Quarterly Newsletter of the UCLA Medical Center People-Animal Connection
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THE PAC BARKER

Our Funny Valentines

PAC teams serve sweets to the sweet for Mattel Hospital’s children

This year, the “Hallmark holiday” of love and romance simply went to the dogs – literally – when patients from Mattel Children’s Hospital celebrated St. Valentine’s Day with animal-assisted therapy/activity (AAT/A) teams from UCLA’s People-Animal Connection.

The February 14th event took place in the colorful balloon-filled lobby of Mattel’s main entrance, where television news teams and photographers captured playful interaction between the children and the dogs.

“Just warms your heart to see the smiles on the faces of these children,” says Volunteer Services Director Kathy Sipes. “Some of these young patients are here for a long time, and the dogs really help to lift their spirits.”

Adds PAC Director Jack Barron: “The kids are beaming with joy, which makes us beam with pride. What a moving experience, to see these very ill children connect with these amazing dogs.”


“Aladdin” casts his magical smile.

“Everything we’ve seen from this program has been all positive. There are very few things we do in medicine that are all positive. This is one of them.” (Dr. Jan Tillisch, MD, Executive Vice Chair, UCLA Dept. of Medicine)

Expansion made possible by foundation grant

The UCLA People-Animal Connection is pleased to announce that volunteer Marilee Bradford has joined the organization as PAC Team Coordinator, made possible by a generous grant from the California Communities Foundation.

Marilee and her 3-1/2-year-old dachshund Tovah have been volunteering with PAC since the Fall of 2002, primarily in pediatric and adult hemodialysis, CCU and PICU units. Early in this Delta-certified team’s career, they were awarded a prize by Bayer/Advantix for their work here at UCLA. Marilee was co-Chair (with volunteers Martha Penhall and Lisa Waltz) of last year’s successful PAC fundraiser Sit. Down. Dinner!, and has participated in many other PAC events and activities.

Outside the world of PAC, Marilee is an award-winning record producer and writer, and a noted expert in film and theatre music history. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre here at UCLA and earned a Juris Doctor from Loyola Law School.

“You go about your world thinking you’re fulfilled, until you enter a program like this. Then you suddenly realize no, there was something missing.” And, she added, PAC filled that void. “Being involved in animal-assisted therapy is incredibly rewarding, but at the same time humbling and often challenging. And for most of us, it’s inspiring.”

The CCF grant provides for a part-time position to assist PAC Director Jack Barron in expanding the program, so hospital staff and volunteers will find Marilee in the PAC office 20 hours per week. Among her responsibilities will be training new PAC teams at UCLA Santa Monica Hospital as well as at the Medical Center.
The Tinker Miracle
by Martha Penhall

Tinker and I were working one of our normal units — 6 East ICU. A nurse took me aside and explained that the next patient, “Joe” (not his real name), was a quadriplegic and had only sensation in his upper chest, shoulder and neck areas. Joe also had a tracheotomy and could not speak; he could hear fine but could communicate only with his eyes.

After Tinker and I introduced ourselves to Joe, I held her above him so that he could feel her ears on his shoulders. It was an awkward position for me — being too short to really stand above the patient while trying to balance Tinker, who was beginning to squirm at that point. So I pulled Tinker away from Joe to reposition myself and her.

And then a miracle happened. Joe moved his right hand and fingers. He thought I was taking Tinker away from him, and he was so panicked at the thought of her leaving that he tried to reach out for her. His gesture was the first time! I knelt beside him and rubbed Tinker’s paw and nails against the palm of his right hand, and I asked him if he could feel it. He blinked his eyes “yes.” The word spread immediately among the nurses, and in his chart it was duly noted: Joe was ready for rehab.

And Tinker? She was ready for the treat that she earns at the end of each UCLA therapy visit: the cheese left on the paper wrapper of my In-n-Out burger and a sip of root beer.

PAC Incorporates Delta Regulations
Orgs team up for the betterment of AAT/A at UCLA

The PAC program has recently strengthened its affiliation with The Delta Society, the leading organization governing animal-assisted therapy/activity (AAT/A).

Since PAC’s inception in 1994, the program has abided by Delta guidelines, including protocol for AAT/A visits (from hand-washing and bedsheet barriers to hospital etiquette and dress code) and regulations for admission into AAT/A-based programs.

However, over the past 18 months, PAC has established a stricter requirement that all human/dog teams considered for UCLA’s top-dog program must first become Delta-certified and that the certification process be performed at UCLA under the instruction and evaluation of PAC Director Jack Barron.

On February 26, PAC held its first Delta Pet Partners AAT/A instructional course at UCLA Medical Center. The 8-hour session — a prerequisite for all handlers who wish to be considered for Delta certification — was headed by Barron with assistance from PAC Team Coordinator Marilee Bradford, Director of Volunteer Services Kathy Sipes and Orange County Pet Partners Delta-certified instructor Pam Becker.

Among the more than 30 attendees were handlers whose dogs ranged from a 110-lb. Labrador Retriever to an 8-lb. Chi-huahua mix. Course materials included Delta-published instructional books and an effective Powerpoint presentation which incorporated the fine points of Delta’s rules and regulations as well as those specifically pertaining to UCLA Healthcare facilities.

Upon completion of the all-day seminar, handlers and their canine counterparts were invited to participate in the required behavioral evaluations. On April 30 in the lobby of Mattel Children’s Hospital, 12 human/dog teams were tested by Barron and Becker for specific obedience commands (sit, down, stay, come), behavioral reactions (to loud noises, petting by strangers, meeting another dog), and communications and relationships between dog and handler. Eight teams passed muster for Delta certification and acceptance into the PAC program.

More evaluations will be held in June and later this summer. PAC expects to add another dozen teams to its roster by the end of 2005.