Off The Couch...The Pet Therapy Prescription

Paws for Thought... By June Golden

Hi there fellow pet therapists! It has been a long time since our last newsletter and I’m sorry. Rest assured we were not on a major city world yacht cruise (sounds good doesn’t it?). We’re right here for all of you trying to keep up with our growth.

However, as you can see from our pages here, we’ve had many interesting and exciting things to report and share with all of you.

We have welcomed, since our last newsletter ... taa dah! 30 new evaluators doing really exciting work in five new states, bringing our program very close to nationwide! We are grateful to our evaluators for all the great work they do for us and our continued growth and success.

As the horror of Newtown/Sandy Hook began to emerge we were amazed as our Connecticut division sprung into action, quietly, gently, behind the scenes (without the media coverage) and really helped to save and comfort the residents. I know you’ll be proud to read the story and see the pictures. This was great, hard work; only they, as members of the community, could do it and give everyone some consolation.

We’ve had to raise our fees and I’m sorry about that, too. Again, it’s a Jeep in my driveway not a limo or Porsche! Our insurance, necessary to allow you access with your dog to any venues, increased over 1000% this year. Phones, postage, office equipment, supplies, etc. have gone up too.

Speaking of which, we have a wonderful Fund Raising opportunity I urge you all to participate in. We are raffling off an original (16" x 20" on canvas) portrait commission from the great artist Dean Russo. Valued at more than $900 (of course we paid less!) this Brooklyn based pop artist’s work is inspiring, realistic and expressive (see pictures on page 15). Be the lucky pet therapist who will have their picture transformed into a beautiful and endearing work of art while supporting their favorite charity, too!

Edan! We actually have a B&B therapy dog in Afghanistan helping our service men and women! We are so proud of her and wait until you see her pictures on page 2! Edan has helped thousands of wounded and troubled American soldiers there.

An important article in the newsletter and an issue we feel very strongly about is the influx of reports that some B&BTD handlers are misrepresenting their therapy dogs as service or assistance dogs. These dogs are specially trained to perform tasks that therapy dogs cannot do. As such, they must have access to places and environments that therapy dogs do not. Please read the article and be considerate of the special gifts and privileges service and assistance dogs have.

Enjoy our newsletter, keep your suggestions, comments and stories coming; we love them!

June
We would like to introduce Major Edan, our very special Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dog working in Afghanistan. Edan was originally purchased to be deployed to Afghanistan to enter a narcotics detection program. This did not work out as she was not well motivated to detect drugs. During training sessions, it became apparent that Edan was sensitive and caring towards humans and had what it takes to become a great therapy dog.

Edan was certified with The Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Inc. through our long-distance program. The military held a ceremony for her and she was indoctrinated by the General into the Army and was pinned the rank of Major. Edan now works with the 85th Medical Detachment Combat Stress Team (CSC) to assist wounded soldiers. In her first four months of service, she completed 10,805 walkabout/interactions with our service members.

Edan and the combat stress team help service members that suffer from combat and operational stress, which includes all the physiological and emotional stresses encountered as a direct result of the dangers and mission demands of combat. The goal is to assist in maintaining unit cohesion and the ability to fight under high stress conditions and maximize posttraumatic growth. This is a phenomenon in which positive outcomes occur among survivors of a wide range of traumatic experiences. Posttraumatic growth among trauma survivors has included improved relationships, renewed hope for life, an improved appreciation of life, an enhanced sense of personal strength, and spiritual development. Major Edan is part of their Individual Counseling, Group Counseling, Occupational Therapy, Support Groups and Traumatic Event Management. Great job, Edan!
A Retirement Party for Sambro

Sambro was born just after 9/11 and was the only one in his litter that was not immediately adopted. One family gave him a chance but returned him after only hours. His owner, Dennis Nelson, was glad the handsome yellow Labrador Retriever came back to him. Sambro was loving, calm and sensitive, prompting Dennis to pursue the training needed for pet therapy. He felt that was the work Sambro was here to do.

Sambro & Dennis served at Staten Island University Hospital’s hospice program for nine years. Sambro was known as the golden boy of S.I.U.H. The nearly inseparable pair has been a calming & reassuring presence not only at the hospital working mostly with life-end patients, but also at nursing homes & 911 memorials. The sweet dog offered his company and his ear to anyone in need of his warm and loving ways. The fabulous therapy team was honored in December, 2013 with a retirement party at Regina M. McGinn’s MD Education Center.

So how does Dennis keep busy now that his partner is retired?

He’s training a new therapy dog … Zeus!

Kessler Welkind: Yappy Hour

Yappy Hour is a once a month visit to Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in Chester, NJ. Visits take place in Kessler’s outside courtyard, weather permitting, and this enables us to bring all our teams. Currently we have five teams participating in a relaxed setting where the patients can interact with the dog of their choice, and for a longer time rather than just the few minutes for each of our standard visits. We have large to small dogs: Whippet, Standard Poodle, Rough Collie, Bichon/Maltese Mix, and Welsh Springer Spaniel. It gets the patients as well as their families and staff out in the fresh air in a casual, relaxed setting, non-alcoholic drinks are served, water for the dogs, and everyone laughs and forgets their troubles for a while. The wonders of pet therapy shine through at this special event. Captain: Kate DeBiasi

Left to right are: Frieda Goodrich & Harry, Sue Sebastian & Riley, Kate DeBiasi & Sarah, and Doreen Scouras & Bogey.
Roxy Reading Courthouse Therapy Dogs

Something new is happening at the Bucks County Courthouse in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Roxy Reading Therapy Dogs, in conjunction with County Judge Robert Mellon, recently launched a program providing pet therapy for minor victims who must appear in the County’s Dependency Court. Several judges oversee court cases involving children who have been separated from their caregivers and removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, mental health issues and other reasons. He recognized how stressful court is for children. Vulnerable children are shielded as much as possible; however they often must still face angry or distraught parents in court as they describe their living conditions to a judge. In order to ensure that a child is safe and that their educational, medical and emotional needs are met, the state requires that each child must be seen. Therapy dogs are great distractions which help the children relax enough to talk to a judge in court.

Roxy Reading Therapy Dogs, a Doylestown-based non-profit and all volunteer therapy dog group, supplies the volunteer therapy teams to the courts at no cost to the taxpayers.

Local child advocates are thrilled with the program. “This week, I have seen the dogs light up the faces of children, their parents, the attorneys, and others who work at the courthouse,” said Stacy Leffler. She’s the Foster Care Supervisor at the Bucks County Children and Youth Agency, the county social service agency that oversees the care of dependent children. It’s common for the court process to be stressful for all parties involved. The dogs visibly seemed to ease the tension and smiles abounded as the children were distracted from the reasons they were at court. Each child was given a little stuffed dog - donated by Roxy Reading and designated as a “Roxy Puppy”--to continue the comfort a real dog brought to him or her. In many cases, this is the only belonging the child will have as they move on to foster or county care later in the day.

Judge Mellon is thrilled that the therapy dog program is now a permanent program for the county and Roxy Reading Therapy Dogs. In fact, the success of the Dependency Court visits have inspired the group to expand into a cutting edge program in the District Attorney’s office in Bucks, visiting fragile children who are victims of violent crimes, on the day they must face their perpetrator. Many thanks to the volunteers who make this possible by devoting their time and efforts to this great cause!

Roxy, of Roxy Reading

Luke, a 3-year-old golden retriever, greets youngsters waiting to enter court on his first day on the job.

Dolores Socha and Obi Red Knobi

Dolores Socha tells us that her beautiful B&BTD Obi has won one of the five honorable mentions from the American Kennel Club for the Ace Awards, Therapy 2012. Congratulations to Dolores and Obi!


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A Russian Toy Rules “The Breeds”

One little Russian Toy Terrier dog took Manhattan with great aplomb at “Meet the Breeds”, which took place at the Javits Center in NYC on September 28th and 29th, 2013.

Bright & Beautiful founding member and board member, Hazel Wichman, watched proudly as her Angel’s Toy Fortune “Niki” was awarded her CGCA or Community Canine title. The test was administered by the Director of the Canine Good Citizen (CGC) and Star Puppy program at the AKC, Dr. Mary R. Burch.

A dog must have a CGC recorded with the AKC before testing for the advanced title, testing in a real world environment instead of a ring. In spite of the unusually hard conditions, with thousands of spectators milling through the area and even reaching to pet the little dog on her stays, Hazel Wichman’s Russian Toy Terrier passed this Advanced CGC test with flying colors!

Our thanks goes to the American Kennel Club for providing the opportunity for a Russian Toy Terrier to be the first of her breed to achieve the CGCA title at this event.

At that same event, two other Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs’ members also received the AKC CGCA title: Kira Wright, our Director of Evaluators and board member with her Blue Great Dane, Mouse; and Dorice Stancher, certified Bright & Beautiful Evaluator, with her Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, Krista.

Congratulations to all!

AKC® Canine Good Citizen® are trademarks of the American Kennel Club
On December 14, 2012, we lost twenty six precious angels in our town ... six beautiful adults and twenty wondrous and special children. The world was undeniably shaken to the core, and we in Sandy Hook and Newtown felt utterly helpless and lost in the face of such unbelievable horror and tragedy. We searched for answers, reasons, anything to make some sense out of such unspeakable cruelty. And we anxiously wondered “how can we help, what can we do?” As we slowly absorbed the reality of what had happened in our town, we quickly realized there was indeed a way we could help ... and in what seemed like minutes, we had gathered together a group of local dogs and their owners, and we were at the primary memorial site in the center of the Village of Sandy Hook. There we stood as our dogs comforted hundreds of residents and visitors, adults and children alike. Each morning our dogs went in eager and alert, anxious to get to their people; and each afternoon they came home tired and carried with them the sorrow they had felt throughout the day. In the days immediately following the tragedy, these dogs tirelessly gave love and comfort to hundreds ... first responders, fire men and women, police men and women, teachers, parents, grandparents and children of all ages. And each day, as so many people hung on to them, crying into their fur, the dogs said, “Yes, hold on to me; I will bring you comfort and strength”.

From this, the Newtown-Strong Therapy Dogs began simply and slowly, as a sub-group of the Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Inc. Bright & Beautiful certified our first two teams shortly after the tragedy, and our next two teams a few weeks later. Since beginning our group with these four therapy dog teams, we have trained and certified ten new handlers and eight new therapy dogs, so we now have fourteen handlers and twelve therapy dogs. We are currently training a group of twelve new teams, who will be taking their formal Bright & Beautiful therapy dog handling class within the next few weeks, and all will be certified within the next few months.

Our members are heavily involved in Newtown and Sandy Hook, and our surrounding towns as well. Because of where we live, we are mostly asked to work with children, but we also do private visits to the elderly who live at home, as well as to assisted living and convalescent environments. We visit with the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts during meetings, with local colleges, high schools, and middle and elementary schools as well.

Please feel free to contact us, should you like a visit with our dogs.

We can be contacted at: NewtownDogs@aol.com.

And please like our page on Facebook: Newtown-Strong Therapy Dogs.

—Ann Marie Cioffi, MA, Psy., Director, Newtown-Strong Therapy Dogs.
The Newtown Strong Therapy Dogs (continued from page 6)
Watching television on the morning of December 14th, 2012 was surreal, as the news unfolded, little by little, of what was happening less than two miles up the road from our house. Initially I just heard the sirens, and then a Newtown friend posted a page on Facebook, from our online newspaper, The Newtown Patch. A possible shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. That’s when I turned on the television and started paying more attention to the sirens, that I now realized were not just passing by and fading. They kept on and on and on .... then the helicopters started coming, and then just more and more speculation from the news reports until the world learned, much later in the day, just how horrific a tragedy we were facing.

Shocked, like so many others in Sandy Hook and Newtown, our neighboring towns, and across our entire state and country, I felt helpless and sickened and sad. And also like so many others, I wondered what in the world I could do to help, when a small voice said, “hey, you have a wonderful therapy dog, as do many of your friends in Sandy Hook and Newtown, and surrounding towns; they have an ability that will amaze you.” And before I knew it there was a group of nine golden retrievers and one black lab at my house, forming a caravan down to the primary memorial site. And that started a week of incredible work on the part of Libby, “Mirasol Cayberry UnScentsored”, who rocked my world with her awesome instincts, abilities and perseverance in the face of unimaginable grief and horror. Many of the children smiling for the first time since the tragedy, and so many adults smiling through their tears, as they reached out to touch her, and she reached up to them. Night after night we came home sad and exhausted, but each day Libby went right back to work, wearing her happy face and obviously eager to help comfort and heal. Words just cannot adequately express the impact our dogs had ... they are beyond awesome in their ability to comfort and heal. I think the photos tell their story quite well.

—Ann Marie Cioffi, MA, Psy., Director, Newtown-Strong Therapy Dogs.
Thank You Alice Quinn, PhD, CPDT-KA

Trainer of our first Newtown graduating class, and an awesome friend and mentor, Alice Quinn is the Director of the MA and CT Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Inc., Connecticut Director and Founder of Allan’s Angels Therapy Dogs based in Ellington, CT.

Alice is also the owner of Faithful Friends Canine Academy based in Ellington, CT. Pictured here with her medical alert service dog, Faith.

Alice selflessly gave countless hours of her time and energy to help us get off the ground .... for almost three months, traveling a great distance weekly, to get our new hopefule trained and ready to take their therapy dog test.

Alice, we cannot thank you enough for all that you have done for us!!!

Alice and Faith
The Ruby Rowe Story

Sharon Smith, our Program Director in Fredericksburg, Texas, shared a heartwarming and miraculous pet therapy story that we would like to share with you, in her words:

Ruby Rowe was a Hill Country Hospice patient at Hill Country Medical Center weeks ago. She had been in Hospice and had not been responsive in some time...eyes closed, heavily medicated, coma, pretty much non-responsive...Now, we know that our dogs aren’t magical...but, we won’t tell, right?...so Daisy and Tashi are making their rounds...I’m at one end of the hall...Linda Davis, Program Director of the hospital and Vicki are at the other end...the story...as told to me...her children are there at her bedside..."Knock, knock!" “Would you like to have a visit from a dog? It’s Dog Day at the Hospital.”...the son says they’d rather not, but, the daughter says that she remembered that her mother always loved dogs...so YES they would.

Miss Daisy took her place on Ruby’s bed and went to work...Ruby moved her hand, opened her eyes, and whispered something to her daughter...daughter asked Vicki if they’d like to know what she had said........Ruby said, “Tell your brother to get over here and pet the dog!”

Now, for some of you who may not know, our Hill Country Hospice Program is remarkable...a remarkable team of people, but, I’ve learned that some patients move in and out of the program from time to time...so for now, we are proud to present the soon to be famous, Ruby Rowe, who moved back to Windcrest Nursing Facility and was reunited with her old friend, Miss Daisy.
As I began to refine my skills as a dog trainer in 2000, the small dogs I encountered were either untrained or aggressive. How hard was it to train a dog under 10 pounds? My solution was to raise and train a little dog to understand issues clients had to overcome, which is how I ended up with Tommy. Tommy is my 8 year-old Papillion who has been working by my side as my professional evaluator since 2006. He has the energy of a puppy and his vertical jump is over 3 feet. He vibrates when he greets people, and he licks incessantly. His play drive is so extreme that he has to have a toy in his mouth before running outside or inside. He may sound spastic, but he taught me how to be a calm, patient trainer.

As my career evaluating therapy dogs grew, so did Tommy’s role. His first job is to demonstrate basic obedience skills. His second job is to show me which dogs have a hard time with impulse control or a strong prey drive. Tommy’s size and his fluffy tail seem to be an irresistible trigger to some dogs. Tommy does not bark or react to the excitable dog; rather, he remains in position in a calm, professional manner. This shows owners what they need to work on in order to become better therapy dog teams.

Sadly, not all dogs or owners possess the skills to pass the therapy dog test. For the people that don’t pass, it’s because they are either not right for the work or not ready for it. Not right may include a dog that has fear issues or is aggressive. Not ready includes a dog that has not been trained or is immature. So being a therapy dog evaluator is bitter sweet, because I have to tell these people that I cannot pass them. So it is the best and worst job, but I know that all of the dogs I have trained in my 15-year span have somehow found their purpose. Not every dog is meant to go into therapy work, but that does not mean that they don’t provide therapy in some way.

I feel lucky to be able to work with Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Inc. in order to help people fulfill their dreams. I get to meet nice people with well-trained dogs who are willing to work hard and volunteer to enrich other people’s lives. Even after a long day of testing and training people, my little Tommy provides me much needed therapy. He has lost several teeth and his little tongue sticks out as he sleeps on my lap, because he’s just as tired as I am. But I know he’ll be ready for work again in the morning.

Susan Jakobs, Sterling, IL, www.dogbuilders.com
Spotlight on Tate

Tate (CH Haloridge I've Got It Covered, THD, CGC, ROM Silver), a Bright & Beautiful Therapy dog, received the Sterling Award for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement in Therapy at the 2013 French Bulldog Club of America National Specialty Awards Banquet in Topeka, Kansas.

Tate is the third French Bulldog in the history of the French Bulldog Club of America to be honored with this prestigious award.

Tate’s owners are Paul and Mary Raleigh. In 2010, Tate and Mary became a certified therapy dog team through Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Inc. Tate and Mary visit Hill Country Memorial Hospital, nursing homes, retirement homes, children's reading programs, Boys and Girls Club programs and participate in various community events (Wounded Warriors picnic and Relay for Life).

Tate and Mary are one of 20 certified Bright and Beautiful therapy dog teams currently active in Fredericksburg, Texas and surrounding communities, under the leadership of Sharon Smith, Program Director and Certified Evaluator for The Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Inc.

Mary Raleigh has just become a Certified Evaluator assisting Sharon Smith with evaluations.
T.A.P.S.  Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

My full name is “Honor’s First for Freedom”, but most folks call me Belle. I’m a Golden Retriever, born on January 27, 2005; I was bred to be a therapy dog by a special breeder. I was brought into the family of Lisa Dolan and her children, Becca and Beau. Their father, Navy Captain Bob Dolan, died in the terrorist attack on the Pentagon in 2001.

After Mr. Bob died, his family attended TAPS. Lisa Dolan decided she would raise a puppy in Mr. Bob’s memory to be a pet therapist and to give back to TAPS and honor her husband. That was me!

The first time I went to TAPS in May, 2005, I was just four months old. Many of the attendees were children and first-timers. They were as scared and nervous as I was! Soon hugs and kisses were calming my nerves and theirs. Mom said I was making them feel safe and helping to heal broken hearts. She says the hugs and kisses are comforting and healing, and it’s the job of a therapy dog to comfort and heal.

My official training was on Memorial Day Weekend, 2005. TAPS gathers each year to remember the love, celebrate the life and share the journey. I met lots of folks but was most drawn to the children. I became a mascot for the Good Grief Camp and cuddled and licked away many tears. I found my true calling as a heart healer!

I love being a heart healer. Over the years, I have comforted many families. I’ve worked with veterans and nursing homes. This year was my ninth TAPS weekend and I enjoy seeing my TAPS families, especially my children! I love that I have touched so many lives!

First for Freedom, Lisa Dolan & Belle
In Loving Memory Of Captain Robert E Dolan Jr.
(September 11, 2001)

Belle with some younger (2&3yrs) campers.  Belle, therapy dog helps comfort families of the fallen.
Doc's Best Friend

B&BTD Therapy dog, Shea helps anxious patients of all ages get through their dental work in Lakewood Twp., NJ.

Shea, a seven year old West Highland White Terrier who has been putting Dr. Winokur's more special-needs Ocean Family Dental patients at ease.

Shea has a red therapy dog jacket and a way about her to help each patient's concerns.

Shea helps Doctor Winokur keep it simple with no sedation.

She performs miracles.

Shea and Dr. Donn Winokur

Therapy Dogs Versus Service Dogs

Many requests have been made from our membership to address the difference between therapy dogs & service dogs, since there is a lot of misunderstanding around these designations.

Our members & their dogs are certified pet-therapists. This allows the owner & dog teams to enter facilities & public places where the dogs may provide companionship, comfort, love & affection to patients, residents or the general public. The dogs must have extensive training & pass a test to be certified. Beyond that, each dog must possess a very special personality, being docile, friendly, gentle, loving & compassionate. They must allow people to touch them & tolerate strange equipment & locales.

Working or assistance dogs may include guide dogs, service dogs & military service dogs amongst other categories. Unlike therapy dogs, assistance dogs are highly and specifically trained to serve the special needs of ONE person. They are trained NOT to react to friendly gestures from other people. Assistance or service dogs are WORKING when they travel with their human companion. They help the individual to function and/or cope and thereby are granted the right to accompany their person in places pet or therapy dogs may not go. Please respect this important difference.

We appeal to our members: please do not take advantage of your dog's badge and/or vest to misrepresent him or her! We take a strong stand on this; therapy dogs are not service dogs & do not have the same special privileges that service dogs must have.

Faking your dog's status to gain access to a venue not common to dogs is dishonest & unethical.

The Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dog's I.D. cards will soon bear a new statement: "This is not a service or assistant dog certification".
WIN A ONE-OF-A-KIND PORTRAIT OF YOUR DOG BY FAMOUS ARTIST DEAN RUSSO AND SUPPORT YOUR FAVORITE CHARITY!

These are just some examples of Dean’s work taken from dog’s photos
$20 Tax-deductible receipt will be sent as payment confirmation per entry
Visit Dean Russo’s Facebook page for more examples of his fine work.

A $900 VALUE!!!!

RAFFLE TICKET

Original Commission

Dean Russo for Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs
Tax Deductible Donation of $20 per Ticket/Entries must be received by 12/01/14
Name: Tel.# : email:

DRAWING TO BE HELD ON CHRISTMAS EVE (12/24) 2014!!!
MAIL ENTRIES TO: BBTD 80 POWDER MILL RD, MORRIS PLAINS, NJ 07950

RAFFLE TICKET

Original Commission

Dean Russo for Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs
Tax Deductible Donation of $20 per Ticket/Entries must be received by 12/01/14
Name: Tel.# : email:
GET THAT DOG OFF THE COUCH!

THE BRIGHT & BEAUTIFUL THERAPY DOGS, INC. FALL/WINTER 2014

Contributions to “Off the Couch” are welcome and may be sent to info@golden-dogs.org!

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