



Unleash a smile

FALL 2008

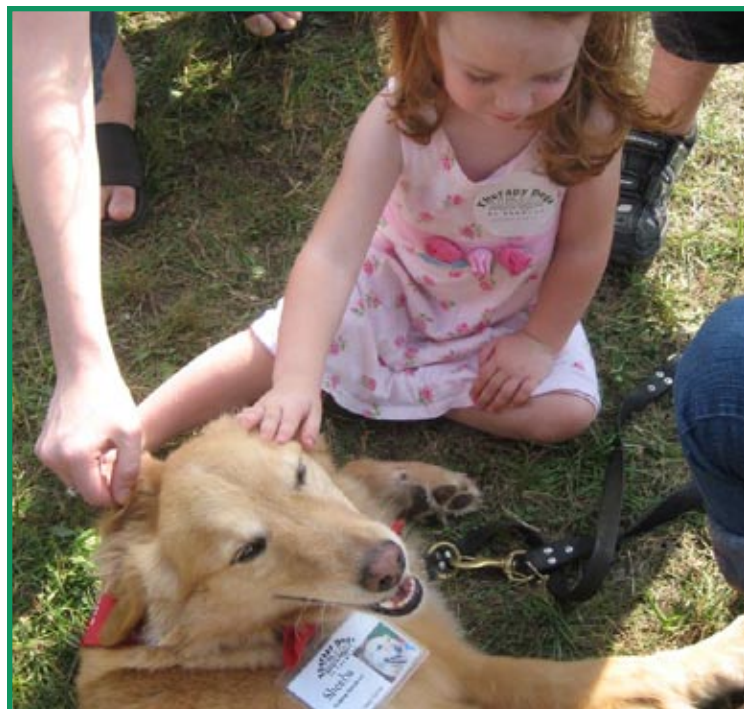
An all-volunteer non-profit, 501(C)(3), organization of therapy dogs and their handlers who have worked to improve the emotional health of Vermonters since 1992

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shelburne Museum Goes to the Dogs

Sunday, September 14

Shelburne Museum went to the dogs, and Therapy Dogs of Vermont was there! Volunteer teams greeted visitors as they passed by the welcome booth, some having their picture taken by professional photographer, Karen Pike. From there it was on to the main booth to enter into the raffle, purchase colorful TDV clothing and accessories, munch on some delicious popcorn and find out if their dog had the potential to be a therapy dog by participating in pre-testing. Over 60 teams were pre-tested, with many potential teams eager to take the next step to becoming a certified Therapy Dog of Vermont. All the fun and financial gain would not have been possible without the support of our TDV members and sponsors. Many thanks to the Pet Food Warehouse, Wagatha's, Shelburne Museum, The Lazy Dog Inn, SuperStore, Alpine Shop, and Karen Pike. We look forward to next year and all the smiles it will bring.



Welcome New Members!

- Jo Ellen Warner and Dizzy (Shetland Sheepdog)
- Jamie Cushman and Ben (Golden Retriever)
- Brian and Sara Riley and Spenser (Golden Retriever)
- Patricia Whitney and Samantha (Bernese/Shepherd mix)
- Susan Rohde and Rudy (Shih Tzu)
- Charlene Young and Bau (Bichon Frise)
- Brianna Blanchard and Watson (Mini Longhaired Dachshund)
- Joan Shelley and Kodi (Golden Retriever)
- Lynn Furno and Snow Falls Suki (Shih Tzu)
- Catharine Engwall and Isabel (Standard Poodle)
- Gail Spencer and Polar Bear (Samoyed)
- Sydney Cohn and Abby (Labrador)
- Jon Ellefson and Rebekah Liebling and Fellon (Retriever/Malamute mix)
- Christy and Andrew Hollstein and Mr. Wrinkles (Pug)



When To Hang Up The Badge

Isa and Deb Helfrich



If you have a question for me, please e-mail it to: admin@therapydogs.org. I can use your name or you can remain anonymous! Looking forward to your questions! –Isa

Dear Isa:

I am getting up there in years. Is there an age at which therapy dogs should retire?

–Yodle, Great Dane

Dear Yodle,

Great question! My canine pack member at home is 14, so I know a bit about those older woofers.

Therapy dogs can work well into their older years. In fact, senior canines can make great therapy dogs, with their experience on the job and often mellow, gentle demeanor. In fact, my handler's former partner (Jordan, the therapy dog who founded TDV nearly 20 years ago) worked until she was 14!

However, for those handlers out there who have an older therapy dog partner, please consider:

- **Changes in sensory abilities:** An older dog may have much decreased hearing, smell, or sight. This means s/he may perceive things differently or in less capacity, and be easily startled. Make sure your older therapy dog is not surprised by an approaching visitor or object.
- **Shortened visits:** The older a dog gets, the shorter the time period s/he could and should be working on a visit (so, in the younger years, if your dog worked an hour-long shift at the hospital, s/he may need to work half that, or even less!). Let your older dog be the guide for how long a therapy dog visit lasts.
- **Increased stress and over-stimulation:** Watch for increased signs of stress, overheating, overwork, and overstimulation. An older partner may not be able to tolerate the therapy dog visit environment and demands as well as s/he did as a younger dog. Listen to your dog's signals and their tolerance level.

- **Changing physical abilities:** An older dog's body is changing and it may not be up to visits. Be especially aware of any pain or discomfort, and also make sure your older dog doesn't fall on stairs, or slip on the slick floors you may find in health care environments (there are products you can put on your dogs feet, spray on or boots, that can give your older dog more traction).
- **Does your older dog ENJOY making visits?** This is critical—if your older dog is starting to lose enthusiasm for working, retirement is in everyone's best interests.

If you have any questions about your older dog and therapy work, please do not hesitate to ask your vet and/or email TDV at admin@therapydogs.org.

In short, when working with an older dog, consider:

- Changes in sensory abilities
- Shortened visits
- Increased stress and over-stimulation
- Changing physical abilities
- Does your older dog ENJOY making visits?



**"HE IS YOUR FRIEND,
YOUR PARTNER, YOUR
DEFENDER, YOUR DOG.
YOU ARE HIS LIFE, HIS
LOVE, HIS LEADER. HE WILL
BE YOURS, FAITHFUL AND
TRUE, TO THE LAST BEAT OF
HIS HEART. YOU OWE IT TO
HIM TO BE WORTHY OF
SUCH DEVOTION."**

– AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Smile. Show Those Ivories.

Fr. Al. Murphy



In 1973, I got my first golden retriever puppy. It wasn't long before my new puppy Austin taught me what to observe in his special breed. One day I approached him, placed my two forefingers in his mouth just behind his canine teeth and began to pull forward. In seconds, he caught on to the game. He clamped his jaws, careful not to bite the hand that feeds him, sounded a ferocious growl and shook his head as though he had captured a squirrel. What began as a tug-of-war turned out to be a test of my strength, for I lifted Austin off the ground and swung him 360. Whenever he, unintentionally, I'm sure, bit down too hard on my fingers I said, "Easy. Easy." He immediately stared into my eyes, relaxed his jaws and continued the game. One time a bystander was poised to rescue me from a vicious attack until I assured him that the descendant of the wolf and I were in a playful mode.

As time passed I gradually learned more about Austin, having read my first book on canines, "Understanding Your Dog," written in 1972 by Dr. Michael W. Fox. This book, still in my library, treats in chapter nine, A Dogs Body Language, a reference to showing of teeth.

Becoming acquainted with the anatomy of your dog's teeth helps you to appreciate a carnivorous animal from creation through evolution, selective breeding and training. Teeth are highly specialized structures that

serve as weapons of offense and defense, as well as for the procuring, cutting, and crushing of food. Their display, in conjunction with the position of lips, convey the emotional status of your dog. The show of teeth contributes to telling others the need to keep ones distance or to feel free to move closer.

A dog trainer described to me a vivid picture of what happened to him when sat at the kitchen table of prospective clients. Their barking Rottweiler charged into the room, lunged forward and fixed his front legs on the table. He stopped short with his teeth at the trainer's neck. The trainer asked me, "Do you know what I did?" Anticipating words of wisdom, since the trainer is still with us, I asked, "What?" He calmly responded, "Nothing. I deliberately froze." The point made was simple. Under such conditions, be still. Don't move. The master's command deflated the emotional reaction and peace reigned. The dog moved from an aggressive posture to a calm, though cautious, stance.

Reading body language of humans as well as dogs gathers information that can be productive in getting to know the other and to gaining self-knowledge.

Quickly, take a minute to review a very brief summary of a dog's teeth anatomy. In all there are 42 teeth. Six pairs of sharp incisor teeth are located in front of the mouth flanked by two pairs of large canine teeth. Both the incisors and canine are used for biting and tearing of food. Other teeth are premolars and molars used to break and chew. Our canine pets also have special teeth, very strong, called carnivorous teeth, which let them chew even the hardest materials. Enamel, the hardest substance of the body, which hardens as the dog gets older, covers the upper part of the teeth. Dentin, similar to bone in chemical compound, forms the bulk of the teeth. It is evident that our dog's teeth play an important role in protecting themselves, their young, their food and their turf.

Whatever is written about a dog's display of teeth it must be taken in the context of reading the body language of the whole dog: the tail, legs, eyes, position of head, shoulder and rump hackles. Know your dog. There is no doubt about my golden retriever's smile. Still, there is no harm in observing the position of his tail to inform me of his state of mind as expressed through his body language.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Cori, Our Pet Therapy Dog and Friend

Kim Glynn, Activities Director, Wake Robin Long Term Care

There is so much to say about Cori the dog. Cori touches the hearts of the residents at Wake Robin Long Term Care in a special way. The facility is lucky to have Cori's owner, Phoebe Barash, bring Cori to the greet the residents of Wake Robin each week.

Cori enters the room with a smile and a wagging tail. The resident's eyes light up as they call for their pet pal. "Cori! Come here, Cori!" Cori knows who needs extra love and goes to those residents first (or any residents who might have food with them)!

After she makes her rounds and visits everyone, Cori then takes her nose and nudges it under arms in hopes

of a good scratch. She gives love and receives it. Before Cori leaves, she is given a piece of a treat from all of the residents as they laugh and feel her wet nose and tongue in their hands. Cori knows that her job is done and her belly is full. She has spread her love and good tidings.

The residents watch Cori leave, tail still wagging, as they anticipate her next visit. It is an amazing event to watch—the connections made between animals and people. The communication between them isn't done with words. Dogs have a way of showing love and providing comfort just by being themselves.

Below: Elise Barash, Phoebe Barash's mother (and Cori's handler) with Cori at Wake Robin, where she lives.

