



# Spring 2015

*Touching Hearts, Bringing Joy, Offering Comfort, and  
Enriching Lives with Certified Therapy Dog Teams*

## Welcome New TDV Teams

Nick & Lori Hayer with Milo & Lucy  
Jamie Koehnlein with Mocha  
Alexandre Verville with Harper V  
Andrew Donahue with Snickers  
Juliet Veve Thomas with Tipper Tip

Wendy Bliss with Jasper  
Shane Oakes with Zola  
Lynn Murrell with Austin  
Mary Whitcomb with John  
Katie Mahoney with Braemar

Kristin Haas with Coach  
Steve Taubman with Woody  
Kathy Burris with Snickers  
Jean Peterson with Ryder  
Loren Dow with Jack

## Greetings From Big Dog

*by Steve Reiman, Founder & President*

Mohandas Gandhi once said “The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others.” This is what TDV members tell me they happily do.

As TDV continues to grow, we have been increasing our membership while providing more visits to more people in more facilities in more communities. This currently amounts to 297 certified TDV teams reaching out to 281 facilities. As we move forward, we are committed to make TDV a stronger organization to better serve those in our communities by unleashing even more smiles. In addition, we plan to better serve our members in every way possible.

In my opinion, there is one significant thing that separates Therapy Dogs of Vermont from other therapy dog organizations. TDV has a well-trained and supervised team of Testers and Evaluators. Facilities can count on TDV dogs being extremely well tested. Our 23+ years of experience has helped us adjust and improve our tests and evaluations to insure the safety of the people in the facilities we visit as well as other dogs we may meet while on duty. I know of no other TD organization that has standards as high as ours and you can thank our Certification Team for this.

Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer. TDV Members certainly do more and continue to make me proud. I am truly grateful for the sacrifices that allow our members to bring immense joy and comfort to the many people we serve.



## TDV's Executive Director Moves on

by Steve Reiman, Founder & President

### On February 13<sup>th</sup>, TDV's ED wrote in part:

It has been my pleasure to serve as Therapy Dogs of Vermont's first Executive Director since October 2011. However, this morning, I was offered and accepted a position with the Vermont Agency of Education to begin in early March. Thank you and the TDV Board for the opportunity to lead change at TDV since my arrival nearly 3 and a half years ago.

It has been my honor to serve this wonderful organization and feel great satisfaction in moving the organization on the path to sustainability and growth.

### My reply in part:

It is with great sadness that I accept your resignation as Therapy Dogs of Vermont's first Executive Director. What you have accomplished for us in your more than 3 year tenure has been nothing less than amazing.

Until you came on board as our leader, TDV was stumbling as a volunteer run organization. We knew that that it was critical that we operated more like a business. You worked with all of us on the Board of Directors to make this happen. As a result, TDV is on a firm path toward sustainability and growth. You brought Allison and Muffy on board to deal with membership, renewals, facilities, and the support of members.

You worked with various media to expose our communities to the value of TDV volunteer teams. You informed potential members about the smiles they could unleash with their dogs as certified teams.

You sought out donors and raised considerable funds to help TDV grow. You worked to improve our bylaws and improve our financial state of affairs by connecting us with Compucount.

I know I can speak for all of us in wishing you the best of luck with your new position with the Vermont Agency of Education and do know that we will miss you.



## TDV is Seeking New Members to the Board of Directors

If you have talent and time to spare, TDV would dearly appreciate your help.

If you have questions, please email us at [Admin@Therapydogs.org](mailto:Admin@Therapydogs.org)

For an application, see our Home Page: [www.therapydogs.org](http://www.therapydogs.org)



## Certification & Training Team Interview

*by Jason Reed*

**Name:** Helyn Kerr

**Dog's Name:** Jaxon

**Where do you live?** Charlotte

**Where do you volunteer with TDV?**

We regularly volunteer at Vermont Respite House and at Williston Central School and occasionally participate in one-time events like stress relief days at UVM.

**What can you tell us about yourself, your personal/professional background?**

My professional career was spent in higher education (Penn State, University of Maryland University College, and UVM), teaching composition, English grammar, and ESL; developing academic courses for distance education; and editing/writing/producing a variety of university publications. I have also been a long-time volunteer at the Humane Society of Chittenden County, where I've worked primarily with shelter dogs and served on the Board of Directors, including a term as chair. Since retiring, I have been delighted to become actively involved with TDV; in fact, one of the first things I did upon retiring was become a certified team with Jax. I also enjoy volunteering with the VNA Hospice Program, trying to make a dent in a never-ending reading list, gardening, and attempting to learn to play the piano again. I look forward to getting into training mode as my husband, David, and I begin to contemplate adding another canine member to our family.

**Who is your TDV partner? What breed is s/he? How did you come to be her/his person?**

Jaxon is a pure mutt — a husky, likely mixed with GSD — or, as I like to call him, a “Vermont Gold.” Like nearly all the dogs who have been part of my world over many years, he was a rescue. He had been relinquished at the age of 8 to the humane society. Having a little boxer girl at home who was a typical clown and life of the party and having had a wonderful but fear aggressive dog we had to manage for 12 ½ years, we were ready for a mellower friend, one who might have the potential for therapy dog work. Once Jax picked me, we never looked back!

**How long have you been with TDV? What is your role on the Certification Team?**

Jax and I have been a TDV team for almost two years, and I've been part of the certification team for nearly a year. As a member of the certification team, I help with clinics and monthly tests in Williston and conduct evaluations at Starr Farm with some of the teams who have successfully completed the TDV test. I also process the incoming applications for clinics and tests and maintain the rosters for both.

**What is your favorite part about being a Certification Team member?**

“Favorite” — that's difficult because there are so many great aspects of working with this group. Dogs and humans are wonderfully quirky creatures, and I love having the opportunities to meet and work with a wide variety of them both. It's also incredibly fulfilling to share the pride and pleasure of handlers who successfully complete the certification process, to see their canine partners blossom in evaluations, and to know that they will be helping to do what TDV does best, unleashing some smiles in the community. Not least, I am delighted to be part of a fabulous team comprising some of the most dedicated and committed folks I know, others who have (as my husband once described me) “gone to the dogs.”



## Certification & Training Team Interview (con't)

### What is the most challenging thing about being a member of the Certification Team?

The quirky dogs and people who are some of my favorite things, can also be the most challenging. Although the majority of people pursue certification for the right reasons, there are exceptions. It's also sometimes difficult to be the bearer of disappointing news, to explain to someone that Snoopy, who may be a fabulous personal companion, is really not a good candidate for therapy dog work . . . or that, despite the fact that they've had dogs all their lives, their handling skills are not quite as polished as they should be . . . or that passing the test and showing up at evaluations does not necessarily merit certification. For a member of the certification team, dog skills are certainly important, but people skills are possibly even more so. Overall though, the positives far outweigh any negatives.

### If you had one wish for Therapy Dogs of Vermont as an organization, what would it be?

Therapy Dogs of Vermont enjoys a well-deserved positive reputation and high regard in the community. So if I'm limited to one wish, it would be that TDV maintain that reputation and regard while responsibly, sustainably, and successfully growing in order to continue to fulfill its mission of "Touching Hearts, Bringing Joy, Offering Comfort, and Enriching Lives with Certified Therapy Dog Teams."

## Exciting Changes in the Certification & Training Team

*by Deb Helfrich, Director of Certification & Training*

TDV has **three NEW leadership positions** on the Certification & Training Team:

- Assistant Director of Hub Growth: **Craig Deslaurier**
- Assistant Director of Hub Growth: **Jason Reed**
- Assistant Director of Education and Training: **Karen Odató**

These fine folks will be of invaluable assistance to me, our Board, and our team as we move forward!

We have some **changes in Hubs**:

- **Beth Wadleigh** is our new NEK Hub Director (I thank Steve for his service in this position for the past couple of years and maintaining one of our oldest hubs!) and will be working diligently with us all to grow and refresh that hub
- **Emily Reed** will remain the Williston Hub Director, ensuring that our largest and quickest-growing hub remains strong and sustainable
- **Meredith Dendo** is our new Manchester Hub Director (I thank Kristin for her many years of service in this position and for making the Manchester hub a success from its inception!)
- **Emily Maclean** has taken on launching testing and clinics in a very exciting new area of growth we just identified—St Johnsbury. She will be our point person for all efforts in that area.

Welcome our **newest Evaluators**

Evaluators are critical for providing the final screening for new TDV teams as well as mentoring these teams and showing them how to make safe and happy visits. They also allow us to continue to grow across Vermont.

- **Meredith Dendo** (Manchester Hub)
- **Will Manahan** (Manchester Hub)
- **Gordon Perkinson** (Woodstock Hub)
- **Kay Boyce** (Williston Hub)



## Welcome Austin V

by AEM

After months of research, one humane society came through. Austin V is a 6 yr. old Golden Retriever – Yellow Lab Retriever mix. He and I bonded within the 4 hour return to Robertsville, Friday, February 13, 2015.

Austin V is a gem, as were all of my other Golden Retrievers. This guy loves to *run and run and run*. Another blessing is that when I whistle, Austin immediately races back to join me. As you know, that is the most important discipline. I thank his former companions (handlers) for that training.

One difficulty is that Austin thinks he is a lap-dog. At his 85 lbs. I must set boundaries. When I try, he simply smiles. Also, Austin is gradually overcoming separation anxiety. Daily, he reduces his barking when I leave “our” room.



**Austin V**

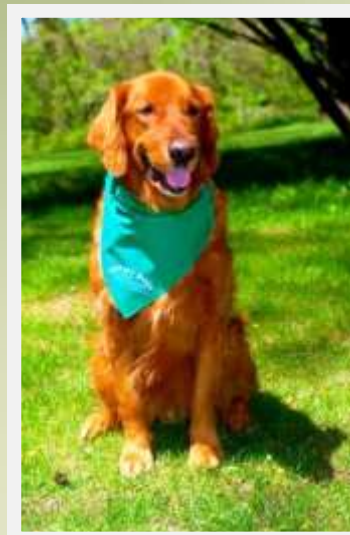
According to Stanley Coren’s *Intelligence of Dogs* out of 133 breeds, the Golden Retriever ranks 4<sup>th</sup> and the Labrador Retriever ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in obedience and working intelligence.



Note: AEM goes way back with TDV with Certified Therapy Dogs Austin III and Austin IV. We are happy for him finding a new “Austin” companion. He has also authored numerous articles for us. You will find a new one on the following page.



**Austin III**



**Austin IV**



## Your Dog is Not a Robot But an Intelligent Sounding Board

by AEM

Austins I and II were as clever as Austin III and Austin IV. Does that sound familiar when writing or speaking about your canine companions? Austin II and I learned from each other. One "skit" we enjoyed is this. While he was at a distance I called, "Austin, heel." He charged forward, sat in front of me and looked up into my eyes. Then, I said, "Is that the way you heel?" With the speed of your computer crashing, Austin jumped up and, almost without hitting the ground, turned around and landed at the side of my left leg. Then, sporting his golden smile, "spoke" words of anticipation, "What's next?" That became our signature. Even though Austin knew what I was going to say to him, he still took his position in front of me and waited for the question, "Is that the way you heel?" which he interpreted as a command. As lightening fast as he was, Austin's first thought was his next move. He was not a robot, a piece of machinery that changes position at the flip of a switch or the pitch of a sound. Austin positioned himself after he heard and thought-out the command.

That brings us to the question of why in the world would anyone talk to their dog? There are countless reasons why we express our thoughts to our dogs. You know them all. Our companions are willing to listen and show it. They are patient with our impatience. Our four-legged saints (as Thomas Merton calls them; and I agree) reciprocate signs and sounds of endearment. They do not judge us. Their antics make us laugh. These special friends are sounding boards for our immediate need to evaluate a situation, or simply to express an emotion. In one sense we are talking to ourselves. But that is an understatement. (By definition a sounding board is board so placed that a speech or music being played will bounce off the board and sent out over an audience.)

Let's look at the word *soliloquy*. Clearly it means talking to oneself. The content of "Self-talk" is derived from our knowledge, experience, religious convictions, and relationships. Talking to oneself reinforces our need to solve problems or to store images in our memories. A person or object nearby may be a sounding board.

St. Augustine wrote *Soliloquies* to develop his spiritual and intellectual life. His sounding board was *reason*. He asked reason a question. Then, using his personal knowledge, experience, faith, convictions and relationships, Augustine answered the question. John Steinbeck wrote "*Travels With Charley*." Stanley Coren, in his work, *The Pawprints of History*" suggests that Steinbeck could have entitled his travelogue "Conversations with Charley," since he spoke to his black standard poodle as though his companion were human. Using his knowledge and experience, Steinbeck observed Charley's motions and drew conclusions from his personal reflections as they traveled across the United States. When all is said and done, our companions are sounding boards.

The psychologist Carl Jung often sat upon a huge stone (boulder) where he contemplated life and all nature. He asked himself questions and discovered answers based upon his education, convictions, etc. That stone took on the medium of a sounding board.

So, we talk to our dogs, once we get their attention. They respond depending upon our training techniques and their instincts. They, in some mysterious way, help us to examine our conscience, solve difficulties, and guide us to greater heights. While we do talk to ourselves, we, in a limited sense, converse with our canine companions, for it is they who remind us to be connected with nature. They give us their time so that we might use our time for worthy purposes. We think and speak. connected to people, creativity, compassion, love, forgiveness and all nature.

Vicktor Frankl, in his "*Man's Search For Ultimate Meaning*," wrote, "God is the partner of our most intimate soliloquies." ... Here it comes ... dog spelled backwards reads God...



## On Duty

Earl Moore, Black Lab (Almost 8 yrs. old)  
Handler: Anne Moore

We visit most weeks at Michaud Manor, retirement home, in Derby Line. This resident is particularly dear to Earl, as you can see. Without vision, he knows Earl as a nice friend and looks forward to his visits.



## Thank you Suzie Wilkie

TDV member Suzie Wilkie sold twenty 2015 TDV Photo & Story Calendars and raised \$400 to support our work. Thank you, Suzie from all of us.

## Macgriff Reading Program

*by Julie Kelley*

What you hear coming from inside the Cambridge Elementary School may be what you'd expect on any given day: the sounds of children reading. What you see when you get inside may be a bit of a surprise. Meet Macgriff, an 8-year-old golden retriever. This 100-pound hunk of love is right at home snuggled against the pink leg of any first-grader.



Macgriff, handled by Barbara "Scotty" Grigat, shown here with Matti of Jeffersonville, Vermont, volunteer at Cambridge Elementary School to help Vermont kids improve their reading skills.



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### TDV CERTIFICATION & TRAINING TEAM

**Deb Helfrich**, *Director of Certification and Training*  
**Jason Reed**, *Asst. Director of Hub Growth*  
**Craig Deslauriers**, *Asst. Director of Hub Growth*  
**Karen Odatto**, *Asst. Director of Education & Training*  
**Meredith Denko**                      Manchester Hub  
**Beth Wadleigh**                      Northeast Kingdom Hub  
**Karen Odatto**                         Randolph Hub  
**Emily Reed**                          Williston Hub  
**Gordon Perkinson**                 Woodstock Hub

### TDV TESTERS, EVALUATORS and CERTIFICATION TEAM MEMBERS

<b>Raymond Belanger</b>	<b>Deborah Schapiro</b>
<b>Brenda Carpenter</b>	<b>Emily Reed</b>
<b>Jenn Vaughan</b>	<b>Callie Field</b>
<b>Jason Reed</b>	<b>Beth Wadleigh</b>
<b>Deb Helfrich</b>	<b>Steve Reiman</b>
<b>Emily McLean</b>	<b>Helyn Herr</b>
<b>Karen Odatto</b>	<b>Kristin Comeau</b>
<b>Will Mahlmann</b>	<b>Meredith Dendo</b>
<b>Craig Deslaurier</b>	<b>Nancy Kahn</b>
<b>John O'Connor</b>	

### TDV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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