



UNLEASH A SMILE

FALL 2013 🍏

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

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Jean Jolley and Lyra  
Mark Gabel and Gillie  
Betsy Donka and Rosie  
Chris Axten and Abbie  
Carol Petty and Rufus

### GREETINGS FROM BIGDOG

*By Steve Reiman, Founder and President*

As always, continual improvement is an important part of our mindset. Our dedicated Certification Teams spent a lot of time certifying and training the right people with the right dogs. As a team, we have continually improved our policies based on the best ones we have found. All of these initiatives translate into more qualified teams, reaching more facilities in our communities.

I believe we have the most compassionate, dedicated volunteers anywhere in Vermont and the surrounding areas. Knowing that there are nearly 300 TDV handler/canine teams, making regular visits to a large variety of facilities, is magnificent.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Decade Initiative is off to a wonderful start to support our Veterans at the VA Medical Center in White River Jct. The reception we received there from Brooke Robinson, MS, Recreation Therapist, representatives from the Volunteer Office, as well as the staff, visitors, and patients, was awesome. I hope more teams will join in there to unleash smiles because the impact is tremendous and unlimited.



To all TDV members, I want to say that you make me proud. To all members of the Board of Directors and the countless people who support our many operations, know that without you, none of this could be happening. I am deeply grateful to all of you.

With my sincere respect and gratitude,



# STRONG WINDS AND COLD TEMPERATURES DIDN'T DAMPEN SPIRITS AT THE 2013 SHELBURNE MUSEUM GOES TO THE DOGS

*By Bob Uerz, Executive Director*



Shelburne Museum was again the site for TDV's largest recruitment event of the year. Despite the weather, TDV volunteers and staff were all smiles as they spoke face-to-face with interested dog-owners. Topics range from learning about the organization as a whole, to the specifics of becoming a certified therapy dog team. As has also been our custom, our certification team and testers were on-hand to offer our short Pre-Test. The Pre-Test enabled interested folks to get a sense if they and their dog had the right stuff --- as family, friends, and others watched from outside the ropes.

Also, as has been our tradition, we held our TDV Annual Membership Meeting. During the meeting we updated our members on the organization and specifically progress on our Third Decade Initiative. We also encouraged members to attend an Open House and Tour at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction on Friday, September 13th. Members got a chance to meet our new part-time Operations Coordinator, Allison Ross. As I shared with those present, Allison is a Veteran and a 2001 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. Allison will be coordinating both the member support and facility support functions for TDV six hours per week.

And finally, due to the efforts of TDV member Callie Field, we offered handmade ceramic mugs for sale. They were a great success and were nearly sold out by the end of the day. We may offer these mugs for sale at future recruitment events in the coming months. Unfortunately, not being a fulfillment operation, we are not setup to effectively mail these beautiful (but breakable) works of art containing that signature paw print!!!

## RENEWAL REMINDER!

The 2014 membership renewals are just around the corner. Keep an eye out for an e-mail with your renewal form and instructions for renewal.

## THE LOSS OF A BELOVED THERAPY DOG, LEVI

*By Jamie Balch*

We met online, and fell in love after a wintry walk at North County Animal League; we knew it was a match made in heaven. After all – we had matching hair color! Levi and I bonded, and became a therapy team working with kids in two local libraries over the past 5 years. Putting his paws for a cause, “he” wrote his story of adoption which was shared with NCL and Therapy Dogs of Vermont and the local libraries.

This weekend, August 10, 2013, Levi took his final breaths in my arms, peaceful passing following a very recent diagnosis of a liver tumor. Peace, little Levi, you enriched so many lives and were so loved.



## MATCHING GIFT PROGRAMS MAY ALLOW EMPLOYEES AND RETIREES TO DOUBLE THEIR FINANCIAL GIFT TO SUPPORT TDV

*By Bob Uerz, Executive Director*

As you consider a gift to support Therapy Dogs of Vermont this year, please be mindful that a growing number of employers in the region are now making their donation decisions based upon organizations important to their employees and retirees.

We respectfully encourage you to please check with your employer to see if they have a matching gift program. Such programs may provide a wonderful way to increase the size of your financial gift to TDV. Some employers will even match volunteer hours with dollars! Below are just a few examples.

**IBM** will match a contribution to TDV up to \$5,000 for employees --- part-time, full-time, and Retirees. Here is a link for the information and the form you can use for IBM

(<http://doublethedonation.com/matching-gifts/ibm-international-business-machines>)

**Green Mountain Coffee Roasters** has a program titled, "Dollars-4-Doers" which recognizes employees who volunteer at least 25 hours (outside of normal work time) to TDV. GMCR contributes \$250 to that on the employee's behalf. They also match individual employee donations to TDV at 100% (up to \$1,000 per fiscal year).

**Northfield Savings Bank** provides 10% of its profits to Vermont community organizations with grants to not-for-profit organizations like TDV. NSB also offers a 100% matching donation of up to \$1,000 per employee, per year to TDV.

Please recognize these are only just a few of the many companies of all sizes which have matching gift programs so please inquire. If your company does not have such a program, speak to your employer about having them establish one. I would be happy to help you and your employer in such an effort. Just e-mail me at [ed@therapydogs.org](mailto:ed@therapydogs.org). By the way, to complete matching gift forms (or to set up such a program) it is important to note that TDV has been designated by the IRS as a 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt organization since 1998 and that TDV's Employer Identification Number is 03-0334205.

### MADDIE

*By Joan Greene*

My Name is Maddie. My handler is Joan Greene. I'm a 4 1/2 year old Therapy Dog who spent Monday mornings at the Lanpher Library so children could practice reading to me.

I love getting comfortable and settling in with a good book. I love all kinds of stories, including the "Girard and Piggy" series, by Mo Willems. I loved that one so much that I put my paw on the book when the girl finished reading it. She understood that I wanted her to read it again, and she did!

Not only do I like it when children read to me, I don't care if they stumble over a word, or take their time reading. I enjoy hanging out and looking at the illustrations too. I've been told that I'm very patient.

Do you have any good suggestions for a book that I should listen to? I might be able to visit the library again, or maybe even the school. I would love to continue being read to! I had a great summer at the Lanpher Library and I hope I can go back again soon. Thanks everyone!





## TDV MEMBERS, YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER HERE!

*By Steve Reiman, Founder and President*

The first phase of Therapy Dogs of Vermont's Third Decade Initiative was launched on Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>. This exciting move forward occurred in White River Junction during the VA Medical Center's Open House and Tour for TDV Certified Therapy Dog Teams.

Brooke Robinson, MS, the Recreation Therapist at the VA Medical Center opened the two hour event. Her wonderful welcome carried through the morning in all respects. Representatives from volunteer services and rehabilitation services also attended as well as numerous physicians, nurses, and other allied health professionals at the VA Medical Center.



Joining us as well was the TDV Certified Therapy Dog Team of Gordon Perkinson and his dog, Lizzie. Gordon shared how much he and Lizzie enjoyed the opportunity to make visits facility-wide and how welcoming the Veterans and the staff were to them. And as we took the tour together, it was truly evident.

We were also pleased to have the TDV Certified Therapy Dog Team of Jean Jolley and her dog Lyra. Jean and Lyra traveled down from Montpelier for the Open House. We are glad to share that they left the session to begin the process of making visits there in the coming weeks.

Bob Uerz, Allison Ross, and I headed back north feeling great about how welcoming the institution is to our teams and how valuable they feel our visits are to the men and women who have served our country so bravely.

We wholeheartedly encourage all TDV members to contact Brooke Robinson to make visits any day of the week. Brooke can best be reached at [Brooke.Robinson3@VA.gov](mailto:Brooke.Robinson3@VA.gov)

Brook will help members schedule visits at many different venues. These include patient rooms, and waiting rooms. Visits are especially appreciated on weekends. Almost all areas at the VA Hospital welcome therapy dogs and we will be creating new opportunities to serve our Veterans.

The VA staff is highly supportive as well as appreciative. Many want to pat and interact with therapy dogs even more than their patients do. Volunteering officially starts at 11 a.m. but earlier is OK. Volunteers who visit for four hours are offered a free lunch.

I volunteered at this hospital many years ago and believe it was one of the most personally rewarding visits my Sheps and I ever made. I hope you will consider volunteering there because you will brighten the lives of our brave Veterans and take home great warmth in your heart.

## COCO'S STORY

*By MarthaLeah Chaiken*

Coco seemed cut out to be a therapy dog. From the age of eight weeks, she shared an office with her owner, MarthaLeah Chaiken, at Hofstra University, where Coco quickly became hooked on attention and pats from a diverse population of students, faculty, and staff. She took group classes in basic obedience and passed her Canine Good Citizen test at the age of one year. Since she loved the classes, she went on to pass the test twice more just for fun.





The director of Hofstra's Diagnostic and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders asked Coco and Martha to participate in weekly desensitization sessions for one of their clients, who was terrified of dogs. The treatment was a success, and Coco had found her calling.

Coco joined TDV in 2009. The toughest part of the test for her was to resist an invitation to jump up on the tester. Since then she has been the reading dog at Kellogg-Hubbard library.

Coco's owner has a PhD from the Institute of Animal Behavior at Rutgers University, but she can't claim credit for Coco's beautiful disposition, as Coco's predecessor, a Welsh terrier, routinely engaged in snarling matches with Martha's mother.



*Ten-year-old schnoodle (schnauzer-poodle mix), Coco, on duty at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier with Hannah Dorr-White, who has been reading to Coco for over two years. At a special library event last August, Coco shared the privilege of listening to Hannah with a group of children. The photos were taken by Hannah's mother, Heidi Dorr*

## UTHER PENDRAGON

By Sharron Minahan

Hi, my name is Uther Pendragon (yes, my name comes from King Arthurs court). I am a three-year-old Landseer (black and white) Newfoundland. I am writing this note to tell you how I spend my Sunday afternoons.

I have my mom drive me to Birchwood Nursing Home (I can't drive I am only three years old). Once I get to Birchwood Health Care I get to be my loveable self. I visit all around the facility and let people hug and kiss me. I have two special friends that can't wait to see me each week; one of the ladies is so tiny we almost stand eye to eye. I put big smiles on their faces and that makes me feel really good. Sometimes if they are having a bad day I just love up on them and their day brightens and they are happier. I also visit others at Birchwood; I have a lot of love to spread around. Not only do I enjoy visiting the residents but also their families and friends, and of course the awesome staff that work there. I especially love when kids are around, I lie down on the floor and do belly up (and hope someone will rub my tummy).

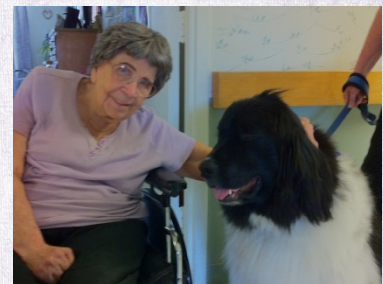
As I visit throughout the facility there is an area that people come and go. I meet new people all the time there, and soon they are my buddies. Some people will just sit on the floor and hug and kiss me, oh my, it makes me feel so good.

When mom drives me home, I'm a very content and tired boy. I can't wait until my mom pulls out my backpack with my supplies for the next week and I know where I'm heading---off to put smiles on residents, families, friends and staff at Birchwood Health Care.

That's how I spend my Sunday afternoons.

Respectfully- Uther Pendragon (dog)

Mommy – Brenda Tymecki      Photos by Joe Tymecki





## DERBY LINE DAY 2013

*By Steve Reiman, Founder and President*

This year's annual event was held on Saturday, August 10th in Baxter Park. This picturesque village, in the center of Derby line, has a beautiful maple tree lined main street and is home to the internationally famous Haskell Free Library and Opera House. The event was an old-fashioned community day that was perfect for the entire family. In addition to Fair-like attractions like Circus Smirkus, the Montshire Museum, Watershed on Wheels, there was face painting, craft exhibits, antique engines, a horse drawn shuttle, alpacas, pony rides, a petting zoo, and four bounces houses for children and adults. Music was heard all day and there were fireworks at dusk.

Many craft and food vendors set up their booths in the park. Food vendors included blooming onions, ice cream, hot dogs, hamburgers, fudge, smoothies, shaved ice, French fries, nachos, Italian ice, grilled sausages, pretzels, popcorn, kettle corn, lobster rolls, grilled shrimp, cotton candy, and pulled pork. The highlight of the day, of course, was TDV's Booth. Many thanks to our NEK Point Person, Beth Wadleigh, Hub Director, Steve Reiman, and Executive Director, Bob Uerz. Several of our TDV teams came to talk to the public about what we do and to hand out flyers and testing schedules. Our "Pet a Therapy Dog" attraction was again a huge hit. I hope you will plan on joining us at this wonderful event next year.



### TDV TESTERS and/or EVALUATORS

**Deb Helfrich**, *Director of Certification and Training*

Brenda Altman	Tim Pollock	Deborah Schapiro
Raymond Belanger	Emily Reed	Beth Wadleigh
Brenda Carpenter	Jason Reed	Jenn Vaughan
Kristin Comeau	Steve Reiman	Karen Odato
Callie Field		

Our testers and evaluators are also supported by dedicated certification support team: Craig Deslauriers, Michelle Douglas Carroll, Nancy Kahn, John O'Connor, Patti Shaw, and Maryellen Sullivan.

### TDV SUPPORT TEAM

**Katie McDonald**, *Social Media*

**Benda Altman**, *Liaison to UVM*

**Wendy Huntley**, *Liaison to Camp Ta-Kum-Ta*

**Diane Forsey & Janet Dooley**, *FAHC Coordinators*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Steve Reiman**, *President/Founder*

**Deb Helfrich**, *Vice President & Director of Certification and Training*

**Connie Barrett**, *Treasurer*

**Katie Ziegler**, *Secretary*

**Julia Page** '15

**Colleen McLaughlin** '16



### STAFF

**Bob Uerz**, *Executive Director*

**Allison Ross**, *Operations Coordinator*

**Elizabeth Hall**, *Administrative Assistant and Newsletter Design*

### VOLUNTEER ADVISORS

**Dr. Lisa Nelson**, *Veterinary Behavior Specialist*

**Nikki Kellaway, CT**, *Veterinary Advisor*

**Jamie Dayton**, *Business Advisor*

**Chad Bonanni of Bergeron Paradis & Fitzpatrick, LLP**,  
*Legal Advisor*

