



THE HYDRANT

**The Monthly
Bulletin
for Members of
Intermountain
Therapy Animals**

**Volume 23/Number 7
July 2023**

ITA Normal Office Hours:

Monday ~ Thursday, 9 am to 5 pm (Fridays - CLOSED)



Image from the Webb telescope

JULY EVENTS

Monday & Tuesday, July 3 & 4 ~ ITA OFFICE CLOSED for INDEPENDENCE DAY

Primary Children's Rehab - TOSH - Early Language Group (2-3 year olds):

Monday, July 3, 10:50-11:25am

Wednesday, July 12, 9:30-10:30am

Wednesday, July 5 ~ Club U Summer Camp Reading Event, 9:45-11:45am

Tuesday, July 11 ~ Camp HOPE (Happiness-Opportunities-Perseverance-Empowerment) Utah, 6:30-8:00pm

Tuesday, July 11 ~ ITA Board of Directors, 7 pm

Tuesday, July 11 ~ ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING of Intermountain Therapy Animals, 7:30 pm

All ITA members and anyone from the public are all cordially invited to hear about the organization's review and accomplishments for the year 2022

Davis Co. Library Summer Reading Events:

Layton Branch Wednesday, July 12, 6:30-8:00pm

Farmington Branch Monday, July 17 6:30-8:00pm

Primary Children's Constraint Induced Movement Camps

Riverton Clinic: Thursday, July 13 10:45-11:30am

Tuesday, July 18, 10:45-11:30am

Thursday, July 20, 10:45-11:30am

Murray Clinic: Tuesday, July 25, 4:25-4:50pm

Thursday, July 27, 10:40-11:15am

Monday, July 24 ~ ITA OFFICE CLOSED for PIONEER DAY HOLIDAY

Wednesday, July 26 ~ Royal Family Kids Camp, 2:00-4:00pm

Monday, July 31 ~ Wasatch Recovery Mindfulness Group, 9:00-10:00am



OUT & ABOUT!



Stephanie Jacobs & Biscuit were at St. Mark's Hospital on June 12th to help them celebrate the return of therapy dogs "since COVID 19." The hospital may be late to the re-openings, but the excitement garnered a nice mention on KUTV-Channel 2 that evening, and a nice big article in *The Deseret News* on June 13th.



Carolyn Barnes & Maggee Mae and **Erika Daines & Daisy** are featured in two new videos by McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden. One is called "McKay-Dee Intro" and the other is "McKay-Dee Unit Tour" and you can watch them live on YouTube!



MORE OUT & ABOUT!



Cheryl McKay & Mozart were excited to tell us about a recent inspiring experience they had Primary Children's constraint-induced camp recently. We're glad they did!

Cheryl says, "The children we saw were three to six years old. In each case, one of their arms or hands needed therapy so the other was in a cast or wrap so it couldn't be used. The kids were so excited to meet the dogs and immediately wanted to walk or pet and brush them. They cautiously fed them treats, and when the dogs were gentle they happily fed them more. When one of the children was walking Mozart the others hid his squeaky toy and they were so excited when he sniffed around and discovered it.

"It was obvious that the kids forgot their arm and hand restrictions when they were focusing on our pets and gladly used the leashes, toys, brushes and treats, which was the main idea for this exercise. I feel this hour pet therapy was very beneficial and I hope other therapists are able to participate."

HOW COOL IS THIS??

Boxby, a Dutch company that makes dog treats, has launched letter treats in the Netherlands, inspired by the R.E.A.D. program!

Our R.E.A.D. leader there, Saskia DeGroot Korsten, is the one who made this happen. She says, "The AAI-maatje Foundation has been supporting the Reading Education Assistance Dogs® (R.E.A.D.®) program in the Netherlands since 2019. The Lettergame snacks will help us extra during our reading sessions, but also because Boxby gives us a donation for every Lettergame box sold. This will allow us to help even more children with reading support from a four-legged Aai-mate, the reading dog!!!

We are bummed that we can't get them here in the U.S., but we are thrilled nevertheless!



ITAVOLUNTEERS.COM

Don't forget that our absolutely current list of facility program opportunities for our volunteers is always available at this website (above)! You also get a message every Tuesday with the very most updated requests for one-time events and other fun stuff.

RETIRING TEAMS



Shirley Davidson & Anica

(Bozeman)

Shirley & Anica first joined ITA in May 2016 and have had a long and storied career. We are grateful for all the years that they were part of ITA. Shirley says, "Over the years we have visited a number of nursing homes, attended special events, demonstrated for young children at the local Animal Shelter and attended many 'Paws To De-Stress' days at Montana State University.

"However, it was during Anica's first visit to the Bozeman Hospital that she found her true passion for helping people. She greeted everyone with her large soulful eyes and her calm and gentle approach, supporting patients, staff and visitors throughout the hospital on her weekly visits. She seemed to have an instinct for seeking out those who needed her most, and my part was just to be on the other end of the leash. I always felt that we were part of the healing process and a welcomed presence on all of the wards.

"Anica is 12 years old now and slowing down, and it is time to retire. ITA has been a wonderful and rewarding experience for both of us, and we will dearly miss it."

Linda Wright & Gordon

(Park City)

Linda first joined ITA in June of 2009, and Gordon has been her second partner, since May 2016. Sweet Gordon is now dealing with cancer and chemo, so it's time for him to get a break.

Lucky for us, Linda is going to join the ITA Board of Directors to keep on working for ITA and our mission. Thanks, Linda & Gordon, for all you have done already to make the world a much better place!



Chris Albrecht & Kazi

(Woods Cross, UT)

Chris & Kazi have been members for a year, but Chris has noticed that Kazi really doesn't have his heart in therapy work and is not enjoying constantly meeting new people. We are truly grateful to Chris for recognizing Kazi's needs and honoring his opinions. He will of course continue as Chris's incomparable family therapist!



LEAVING EARTH



Cali, partner of Susan Bellon

(Salt Lake)

Susan and Cali were a team from March 2015 through September 2022. Cali was a one-of-a-kind Basset-Border Collie mix, and totally irresistible. Thank you, Susan and Cali for your 7+ years of service!



Gail Richardson & Lamar

(Bozeman)

Gail says, “Lamar has been with ITA since January 2015 and therapy work has been so rewarding for both of us. The joy on people’s faces when they see him says it all. And I know Lamar had fun with people and all that petting. Such a sweet, gentle and loving guy. Besides being a R.E.A.D. sub, we’ve gone to BZN Deaconess (cancer center and patient rooms), two assisted-living places, Birchwood and Highgate, MSU Paws to De-stress, local schools and Heart of the Valley over the years. He was a HOPE dog too!”

Gail’s intention was just to let Lamar enjoy retirement, but she lost her sweet boy on Saturday June 17th. Nancy Dodd, Bozeman Chapter Leader, says that Lamar “improved everyone’s lives and was a super sweet, gentle, and loving dog.”



Macy, partner of Mark Miller

(Park City)

Mark tells us, “Macy crossed the rainbow bridge on June 21st, but not before ‘fish-ing’ for 2-1/2 hours on the lake in New Hampshire. All these years of trying and she never did catch a fish, but it wasn’t from the lack of effort! Our last night was really tough and all four legs gave out at 2 am, and she was telling us it was time. She was 14-1/2. Thanks for all you did for us. We loved our visits—especially at the U of U

Burn ICU, Park City IHC and Benchmark Christmas. I will be back!”

Words aren’t enough to thank Mark for all he and his two wonderful Golden partners have contributed to ITA and their clients. Mark has been with ITA for 22 years, and Macy has been an ITA dog her whole life, since turning the proper age in 2010.



BON VOYAGE



Audrey duRoss & Hazel

(Park City)

Audrey & Hazel joined ITA in June of 2022, but alas, they are now moving out of our territory, to Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

We wish them the best!

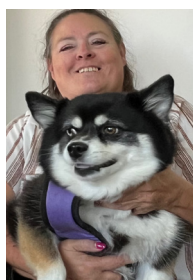
OOPS !!

We're so sorry! We inadvertently reversed locations on Rosanna and Rhonda last month! Here's how it should have been:



Rosanna Finley & Loki

(Helena)



Rhonda Fleury & Mercedes (Sadie)

(St. George)



WELCOME, NEW TEAMS



Emily Callahan & Callie
(West Valley City)



Deedee Fedorchak & Novie
(Salt Lake City)



Kate Cary & Willow
(Salt Lake City)



Tone Halverson & Lily
(Ogden)



Sarah Christensen & Oshie
(Salt Lake City)



Barbara Holck & Keko
(St. George)



Ember Czipka & Gus
(So. Jordan)



Rachel Konishi & Benny
(Midvale)



MORE NEW TEAMS



Ameer Merritt & Ambrose
(So. Ogden)



Peggy Petersen & Tucker
(Salt Lake City)



Steve Moore & Argo
(Salt Lake City)



Dave Smith & Henry
(Miles City, MT)



Charlotte Pace & Bella
(St. George)



Bill Winters & Archie
(Bountiful)



Charlotte Pace & Coco
(St. George)



The Scientific Value of Those Smiles

We were contacted recently by Lucas Benson, RN, a nurse who really appreciates the value of our therapy animals. He is also a writer and asked if he might write an article for ITA. Of course we were delighted to accept his generous offer, and this is what he wrote for us. Thank you, Luke!

Patients and therapists familiar with the healing encounters of therapy animals often remark upon the “magic” of the human-canine interaction. This magic is known to anyone who can't help but smile when they are presented with a caring dog. Studies are showing that when dogs and humans interact there is a detectable rise in specific hormones and brain chemicals that are associated with overall wellbeing, decreased symptoms of depression and anxiety, positive social behaviors, lower stress levels, increased immunity as well as improved growth and healing. It turns out there is verifiable science to the “magic” of these wonderfully compassionate friends.

Oxytocin is a hormone known to play a role in human chemistry, fostering positive social interaction along with a host of other positive, stress reducing attributes. This article posted on the NIH National Library of Medicine shows the benefits of oxytocin on the human condition, from reduction of stress hormones and blood pressure, to anti-pain and anti-anxiety effects. Oxytocin is known to be pivotal in the mother-baby bond, creating a positive feedback loop that strengthens, as an amplifying echo, the connected bond between two separate beings.

It is this same oxytocin that is elevated when humans interact with dogs (in us as well as them), creating a bond based on that same amplifying echo. Oxytocin is like a natural silver-bullet to improve conditions for healing, and dogs freely dole us this wellbeing sub-

strate by simply being with us. This 2015 article from Science (AAAS) demonstrates oxytocin's role in our chemistry and its rise when dogs and humans interact, just some of the evidence of the healing aspects of the presence of dogs. The magic not only feels real, but it is scientifically quantifiable.

It doesn't require hard science to know that dogs have the indelible quality of inducing a smile without any seeming effort. They bring the most stalwart smile

lines to the hardest of hearts, causing involuntary grins that do quite a bit more, it turns out, than display an inner landscape of expressible happiness. The mere motion of a smiling face, genuine or fake (this article originally published in Psychological Science says it matters not, remarkably only the

smile action is needed), persuades our inner chemistry to flow toward a positive state, reducing stress and increasing natural resilience to wear and tear, which enhances our ability to fight sickness and heal from trauma. This piece from Neurimmunomodulation details how stress levels can drastically affect wound healing, demonstrating how reduced stress levels can promote improved trauma recovery.

It also doesn't require hard science to know that smiling feels good, but the neuroscience and biochemistry around smiling has been studied extensively nonetheless, and it is becoming more and more clear that smiling prods our so-called 'feel-good' brain chemicals to flow. This piece from Psychology Today cites studies that show how brain chemicals called neurotransmitters, such as dopamine and serotonin, are released when we smile. This mix of neurotransmitters and



endorphins is like a natural cocktail of some of the finest feelings humans can feel; nothing like an intoxicating buzz, but more a general wellbeing that allows humans to live within the ups and downs of life, and to heal from wounds in an optimal way. Many common anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medicines work on balancing these same neurotransmitters, and dogs do it simply by being dogs, causing us to give ourselves a spoonful of our own medicine by involuntarily smiling in their presence.

When you combine a naturally occurring chemical bond of oxytocin with a heady brew of endorphins and neurotransmitters, responsible for everything from positive social value to trust and acceptance, it is no wonder dogs have such powerful abilities to aid and assist humans in our healing and wellbeing. The environment for patients dealing with various kinds of trauma can be difficult to traverse, wrought with potential pitfalls largely indefinable. With the help of therapy dogs this terrain is softened and made smaller, more manageable somehow, and barriers are broken. Defenses melt away involuntarily when a therapy dog comes around the corner...an instant smile, perhaps the first since a recent trauma, and an instant shot of mother nature's best medicine rushes onto the scene.

When the defenses drop, at least a degree, and the first smile cracks, the ground is ripe for laughter. And as I hope we all know, laughter holds the keys, and is truly, without a doubt, the finest medicinal tonic money can't buy (and in case you aren't personally familiar with the powers of laughter, here's a short piece from Yale Scientific on the matter, one amongst many such studies). Laughter is a heavy tool, not only as a common sense truism about best medicines, but pointedly as to what it demonstrates as far as someone's current status... like an acid test for general wellbeing. As a nurse, if I see a patient laughing it demonstrates they have, at least temporarily, put a muzzle on their pain and a short leash on their nagging reality of living with their

trauma, whether they be mental or physical maladies. The symptoms have, in a sense, abated for the moment when laughter can occur.

A precursor for genuine laughter is smiling, and a good breeding ground for smiling is feeling less stressed, less depressed and anxious and more positive about our relational bonds and societal belonging. Dogs bring this neuro-chemically charged psychological chain of events into real time and the real-world the instant their doggy ears come into view, providing humans with a potent balm to assist healing from all types of wounds, and to aid the struggle through all sorts of tribulations.



The data and science of the day supports what has been known to those close to animal therapy all along, that there is an unmistakable bond and "magic" that permeates the connection between humans and dogs. Oxytocin and the host of other chemicals involved in helping humans heal are induced to flow by merely being in the presence of these magical creatures, providing real-world treatment for physical and mental ailments. But while the effortless power of canines to calm and comfort humans can be shown in data sets and laboratory experiments, the mystery of how dogs essentially hopped the fence into our neuro-chemical bonding and wellbeing system (and us theirs)

is still just that, a great mystery...of how we became so undeniably good for each other. It's almost like fate... which lands it somewhere back toward the realm of magic, which sounds just about right.

– Lucas Benson, RN



Appreciation

During their recently declared “Community Health Improvement Week,” ITA received a card from Intermountain Health (note their new, shorter name and new logo) that said, “It takes a community to improve community health. We want to extend our deepest gratitude for the invaluable contributions you and your organization have made toward helping people live the healthiest lives possible. Your commitment bolsters our community’s resilience and well-being. Thank you for your tireless efforts.”



Andy Chudd, Peggy’s husband, came upon this display recently in the Nashville airport. We should lobby for this here in SLC!

Very Cool Idea!

As you are likely aware, shelters nationwide are overflowing with pets that have been given up for a boatload of reasons: returning to work after the pandemic, the housing crisis, and more.

ITA member Bee Lufkin decided she would like people to know what wonderful animals are out there waiting for forever homes, so she asked if she could add the organization where she found her lovely Coach, and we thought that was a brilliant idea.

While we don’t generally advertise for others beyond ITA on our trading cards, we were happy to support the idea of rescue and adoption as an excellent source for anyone’s next companion animal.

If you happened to find your ITA partner at a reputable nonprofit rescue organization and were pleased with their policies and treatment of their animals, we invite you to do the same the next time you order your ITA trading cards.



- Kathy Klotz



Supporting Others Who Are Grieving



MORE AND MORE, our ITA teams are being asked to support those who have gone through a recent trauma or tragedy, whether it be a student suicide, a shooting, or any other life-shattering event.

We all worry about whether we are saying and doing the right or wrong things, about the best way to help others navigate their grief and pain. And often our instincts and responses fail to be truly helpful and supportive, despite our sincere best intentions.

We have included lots of information on this topic in our training manuals, but we just came across an article by writer Celeste Headlee that seems to summarize the problem—and the solutions—brilliantly. We hope you find this as inspiring as we did.

The Mistake I Made with My Grieving Friend

The author of We Need to Talk reveals how she learned to help—and not help—a friend with loss.

By Celeste Headlee

A good friend of mine lost her dad some years back. I found her sitting alone on a bench outside our workplace, not moving, just staring at the horizon. She was absolutely distraught and I didn't know what to say to her. It's so easy to say the wrong thing to someone who is grieving and vulnerable. So, I started talking about how I grew up without a father. I told her that my dad had drowned in a submarine when I was only 9 months old and I'd always mourned his loss, even though I'd never known him. I just wanted her to realize that she wasn't alone, that I'd been through something similar and could understand how she felt.

But after I related this story, my friend looked at me and snapped, "Okay, Celeste, you win. You never had a dad, and I at least got to



spend 30 years with mine. You had it worse. I guess I shouldn't be so upset that my dad just died."

I was stunned and mortified. My immediate reaction was to plead my case. "No, no, no," I said, "that's not what I'm saying at all. I just meant that I know how you feel." And she answered, "No, Celeste, you don't. You have no idea how I feel."

She walked away and I stood there helplessly, watching her go and feeling like a jerk. I had totally failed my friend. I had wanted to comfort her, and instead, I'd made her feel worse. At that point, I still felt she misunder-

stood me. I thought she was in a fragile state and had lashed out at me unfairly when I was only trying to help.

But the truth is, she didn't misunderstand me at all. She understood what was happening perhaps better than I did. When she began to share her raw emotions, I felt uncomfortable. I didn't know what to say, so I

defaulted to a subject with which I was comfortable: myself.

I may have been trying to empathize, at least on a conscious level, but what I really did was *draw focus away from her anguish and turn the attention to me*. She wanted to talk to me about her father, to tell me about the kind of man he was, so I could fully appreciate the magnitude of her loss. Instead, I asked her to stop for a moment and listen to my story about my dad's tragic death.

From that day forward, I started to notice how often I responded

(continued on next page)



Supporting those who are grieving *(continued)*

to stories of loss and struggle with stories of my own experiences. My son would tell me about clashing with a kid in Boy Scouts, and I would talk about a girl I fell out with in college. When a co-worker got laid off, I told her about how much I struggled to find a job after I had been laid off years earlier. But when I began to pay a little more attention to how people responded to my attempts to empathize, I realized the effect of sharing my experiences was never as I intended. What all of these people needed was for me to hear them and acknowledge what they were going through. Instead, I forced them to listen to me and acknowledge me.

Sociologist Charles Derber describes this tendency to insert oneself into a conversation as “conversational narcissism.” It’s the desire to take over a conversation, to do most of the talking and to turn the focus of the exchange to yourself. It is often subtle and unconscious. Derber writes that conversational narcissism “is the key manifestation of the dominant attention-getting psychology in America. It occurs in informal conversations among friends, family and co-workers. The profusion of popular literature about listening and the etiquette of managing those who talk constantly about themselves suggests its pervasiveness in everyday life.” Derber describes two kinds of responses in conversations: a *shift response* and a *support response*. The first shifts attention back to yourself, and the second supports the other person’s comment. Here is a simple illustration:

Shift Response

Mary: I’m so busy right now.

Tim: Me too. I’m totally overwhelmed.

Support Response

Mary: I’m so busy right now.

Tim: Why? What do you have to get done?

Here’s another example:

Shift Response

Karen: I need new shoes.

Mark: Me too. These things are falling apart.

Support Response

Karen: I need new shoes.

Mark: Oh yeah? What kind are you thinking about?

Shift responses are a hallmark of conversational narcissism. They help you turn the focus constantly back to yourself. But a support response encourages the other person to continue their story. These days, I try to be more aware of my instinct to share stories and talk about myself. I try to ask questions that encourage the other person to continue. I’ve also made a conscious effort to listen more and talk less.

Recently, I had a long conversation with a friend of mine who was going through a divorce. We spent almost 40 minutes on the phone, and I barely said a word. At the end of our call, she said, “Thank you for your advice. You’ve really helped me work some things out.” The truth is, I hadn’t actually offered any advice; most of what I said was a version of “That sounds tough. I’m sorry this is happening to you.” She didn’t need advice or stories from me. She just needed to be heard. ❤️



Another Great New Book about Therapy Dogs!!

We have a whole lot of amazing people in our world of animal-assisted interactions!

Dee Dee Davis has been a R.E.A.D. member since 2015, as well as a member of our affiliate, MidSouth Therapy Dogs in Memphis, TN. She has written a lovely new kids' book about her partner, Bentley, and all the various things he does as a therapy dog. We haven't seen anyone else describe our "jobs" in such perfect and helpful detail.

What's more, *Dee Dee is donating 100% of the proceeds of Bentley's book to the R.E.A.D.® program which they love so much.*



This story could be great fun and education for *all* kids, not just those in the R.E.A.D. program. Think about it for the kids in your own life—no matter their age—and it could go a long way toward "explaining" therapy dogs to the vast public!

Huge thanks to Dee Dee and Bentley for their talent, creativity and generosity!

Bentley's book will be out on September 12, but it can be pre-ordered now on Amazon. Here is the link:

<http://amzn.to/42yuFaO>

BENTLEY'S DAY OUT
A Day with Bentley the Therapy Dog

Dee Dee Davis
Illustrated by Julia Miranda Louzada

\$18.95 us
/25.95 CAN

ISBN: 9781637555293

**Ever wonder how a therapy dog makes kids smile?
Spend the day with me, Bentley the Therapy Dog!**

If you are feeling sick or mad or lonely, I can cheer you up. Want to know what I did to become a therapy dog? Come along with me and meet the special people I've encountered during my day out, and how it all began! Everyone is filled with hope when they experience the special bond between humans and animals.

This special book teaches children the role of therapy dogs, the difference between therapy and service dogs, environments where a therapy dog visits, and how therapy dogs enhance the human-animal bond.

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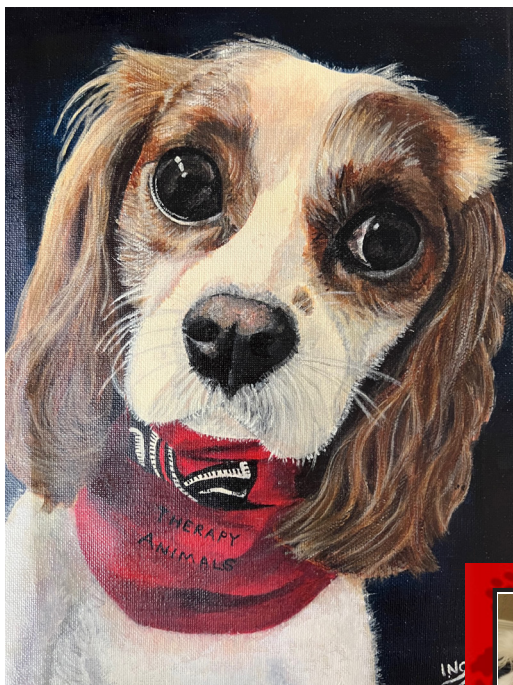
Dogs in Paintings



A Hunter Combing a Dog (detail), about 1430–40, French. Tempera colors, gold paint, silver paint, and gold leaf on parchment. Getty Museum



OUR Dogs in Paintings



A friend of Merrilee Anderson's painted this portrait of her partner, Cooper, and Merrilee liked it so much that she asked her to paint another one that she could give to us in the ITA office to enhance our art collection!

Merrilee and her husband drove from their home in St. George on Thursday, June 22, on their way to their cabin in Island Park, and dropped in to deliver this delightful surprise. They sure made our day!



The Lighter Side

I'm sorry Jack,
there's not enough room



I THINK THE REASON WE'RE BORN WITH TWO HANDS IS SO THAT
WE CAN PET TWO DOGS AT ONCE.



I don't care who dies in a movie, as long as the dog lives.



**The world's best antidepressant has 4 legs, a wagging tail and
comes with unconditional love.**



Love is how excited your dog gets when you come home.

