM DRAWS NATIONAL ATTENTION!

Thanks to all who supported the 2021 World's Largest Pet Walk! All funds raised directly supports Pet Partners and the incredible work of their therapy animal teams. More than \$71,000 was raised nationally for the therapy animal program that brings life-changing visits to millions of people each year.

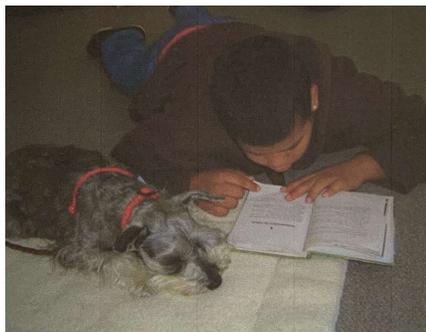
PVAA's team was a top 10 fundraiser, receiving recognition in the Pet Partners newsletter for raising over \$1,000. Special thanks to Judy Knoll for assembling the team! Here's a link to their wrap up video - our PVAA team members that walked (Julie with Ava, Tim with Cheyenne, Lisa with Ash & Bree, Carolyn with Hope & Jasmine, Judy with Charley and Pam with Oscar) are up first:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eelONGZQ5A8>.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN...

Each newsletter will pay tribute to a dog that brought joy and comfort to hundreds if not thousands of people before crossing the Rainbow Bridge. Here is their story...

In Honor of Jules
Born: Oct. 1998
Died: March 2, 2013
Partner: Kathy Schlotterbeck



And one thing led to another...

In the late '90's, Kathy Schlotterbeck was a kindergarten teacher at Williams Science and Fine Arts Magnet. Tired to leaving her dogs alone during the day, she asked her principal if she could bring Jules to work.

To her surprise, the answer was yes.

Jules became a fixture in her classroom. Sadly, another classroom dog bit a child and the district soon forbade dogs to enter their building.

Which led to Kathy exploring a new concept in the care of dogs called "doggie day

care." A short time later, Kathy learned about therapy dogs. Jules was a natural and began visiting residents at a retirement center in Highland Park. One of the residents, who had been non-verbal, suddenly started making vocal sounds whenever Jules would visit. An employee of the nursing home said that it was the first time the resident had attempted to communicate with anyone.

Kathy has always loved walking her dogs. While on a stroll down the Shunga Trail, she caught a sign about therapy dog evaluations hosted by what was known at the time as the Delta Society. The Delta Society eventually became Pet Partners. Kathy signed on, she and Jules passed the evaluation.

Jules began visiting nursing retirement centers, the senior diagnostic center at Stormont Vail Hospital. A short time later, Jules began working as a Reading Education Assistance Dog (READ) where he found his niche' in the therapy world. Jules made appearances at schools as well as the Public Library

We salute Jules for a rich and storied therapy career and thank Kathy for recognizing and acting on his special gift.

WE'RE LEGAL! (We always were as a non-profit)

PVAA is now officially a 501c3 organization! This means we are exempt from federal taxes, sales taxes and property taxes.

"This is a huge advantage for Prairieland going forward. Any donations from sponsors or anyone can be deducted," said PVAA President Karen Simecka. She continued, "If we want to have advanced pet therapy workshops or other pet therapy programs next year, we can ask others to support us. There are other benefits with reduced fees, with PayPal and with postage. I'm so thankful that the membership decided to move forward with this and a huge thank you goes to Diana Zimmerman for her countless hours of work on this."

What do my dog and my cell phone have in common? They both have Collar ID.

PETSMART THERAPY DOG CLASS

PetSmarts next therapy class begins Wednesday, January 26 at 7:30 p.m., running for 6 weeks, with hour-long sessions. Canine Good Citizenship certification is recommended, not required, but basic training is needed. Register and pay for the class (\$139) in store or on-line at petsmart.com. Register early to get your space.

NEW TO THE FOLD!

Congrats to our newest Prairieland Members who successfully completed their evaluation with Pet Partners (some renewals, some first-timers)



Carly and Ginny

Anthony & Leonidas

Debby & Dinah

Crystal & Alita

Madison & Tyson

ANNUAL MEETING - November 2, 2021

Officers elected for the next year are: Karen Simecka - Chair, Tim McHenry - Vice-chair, Judy Knoll - Secretary, Diana Zimmerman - Treasurer. Many thanks to Kathy Schlotterbeck who was previously our Vice-chair.

The dates for our 2022 meetings are as follows: March 8, May 10, August 16 and November 1. The picnic date is June 11th and the holiday party is set for Dec 3rd.

Thanks to Diana's efforts and all who submit pictures, we've had a huge increase in followers on social media. Please continue to send photo's of your visits so we can post them. Send them to dianazimi6@gmail.com.

2022 dates for the READ program at the library are as follows: Feb 6-Mar 13, Jun 5-Jul 10, Sep 11-Oct 16. It runs for 6 weeks each time with 2-3 dogs and a monitor. Karen will ask for sign-ups in advance.

A complete report of the meeting will be sent to members soon.

LOVE ON A LEASH & ALLIANCE OF THERAPY DOGS

Recently, we've had increased interest in people wanting to join LOAL and ATD national pet therapy groups. Preparations are being made to facilitate the evaluations and requirements for each organization. For more information, visit our website and click on "[Become a Therapy Team](#)". The steps to join each group and the links for additional information are listed. Contact Karen Simecka @ ksimecka1@gmail.com for questions and to schedule an evaluation.

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 offers online classes to help strengthen the bond between you and your dog. Click on this link for more information: <https://petpartners.org/>. Alliance of Therapy Dogs features online articles that might prove helpful as well: <https://www.therapydogs.com/>.

The next Pet Partners Evaluation for new or current teams will most likely be in February at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 3625 SW Wanamaker. Check our website for updated information: <https://www.prairielandvisitinganimals.com/> Once the date is set, you can register at <https://petpartners.org/>.. Navigating the Pet Partners website can be tricky. Contact Sharon Fricke at slintonf@gmail.com for assistance.

Contact Julie Hoffman (julieprairielandpp@gmail.com) regarding the next Pet Partners Handler's Course. Our good friends at MO-KAN Pet Partners in Kansas City also conduct Handler's Classes and evaluations. Go to <https://mo-kanpetpartners.org/events/> for more information.

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.

Officers:

Chair: Karen Simecka

Co-Chair: Kathy Schlotterbeck

Secretary: Judy Knoll

Treasurer: Diana Zimmerman

Contact us:

prairielandvisitinganimal@gmail.com

Website:

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

Content by Tim McHenry, editing by Judy Knoll