



New volunteers | January 2018 Orientation

**SHARING JOY
LOVE
& HEALING POWER**
May 2018 | Newsletter

Sharing & Caring LO4P Leadership

Love On 4 Paws (LO4P) started in 1990, when a mother with an autistic daughter noticed that her child spoke to the family dog, but nobody else. She spoke with her daughter's teacher and asked if she could bring her dog to visit with her daughter's classmates. After all the hurdles had been cleared, the visits with her daughter's classmates turned out to be a rousing success. Encouraged by the positive response, the mother felt that such visits could be beneficial to other children with special needs. She developed a relationship with the Los Angeles Unified School District, and LO4P was born.

As the program became more popular, she was receiving requests for visits to other types of facilities. Soon, she was visiting with Shriners Hospital for Children in Los Angeles, and was receiving more requests than she could handle. In 1997 the group had grown enough to require a formal structure, so she organized the group and created Love On 4 Paws, Inc., a California Non-Profit Corporation. That one mother and one dog evolved into 80 therapy animals and handlers today.

In 2003 I joined LO4P with my dog Roscoe. I was happy to see that the organization had high standards, but I must admit, I was a little concerned about Roscoe behaving himself. As it turned out, Roscoe and I were the best team and the worst team... because we were the only team to test.



Roscoe was a perfect gentleman (much to my surprise) and we passed the entry test.

Roscoe then provided over ten years of services with LO4P and was extremely popular with all of the people he visited. I know Roscoe loved doing the visits, because when I put on his LO4P vest, he was raring to go.

Why do we do it? Unless you have experienced it first hand, it is very difficult for anyone to describe the magic that happens when one of our animals visits a sick patient in the hospital. The age of the patient really doesn't matter. Tears and pain soon turn into smiles and laughter when one


of our doggie therapists enters the room. The transformation is miraculous and an amazing sight to behold.

We now hold orientation meetings three to four times a year for new volunteers or for current volunteers to add a second animal or include their spouse as a new volunteer. We visit 15 hospitals, several colleges and universities, nursing homes and schools for children with special needs. In an average year LO4P makes more than 2,500 visits during which each volunteer may see as many as 25 people on a single visit. We are out there: seven days a week, 365 days a year, including major holidays.

Join us to feel the joy we get from sharing the unconditional love of our animals and bringing a little ray of sunshine and a bit more hope into the lives of many wonderful and deserving people. Once you experience it, you will be hooked!

Why not give it a try?

~ Janie



Watching co-workers melt when they see a four-legged coming toward them is another example of rewards these visits bring

Dignity Health
California Hospital Medical Center

NOW ON STAFF

We are grateful to include Love On 4 Paws to our pet therapy program among the volunteer services offered at California Hospital. Known as Canine Kindness throughout Dignity Health, these volunteer teams enhance the hospital environment for patients, visitors, and staff members. “Man’s best friend” instantly converts an intimidating or stressful place to a warm and comforting space.

Chaplain Denise LaChance recently shared a story she heard from a patient who enjoyed such a visit. “The patient had gotten some bad news medically and was feeling alone and frightened. She wasn’t sure what to make of the offer of a little visitor, until she saw the dog – and she loves dogs. The patient reported “the dog knew exactly what to do and even gave me a hug.” Chaplain Denise commented, “She had experienced the visit as a gift given at exactly the time she needed it.” Patients who welcome these special visitors are transported outside of the hospital walls as they share memories and photos of their own pets.”

During a therapy session, physical therapists were walking with a patient, Maria, when they saw the Canine Kindness team approach.

The physical therapists invited the team to walk along with their patient, saying “it will help her keep going.” Maria, brightened by the sight of a dog, commented that she “missed her dogs and this made her feel at home.”

Watching co-workers melt when they see a four-legged coming toward them is another example of rewards these visits bring. There is a palpable change in the energy of the department that is enjoying a visit. Smiles are broad and cell phones emerge so staff members can take a selfie with the visiting dog. A 10 minute visit is the equivalent of hitting a re-set button, as important work is resumed with a lighthearted, refreshed attitude. One of our regular dogs, Timmy, is now always welcomed to the pediatric unit with a song created especially for him by the nursing staff.

The wonder of it is that whether it is a brief chance encounter along a corridor or a quarter of an hour interaction in a patient room, Canine Kindness has the power to

create a positive memory that leaves a lasting impression on everyone.



"There is a palpable change in the energy of the department that is enjoying a visit"

SMACKY'S MAGIC STORY

Smacky and I met at the animal shelter in 2001. I walked right past her cage without seeing her because she was so quiet. For some reason I went back to her cage, saw her, and decided she was the one.

Smacky is a calm, quiet, and patient dog. Kids and kittens love her, and the feeling is mutual.

One time we were leaving a hospital when an older gentleman in the lobby stopped us, asking about Smacky and her vest. I told him she's a therapy dog, and her job is to cheer up patients and the staff. He was very interested and happy to

meet her. Afterwards his granddaughter told me he is a Holocaust survivor and he's actually afraid of dogs.



More recently we were at a hospital and a teenage girl came up to us in the lobby asking if we used to visit another Los Angeles hospital, and I said yes. She recalled that we visited her when she was a patient there ten years ago. Today, she still has the picture with Smacky!

Smacky is now 17 years young and she still loves working as a therapy dog.



**Therapy pets
relieve student
stress before
finals week.**

FURRY STRESS RELIEF

by Jennifer Murua

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**Studies show that petting
animals is definitely more
conducive for a healthy well-
being and state of mind**

"We really want students to be prepared for finals and to be relaxed during the stressful season."

Finals are upon us and stress has taken a toll on students. With papers to write and exams to study for, it is no doubt that students need time to unwind and relax during the last week of the semester.

Cal State LA hosted a therapy cat and dog event at the main walkway on Nov. 28, where four dogs and one cat were available for students to interact with. Students waited in line as they looked forward to spending some quality time with the therapy pets.

Frangelo Ayran, Assistant Dean of Students for Wellness and Engagement, mentioned how "This event happens every semester right around the time of finals. We really want students to be prepared for finals and to be relaxed during the stressful season."

As a way for students to be more relaxed during these last few weeks, animal assisted therapy shows great results.

"Studies show that petting animals is definitely more conducive for a healthy well-being and state of mind, which is a great place for everyone to start for finals or tests or anything that's stressful," said Ayran.

Monica Benson, a student on campus, was happy to assist with the event this year:

"I really like dogs, it makes me really happy when they bring dogs on campus to get us ready for finals week."

Cal State LA has been working with the animal assisted therapy organization, Love On 4 Paws, for nearly three years now. As a California nonprofit public benefit corporation, their mission is to provide therapy to "children and adults in hospitals, special schools and assisted living facilities to enhance their overall quality of life," according to Love On 4 Paws.

"To become a therapy team, the cat or the dog has to be very well socialized. They have to pass the evaluation and have their shots up to date." said Janiss Garza, a therapy cat owner for Love On 4 Paws. "And so does the owner, they must have their shots up to date too. Especially if going to hospitals. My cat, Summer, was up to date on her shots, I wasn't. It took us an extra month to get the authorization to work."



There is a lot that goes into the certification for pets to work as a therapy cat or dog. They are on duty to make students feel better and relieve stress. However, the animals get exhausted as well. Garza later mentioned that "Therapy animals must do at least three visits per month, and have each visit last one to two hours long." Even though the animals are on duty, it does not mean that they did not enjoy the love they received from students who stopped. Especially if individuals had some treats for them.



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OUR MISSION

Love On 4 Paws is a non-profit volunteer based organization committed to making a positive difference for those in need through animal assisted therapy. Our volunteers accomplish this by sharing the joy, comfort and healing power of their pet's unconditional love.

Love On 4 Paws is a section 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization, established in 1997, and provides services to many facilities throughout the greater Los Angeles area. Love On 4 Paws has nearly 80 volunteer teams, and visits with over 30,000 people each year.

www.loveon4paws.org

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The magic of animal-assisted therapy is possible because of the generosity and support of our volunteers, donors and facilities in Southern California.