

## VETERAN VOLUNTEER

As we begin our spotlight on volunteers, it is appropriate to begin the series with an introduction to our most tenured, and active volunteer, Donna Amato, our current Vice President of **Pets for Life**, a position she has held since 2005.

Donna's history with **Pets for Life** began in 1990 when she saw Mary Buford on a Channel 9, television spot, talking about **Pets for Life** and their need for volunteers. Borrowing a trained dog from the Hecker Clinic, Donna began her journey with **Pets for Life**. Donna eventually rescued a Golden Retriever of her own named Chance, and they served together for over nine years. After Chance passed on, Donna continued her passion for volunteer work with Gracie Buford, a Great Pyrenees/Golden Retriever mix, for a period of time. Donna has worked with Golden Retrievers Pal and Jimmy along with her current team mate, Roxy, a rescued bull mastiff. Donna's volunteer work has taken her to over 40 different facilities across the metro area.

As chairman of the **Pets for Life** annual Pet Parties, Donna has personally made doggie treats, designed and stuffed gift bags, solicited vendors for the contents of our gift bags, and coordinated the "human" food selections. When **Pets for Life** needed someone to oversee donations and fund raising, Donna, at her own expense, took classes at Johnson

County Community College to learn techniques in Grant Applications. Donna has become a one-woman fundraiser for **Pets for Life**. Her tireless effort has created a continuous stream of grant money from foundations, companies, and individuals. In spite of current economic conditions, Donna's carefully worded and expertly crafted applications continually yield positive results.

Donna's ability to see the big picture of **Pets for Life** – how things are working now as well as the direction the future may bring, keeps the Board of Directors on course. She understands the importance of and the need for growth, new facilities and future volunteers. **Pets for Life** is truly fortunate to enjoy the talent, the passion and the energy that Donna contributes to the advancement of the **Pets for Life** mission.

*Thank you Donna*

### SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

Future editions of **Pets for Life** newsletters will feature articles about one or more of our volunteer pet teams. All of our volunteers are special people, yet many of us never (or rarely), have the opportunity to meet each other. This Spotlight on Volunteers will help acquaint you with a different team in each edition.

**Pets For Life, Inc., Executive Committee:** Joe Sanches, President; Donna Amato, V. P. Development; Sharon Rush Williams, Secretary; John McGee, Treasurer; Judy Thomasson  
**Pets For Life Staff:** Mary Buford, Program Director; Kathy Watkins, Office Assistant; Jane McDowell, Office Assistant

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Pets helping people

Pets for Life

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## KANSAS CITY'S PETS FOR LIFE LAUNCHES LEASH PALS™

A Program to Educate Children for the Prevention of Dog Bites

Kansas City's **Pets for Life** proudly presents Leash Pals™ a 4-lesson elementary level curriculum designed to help children enjoy safer, more productive relationships with Man's Best Friend. Beginning this fall, qualified **Pets for Life** volunteers, along with their certified therapy dogs, will visit area schools and facilitate an interactive program which includes mixed-media presentations, role-playing exercises, and hands-on learning.

The Leash Pals™ program was written by dog trainer and Certified Humane Education Specialist Suezanne M. Law, and includes body language instruction to help children understand canine communication and education in appropriate interactions between kids and the dogs they will encounter.

"Depending on whom you ask, there are between 60 and 80 million dogs in America – more than one in every three homes. "That's a lot of dogs," says Law. "And according to the CDC, an American has a one in fifty chance of being bitten by a dog every year".

In fact, according to DogBiteLaw.com, of all age-groups, children – especially boys aged five to nine – experience the highest incidence of dog-bite injuries. Half of these incidents involve a dog living within the child's own home. 77% of injuries are to the child's face, head and neck.

Through their new Leash Pals curriculum, the **Pets for Life** organization wants to decrease those odds. Says **Pets for Life** President, Joe Sanches, "Much of the conflict prevalent in human-canine interaction could be easily avoided if humans would take one simple step: learn dog body-language, and teach it to children, too".

The Leash Pals™ curriculum will begin in a limited number of schools and facilities this fall and will soon be available in all of the counties that the **Pets for Life** organization serves: Clay, Cass, and Jackson counties in Missouri; Johnson, Miami and Wyandotte counties in Kansas.

If you would like more information on this topic, please call 816-363-3665 or e-mail [petsforlife@sbcglobal.net](mailto:petsforlife@sbcglobal.net)

### Pets for Life – Save the Date

It's almost here! Our 25th birthday celebration promises to be a gala and memorable event! Certified **Pets for Life** volunteer teams will be invited and featured as we celebrate over 25 years of service to thousands of adults and children. As we approach this important milestone in the history of **Pets for Life**, we are excited about the line-up of honored guests and exciting events that will commemorate this special occasion. **Volunteers! Save the date - October 24, 2009.**



### PETS HELPING PEOPLE

**Volunteers** - Please talk with your Vets and ask if they will let you place a Brochure holder, with **Pets for Life** brochures in their office. If they are open to this opportunity, please contact Pam Graves- [madisonsgranny@aol.com](mailto:madisonsgranny@aol.com). She will see that you get a holder and brochures to place in the office. But, you will be responsible for seeing that the brochure holder stays full.

## FEATURED FACILITY

### Delmar Gardens of Lenexa

Delmar Gardens of Lenexa is a 24-hour care facility, including units for Alzheimer's, physical therapy and skilled nursing. Seniors (age 60+) live in a home-like atmosphere and enjoy a variety of social and recreational programs.

Three volunteer teams from **Pets for Life** make regular visits to Delmar Gardens. Shan Leatherman and her dog Joey along with Paula Fanning and Itty Bitty visit the third Saturday of each month. Chuck Williams and his Whippet, Deevo, were an integral part of this team until Deevo passed away earlier this summer.

Since 1987, residents and staff at Delmar Gardens have eagerly anticipated the **Pets for Life** team visits. Spreading smiles, laughter, cheer and unconditional puppy love, the residents at Delmar Gardens love their **Pets for Life** volunteer teams. Following are some thoughts and comments from team members who frequent Delmar:

In the early years, a nurse told me that this patient had not spoken a word since she arrived at Delmar. The minute I put Sidney (my cat) in her lap, she was petting him and talking. The nursing staff was shocked that the resident was able to talk. It really warms your heart to know that you are making a difference.

Another resident had a limited range of motion and I remember her trying to pet Joey, who is the perfect wheel chair height. The nurses squealed with delight and exclaimed that they had been trying to get her to move her arm. Miraculously there she was, petting Joey and loving every stroke.

There is a gal in the Alzheimers ward that is not fond of people but lights up the minute we bring the dogs in. She frequently lets us know that dogs are smarter than people, and I always smile and agree. She is instantly delighted to see her dear doggy friends and it makes her day (and ours).

As the years passed by, the amazing reaction from patients became routine and I didn't marvel in it as much as I did in the beginning. I know the power of therapy pets. One of their greatest attributes is that they are great ice breakers. There are many residents who never have visitors, who are very lonely and are excited by the prospect of having someone they could talk to and pet. If only for the briefest of moments, you can tell it makes their day. Many residents make special requests for us to make sure we stop in to see them when we visit. It's such a joy to know people look forward to our visits. Because many residents cannot bring their animals to live with them at Delmar, connecting with our dogs gives them a moment of security, comfort and a

sense of the familiar. Ask any volunteer team and they will confirm that we, the team, get as much or more from our visits than the patients. It's rewarding and a win-win for all involved. It reminds us that life is precious and while our dogs don't live as long as humans do they will in some ways have contributed more in their life time than many people do. The impact they make is pretty impressive.

## WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEER TEAMS!

Cathy Ahlstrom and Chance  
 Bob Chaney and Angus  
 Andrea Klinger and Sunny  
 Will Jones and Hawk  
 Alisa Perry and Ozzie  
 Brenda Moore and Patches  
 Meda Bower and Mocha  
 Jim Haley and Sammy  
 Barb and Duane Unruh and Sandy

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Dogtober Fest 2009  
 Sunday October, 18, 2009  
 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
 Kemper Outdoor Education Center  
 Lake Jacomo/Fleming Park  
 Contact Pam Graves,  
 madisonsgranny@aol.com if you would  
 like to represent  
**Pets for Life** at this fun-filled event.

## A Sad Farewell

Losing a devoted companion is never easy. Losing one as special as Deevo is especially difficult. Please join us in expressing our heartfelt condolences to Chuck Williams as his beloved DEEVO passed away in July. DEEVO was a female Whippet, 8 years old, when she and Chuck first visited Rainbow Mental Health Facility in August, 2004. In addition to their years at Garden Terrace, reaching out to a variety of Alzheimer's patients, and Delmar Gardens of Lenexa, hospice work also kept them busy. Chuck and Deevo were named Evening/Weekend Volunteer Team of the year 2006.

## Better Nutrition, Better Health for Cats and Dogs

On August 2, Sarah Dixon presented an interesting and informative seminar for fifteen **Pets for Life** volunteers and their guests. Sarah did a terrific job instructing us in the nutritional needs of our pets, teaching us how to read and interpret pet food labels, warning us about ingredients to avoid, and advising us about certain ingredients and foods which can enhance the health and well-being of our dogs and kitties.

Seminar participants enjoyed lively discussions among themselves and with Sarah throughout the session. We all agreed that this was one of our best training sessions.

We hope to have Sarah repeat both this nutrition seminar and her Red Cross First Aid for Dogs and Cats in 2010!

## PETS FOR LIFE RECRUITING UPDATES:

BowWow! What a fun time the volunteers & their pets had at the Dog-N-Jog. Participating volunteers included: Ronda Hays-Tims with Angel, Angela Catalano with Oliver, Marsha Orrick with Mickey, Judy Thomasson with Bella. In addition to their assistance in the recruiting booth, Angela & Oliver participated in the run-walk while Marsha & Mickey participated in the costume contest. As for Angel & Bella? They indulged in Sheridan's and 3 Dog Bakery treats. A big "thank you" goes out to all these volunteers and their pets. Our special appreciation is extended to Alan Buford & Greg Tims for helping set up and taking down of our new canopy.



## Looking for Canine Action?

**Pets for Life** volunteer Nicki Dobson has a great new website. Check out [www.DogsLifeKC.com](http://www.DogsLifeKC.com), an on-line lifestyle magazine for Kansas City's dogs and their human companions. Review this website for wonderful, dog-related, news, events and activities that will bring you and your dog new and fun-filled opportunities to spend time together.

## PETS HELPING PEOPLE

Many large companies offer grants to non-profit organizations in communities where they have a presence. Many of them prefer to donate to organizations where their employees do volunteer work. We are fortunate to have received a grant from the Banfield Charitable Trust for the last two years in the amount of \$5,000. This grant was supported by volunteer Julie Krogh, a veterinarian at Banfield.

**Pets for Life** also received a \$2,000 grant from American Century Investments Foundation through the support of volunteer Julia Webster, an employee of the firm.

CVS Caremark is a company that supports the communities where their stores are present. CVS All Kids Can Program strives to make life easier for children with disabilities and to help all children build self-esteem, lasting friendships and social skills while helping children without disabilities to learn diversity and tolerance. **Pets for Life** received a \$1,000 grant from CVS Caremark which will help us continue to serve the many facilities for children where our volunteer/pet teams visit.

We are grateful for these grants as they provide the means for us to continue our work in the community. Perhaps your employer also offers such a program. If you would like to help, please contact the HR Department of your employer (or former employer) and ask if there are any community grants available. If such a program is available please contact Donna Amato who will do the follow-up. Reach her at: [donnaj2217@yahoo.com](mailto:donnaj2217@yahoo.com).

Please join us in thanking the following for their generous support of **Pets for Life**:

• Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City	\$ 7,500
• Banfield Charitable Trust	\$ 5,000
• Helen S. Boylan Foundation	\$ 4,000
• Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation	\$ 2,000
• Kerr Foundation	\$ 2,000
• American Century Investments Foundation	\$ 2,000
• CVS Caremark/CVS Pharmacy	\$ 1,000
• GEHA	\$ 500
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