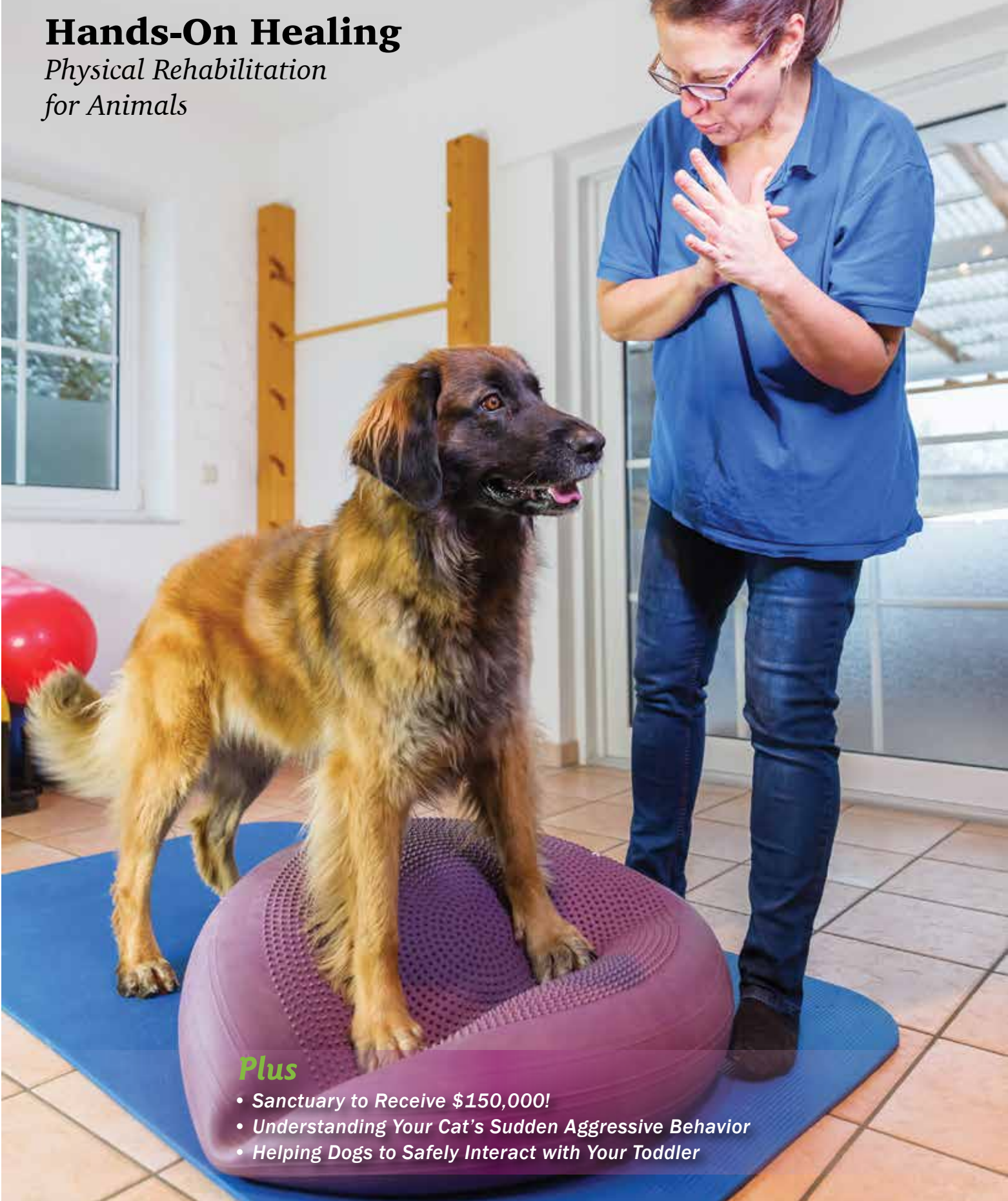


Hands-On Healing

*Physical Rehabilitation
for Animals*



Plus

- Sanctuary to Receive \$150,000!
- Understanding Your Cat's Sudden Aggressive Behavior
- Helping Dogs to Safely Interact with Your Toddler

Something to Chew On

Dear Friends,

When it comes to managing our finances, Our Companions runs a tight ship. We boast an engaged and active finance committee led by our Treasurer, Leigh Ann Kissner, and longtime Finance Director, Henry Petrofsky. Every aspect of our finances – from our budget, to our income, to our investments – is meticulously tracked and accounted for, and we continue to operate without a penny of debt.

We also are exceptionally disciplined when it comes to how our money is put to work, dedicating 83% of our expenses toward our life-saving programs. Whether caring for homeless pets at our Sanctuary, giving displaced animals a second chance via our re-homing program, or helping a feral cat colony survive the harsh winter weather, the vast majority of our income is put to immediate use to support those in need. Furthermore, thanks in large part to our lean and focused fundraising program, it costs us merely three cents to raise a dollar, way below the national average of 20 cents.

In recognition of our fiscal and programmatic efficiency, in 2017, we received an incredible score of 99.67 (out of 100!) from Charity Navigator,

America's largest independent evaluator of nonprofit organizations. We share this information not to impress you, but to impress upon you how important your contributions are to us. Ninety-nine percent of our funding comes from you, our donors. Everything we do is made possible by the annual philanthropic support we receive. We recognize there are countless worthy nonprofit organizations vying for your support, and we are deeply grateful for your commitment to our work. As such, it is important to us that you know how seriously we take your commitment.

Without you, we have nothing; but with you, there is nothing we can't do for the people and pets we serve. Thank you for your generous support in 2017 and thank you for making the Our Companions 15th Anniversary Challenge a success. Last year we raised a record-breaking \$1,058,000 for our operations, putting us in a position of strength as we begin the year and welcome animals in need into our expanded Sanctuary in Ashford, Connecticut.

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for always being there for us and the animals.

Sincerely,



Susan B. Linker,
Chief Executive Officer
and Founder



Maria das Neves,
Board Chair

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About Our Companions News

Our Companions News is published three times per year by *Our Companions Animal Rescue*, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

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Hands-On Healing: Physical Rehabilitation for Animals

Lyn T. Garson, CVT, CCRP



Never give up. This motivational phrase encourages persistence despite the most challenging, even inconceivable, odds. These three simple yet profound words, etched in huge black letters on a wall at the rehabilitation center, demand attention to anyone reading them – except the patients being treated there don't know how to read. They don't need to.

Vito is hard at work on his therapeutic exercises. He's a 21-pound Pug battling a neurologic condition that has affected his brain and spinal cord. Just two months ago Vito couldn't walk. He knuckled his front paws over and dragged his hind end. Today, he plants his paws atop a giant inflatable blue donut, steadying his back legs on a small bumpy wobble disc teetering across two large purple bones.

Tunka is a 13-year-old German Shepherd coping with degenerative myelopathy. She delights in playfully splashing her way around the heated therapy pool. After swimming, Tunka dives onto a thick mattress cushion and barks, signaling her favorite game of catch – with dried liver treats tossed by her therapist. Two-year-old Yuki, a white Husky, is recovering from cranial cruciate ligament (knee) surgery. Following her underwater treadmill session, Yuki relaxes on a pile of fleece blankets in the softly lit room surrounded by soothing instrumental music, where she receives laser treatment and therapeutic massage.

One look around the rehabilitation facility reveals what appears to be a lively indoor playground for dogs, cats and other small animals. But among the colorful exercise equipment, within the walls dotted with veterinary anatomy charts and inspirational posters, hands-on healing happens. Commonly referred to as “canine rehab,” physical rehabilitation for animals rivals that of human physical therapy for treating orthopedic or neurologic conditions, illness, and injury. Rehabilitation utilizes a variety of therapeutic modalities and exercise routines to relieve pain, reduce inflammation, strengthen muscles, increase mobility, and assist with the return to normal function or otherwise improve quality of life. Rehabilitation helps ease symptoms and slow the progression of painful arthritis or other degenerative disorders. Weight management is an important component addressed during treatment due to the numerous health-related complications associated with obesity. Another vital role is sports medicine conditioning for athletic or working dogs.

Rehabilitation treatment typically begins with an evaluation by a Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner (CCRP), or Certified Canine Rehabilitation Therapist (CCRT), both equally specialized in this fast-growing field. In order to develop an individualized, goal-specific rehabilitation plan, a complete health history is obtained, followed by a full head-to-tail exami-



Chauncy receiving laser treatment for arthritis and muscle pain.



Physical rehabilitation is not just for dogs - cats benefit too.

nation, which includes gait analysis along with numerical measurements of both muscle mass and joint range of motion. Home exercise programs, nutritional guidelines, weight management strategies, and joint supplement recommendations are provided as needed. While not all-inclusive, below is a brief overview of the many treatment modalities commonly seen in veterinary rehabilitation.

Therapeutic Exercises

Therapeutic exercises improve strength, balance, flexibility, and proprioception (sense of proper paw placement awareness when walking or standing). Some of the exercise equipment used, either alone or in combination, includes brightly colored plastic disc cushions and inflatable physio balls in the shape of gigantic peanuts, donuts, eggs, and dog bones. Square or rectangular rocker boards tilt side to side, and forward/back-

ward, while the more challenging circular wobble boards move in all directions. Cavaletti rails are a set of hurdles – cones evenly spaced apart with poles placed at various heights – for dogs to step over, crawl under, or weave in and out of, in a slow, controlled manner. Agility tunnels, ramps, obstacle courses, and land treadmills specifically designed for dogs are also used for therapeutic exercises.

Hydrotherapy

The heated swimming pool and underwater treadmill are beneficial modalities for nearly all conditions including post-surgical recovery. Therapeutic warm water temperatures generally average between 85 and 90 degrees to help with muscle relaxation, increased mobility and flexibility as well as cardiovascular fitness. Water resistance strengthens muscles, builds endurance, increases range of motion, improves balance and coordination, and aids in weight loss and fitness conditioning. An array of items including harnesses, life vests, balance gear, foam noodles, water toys and resistive devices may be used during hydrotherapy. Underwater treadmill belt speed and water level height adjustments are made according to the patient's condition and response. Due to water buoyancy, a dog carries only about one-third its normal body weight while walking in water at hip level. Therefore, a 60-pound dog bears just 20 pounds of his weight, enabling movement with greater ease. Orthopedic, neurologic, and arthritic geriatric patients unable to carry their full weight or walk properly on land are often able to walk in the underwater treadmill with less pain and pressure on muscles and joints. Neurologic patients may require assistance with proper paw placement during the early stages of recovery.

Therapeutic Laser

With its red light beam, wand probe, and black protective goggles required for both dog and therapist, laser treatment looks like something straight out of Star Wars® but it has long been successfully used on both animals and humans alike with dramatic results. Sometimes referred to as low level laser therapy, or cold laser (hot lasers are for surgical procedures), the word LASER is an acronym for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation. This form of penetrating light energy is a safe treatment with no harmful side effects.

Laser treatment reduces pain, inflammation and swelling, increases circulation, decreases muscle spasm, and stimulates the natural healing process. Laser is used post-operatively for orthopedic and neurologic disorders to accelerate bone and tissue repair, and improve nerve function. Arthritis, cruciate ligament injury, hip and elbow dysplasia, and degenerative myelopathy, to name a few, are commonly treated with laser. Other uses promote healing of wounds, lick granulomas, ear infections, and scar tissue.

Laser is a non-invasive treatment that does not require sedation or shaving the fur. Most treatment sessions take between 10 to 30 minutes depending on the class of laser and the areas being treated. During laser treatment the animal feels nothing and usually is so relaxed they will often fall asleep during the session. Laser has a cumulative effect; however improvements can sometimes be seen after the first treatment.



Old age and arthritis doesn't stop Bella.



Goggles provide eye protection during laser treatment.



Yuki is recovering from knee surgery.



Balance and strengthening exercises on peanut-shaped physioballs.

Pulsed Electromagnetic Field Therapy

Electromagnetic therapy is used for treating pain and inflammation. One such product, the Assisi Loop®, utilizes tPEMF® (targeted pulsed electromagnetic field) technology to stimulate the body's natural healing response. Pain, swelling and inflammation are reduced by enhancing the therapeutic properties of nitric oxide in tendons, ligaments, bones, inflamed skin, and internal organs. The Assisi Loop® is a portable device

available for at-home use or as an adjunct to rehabilitation at the clinic.

Therapeutic Ultrasound

Ultrasound works similarly to laser but utilizes sound waves instead of light. Ultrasound is a deep tissue heating treatment used for decreasing pain and stiffness, muscle spasm, and scar tissue. Therapeutic ultrasound differs from diagnostic ultrasound, as it is for treatment, not diagnosis. The ultrasound transducer head operates with gel directly on skin, so the pet's fur needs to be shaved.

Manual Therapy

Truly hands-on, manual therapy encompasses skilled assessment and treatment methods to identify and address abnormalities, and involves joint and soft tissue manipulation with the therapist's hands. Therapeutic massage, joint mobilizations, passive range of motion, and myofascial release are manual therapy techniques often used in rehabilitation.

Veterinary Orthotics and Prosthetics

The same advanced technology used in orthotic and prosthetic devices for humans is widely available for animals as well. An orthosis corrects biomechanical alignment of a limb or paw, or protects an injury during recovery. A prosthetic attaches to the body and completely replaces a missing limb or part. Rehabilitation assists the animal in adapting to the device, which requires muscle strengthening, coordination, gait training, and neuromuscular re-education. Measuring, fitting and adjusting the device properly is key. An assortment of adaptive devices for mobility support such as toe-ups, Help 'Em Up™ Harnesses, and cart "wheelchairs" help improve your pet's quality of life.

Other animal rehabilitation treatment options are available such as acupuncture, chiropractic, extracorporeal shock wave therapy (ESWT), transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES), and regenerative medicine. As always, consult with your veterinarian before embarking on a rehabilitation program.

Of course we know dogs and cats can't read, and since they also cannot speak, it is up to pet owners to watch for signs of pain or other problems, many of which can be treated through rehabilitation even if your pet is "just getting old." Changes in your pet's normal routines such as reluctance to jump on a bed/couch or into the car, bunny hopping on stairs or avoiding stairs altogether, lack of interest in playing, or difficulties with daily activities are common indicators of pain or dysfunction.

So, if your New Year's resolution for 2018 is to hit the gym, stop by and visit an animal rehabilitation center. You may find all the motivation you need from those who cannot read. Never give up.



Vito, a pug with a neurological condition, works out in the heated therapeutic swimming pool.



AlphaCat learns to walk with a hind paw orthosis.



A German Shepherd with hip dysplasia walks in the underwater treadmill.



Bella's favorite tunnel exercise.

Does your pet need physical rehabilitation?

Here are some conditions rehabilitation can help:

- Pain management
- Post-surgical recovery: orthopedic or neurologic
- Osteoarthritis
- Hip dysplasia
- Elbow dysplasia
- Shoulder disorders
- Patellar Luxation
- Back or neck injury
- Tendinitis
- Muscle and ligament injury
- Intervertebral Disk Disease (IVDD)
- Degenerative Myelopathy
- Vestibular disorders
- Fibrocartilagenous Embolism (FCE)
- Geriatric issues
- Weight management
- Athletic conditioning



Ensure a Safe Haven for the Animals of Tomorrow

Join the *Forever Home Society* Today

All of our donors are important. In fact, it's no exaggeration to say we wouldn't be here without you. Thanks to your support, all of us – the Our Companions family – are celebrating fifteen years together, during which time, we have worked to make our shared dream a reality.

Along with this initial success comes the tremendous responsibility of ensuring that we will continue to be here, ready to help the homeless pets of the future who have no where else to turn. This is where the *Forever Home Society* comes in. If you have not yet joined the *Forever Home Society*, we hope you will consider doing so, by including Our Companions in your estate plans. Your legacy will help us do the right thing for animals for generations to come.

Below, is a current listing of the *Forever Home Society* members – we hope you will consider adding your name to this list.

Anonymous	Ms. Leslie Haber	Mr. Henry Petrofsky
Ms. Elizabeth Aaronsohn	Ms. Jamila Hadj-Salem	Ms. Doris Phillips
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Ms. Pamela Cabrera	Ms. Dottie Kern	Ms. Karen Scucchi-Carr
Ms. Donna Canalis	Ms. Leigh Ann Kissner	Mr. John and Mrs. Cathy Scuto
Ms. Judith Caravati	Ms. Jean Koepke	Ms. Lorraine Semnoski
Mr. John and Mrs. Tara Carey	Mrs. Gretchen LaBau	Mr. Charles and Mrs. Chris Shivery
Ms. Pam Connelly	Ms. Estelle Langlois	Ms. Joanne Singer
Mr. James and Mrs. Jessica Couzens	Ms. Mary Kathryn LaRose	Ms. Vi R. Smalley
Mrs. Carol Covello	Ms. Doreen Legienza	Ms. Diane Smith
Mr. Harry and Mrs. Joan Curry	Mr. Neil and Mrs. Janice Levett	Ms. Joyce Snyder
Mr. Charles and Mrs. Nancy Curtiss	Mr. Mitchell and Mrs. Susan Linker	Ms. Lisa St. Germain and Ms. Karen Beaulieu
Ms. Christina (Tina) Davies	Ms. Anne Llewellyn	Mr. Michael and Mrs. Patricia Starace
Ms. June E. Day	Ms. Mary Mansfield	Ms. Christa Sterling
Ms. Mary June Day	Mr. Robert and Mrs. Susan Mason	Mr. George and Mrs. Nancy Stimac
Ms. Heather Dennis and Mr. Kevin Gillespie	Ms. Mari Merwin	Mr. Patrick and Mrs. Kathleen Sullivan
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Ms. Christine Durrer *	Ms. Jacqueline Mickiewicz	Ms. Lynda Thornton
Ms. Karen A. Ellsworth	Ms. Olevine (Lois) Morin	Mr. Albert Toro
Ms. Karen Ericson	Mr. Jaroslaw and Mrs. Elizabeth Nyczak	Mr. Jess and Mrs. Janet Wagner
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Ms. Paula Fischer	Mrs. Diane Oberg	Mr. Tom and Mrs. Rita Weidman
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Mr. Marvin Fried	Ms. Lida Orzeck	Mr. Edward and Mrs. Kathleen Young
Ms. Valerie Friedman	Ms. Nancy Parker	Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Kim Zimmermann
Ms. Lyn Garson	Ms. Erminia Pascucci	*Deceased
Ms. Michele Greaves and Mr. Joseph Popovitch	Ms. Sherri Pasquale-Cassidy	
Mr. David Gregorski	Mr. William and Mrs. Eleanor Peters*	



Forever Home Society Member Feature

Michele Greaves and Joseph Popovich have been *Forever Home Society* members since 2015.

"The reason we included Our Companions in our estate plans is, first, because of their involvement in so many aspects of animal welfare: from spay/neuter programs and adoptions, to training and public education, just to name a few. Second, we are confident that even after we're gone, OC will continue to do "the right thing for animals." They have consistently set goals and reached them, most recently evidenced by the Sanctuary expansion. It's comforting to know our small contributions help, and will continue to help, those animals who need it most.

Thank you, OC! And thank you for rescuing 17-year-old Jojo from the pound, where she ended up after both her humans passed away. She has been with us since July, and of course, has us wrapped around her furry little paw!" - Michele & Joe



Charitable Giving News

If you are age 70½ or older, you can make a gift directly from your IRA to Our Companions Animal Rescue without paying any tax on the distribution. Gifts must be made by December 31st to count toward your 2018 required minimum distribution. It's easy to do. To learn more, contact Susan Linker at SusanL@OurCompanions.org or call 860-242-9999, ext. 301.

If you have already included Our Companions in your estate plans, please let us know so we can welcome you as a member of the Forever Home Society. To learn more, please contact Susan Linker at (860) 242-9999, ext. 301 or email SusanL@OurCompanions.org.

Legal Language and Tax ID

If you wish to name Our Companions in your will or estate plans, we should be named as: Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary, DBA Our Companions Animal Rescue • Legal Address: P.O. Box 956 Manchester, CT 06045 • Tax ID number: 41-2047734

Our Companions Gets a 4-Star Rating From Charity Navigator

We are pleased to announce that Our Companions Animal Rescue was given a score of 99.67 (out of 100!) by Charity Navigator. Four stars is considered the "Exceptional" rating, in that it "exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause."



Determinations are made based on the following criteria, according to Charity Navigator:

IRS Tax Status: Charity Navigator rates organizations registered as 501(c)(3) public charities that file a Form 990 with the Internal Revenue Service. 501(c)(3)s are tax-exempt and eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions, meaning that their earnings don't benefit private individuals, their activities can't be substantially used to influence legislation, and they don't participate in political campaigns or political endorsements.

Revenue: Charity Navigator rates charities generating at least \$1 million in revenue for two consecutive years.

Length of Operations: Charity Navigator rates organizations that have been in existence for at least seven years, with corresponding Forms 990. We believe it's unfair to hold new nonprofits to the same benchmarks expected of established organizations.

Location: Charity Navigator rates charities based in the U.S. and registered with the IRS, but the scope of a charity's work can be international.

Public Support: The charity must have at least \$500,000 in public support, which must account for at least 40% of the organization's total revenue for at least two consecutive years.

Fundraising Expenses: Charity Navigator rates organizations with at least 1% of its expenses allocated to fundraising for three consecutive years. Charities depending on the public for support fundraise to sustain their operations.

Administrative Expenses: The charity must have at least 1% of its expenses allocated to administrative expenses for three consecutive years. Administrative expenses include things such as the cost of general legal services, accounting, office management, and human resources.

We are proud of our organization's strong fiscal controls, efficient professional oversight, and prudent Board leadership. Given the fact that nearly 100% of our revenue comes from public support, it is critical that our donors feel confident about the investment they make when they contribute to Our Companions. This is never a gift that we take for granted. We are honored to have earned your trust, and we promise to respect your hard-earned dollars in all of our endeavors to do the right thing for animals now and in the future.



Sanctuary to Receive \$150,000!

We are thrilled to report that WE DID IT! Thanks to your extraordinary outpouring of support and generosity for the 2017 Annual Fund Campaign, the **Our Companions 15th Anniversary Challenge** was a monumental success!

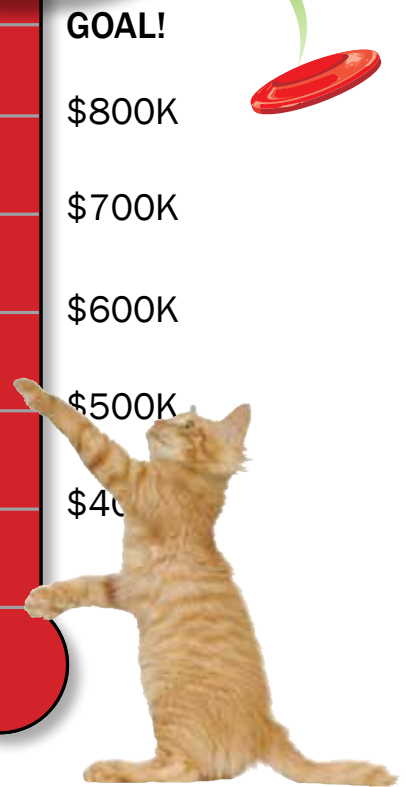
We not only met, but exceeded our \$900,000 Annual Fund goal and have unlocked a \$150,000 gift to support our Sanctuary operations in Ashford. This sizable gift was pledged by a small group of loyal donors, and certainly provided a strong incentive to pull out all the stops on our fundraising efforts. But as they say, it takes a village, and on behalf of the animals, we thank you for helping us to make this gift possible.

We begin this new year poised to help even more animals, not only at our expanded Sanctuary but through all of our many life-saving programs. We are truly overwhelmed with gratitude. On behalf of the staff, volunteers, Board of Directors and the people and pets we serve, thank you!

Happy New Year!



WE DID IT!





OC Volunteers Take Advantage of Corporate Giving Programs

Most of us are familiar with the matching gift programs many employers offer, designed to encourage charitable giving among their employees. In today's work environment it is becoming more common for employers to offer additional programs beyond these matching gifts – to include grants and in-kind donations of time that employees may spend volunteering.

Each year, Our Companions receives thousands of dollars from donors who thoughtfully take advantage of their company's matching gift program – and that's just the beginning. Many volunteers have generated thousands more for Our Companions through additional programs offered by their employers. Following, are a few heartwarming stories from some dedicated volunteers who have maximized their financial contributions to this organization through such programs. We hope they might inspire you to inquire about what may be available at your company.

Now, more than ever – since our Sanctuary has recently doubled in size – we are in need of additional volunteers. The opportunities for involvement are diverse and the rewards are many – most notably, working with a tremendous group of people who are dedicated to helping animals. And the satisfaction and joy in seeing the animals thrive under our care. If your employer has a corporate matching program, then any donations you make also will have a significant impact on our ability to help even more animals.

Walt Disney Company Foundation



Jennifer Overman, who has volunteered at the Sanctuary with the cats since 2013, has had her annual gifts matched by Disney. The company matches eligible donations up to \$15,000. In addition to the matching gift program, Disney offers grants to nonprofit organizations where employees volunteer. Disney "VoluntEARS" are encouraged to apply for an "EARS to You" grant for up to \$2,000, payable to an eligible nonprofit organization of their choice. Additionally, Disney offers "VoluntEARS of the Year" grants which recognize exceptional individual volunteers. These are additional grants of typically \$2,500. Jennifer has also facilitated more than \$5,100 in donations from the "EARS to You" grant program.

"I work with people who don't realize their volunteer hours can be turned into grant money," says Jennifer. "I always tell them about it. I'm volunteering anyway, so I just do what I do, and Our Companions get a nice chunk of change for it! How great is that?"

Cigna



Jeff Schmidt is an Our Companions volunteer who works on the Global Market Research and Insights Team at Cigna. Each year he makes it a priority to take advantage of the "Use Your 8 Program" Cigna offers. Every calendar year Cigna employees receive up to eight paid hours to volunteer for eligible

nonprofit organizations within their communities. Most recently, Jeff used this program at Our Companions and helped with some landscaping and grounds projects at Our Companions Sanctuary in Ashford while receiving a full day's pay!

Volunteerism is encouraged at Cigna and if an employee volunteers for 50 hours at a charitable organization, the charity becomes eligible for a \$500 donation from Cigna. They also provide one-to-one matching grants for up to \$5,000. In addition, Cigna offers a Charitable Contributions Program. If a Cigna employee runs, bikes or walks for a cause, Cigna will make a \$100 donation to that charity.

Below is a feature that recently was sent to Cigna employees highlighting Jeff's involvement in Our Companions.

Jeff Schmidt (Market Research) has been volunteering with Our Companions Animal Sanctuary, helping to maintain the grounds and landscaping – which is no small task considering the Sanctuary occupies 43 acres in Ashford, CT! Our Companions is New England's first large-scale pet rescue center and sanctuary for homeless pets. The Sanctuary provides animals with a home-like setting (think, canine cottages) where animals can rehabilitate physically and emotionally while awaiting adoption. So far this year, Jeff has spent 18+ hours volunteering his time at Our Companions.

Aetna



Pat McGuinness is one of our most longtime volunteers. She started volunteering over a decade ago in a number of capacities (see photo at a downtown Manchester event with Pat and our mascots). Over the years she has taken full advantage of Aetna Foundation's volunteer grant program which is offered to employees and retirees and can be used for as many nonprofit organizations as they wish. However, each organization may receive only one volunteer grant per year of \$300 when employees and retirees volunteer at least 20 hours of time.

"I am proud to have had my career with Aetna, a company that always gives back so much to their community through the Aetna Foundation's grants," says Pat. "Aetna, 'I'm glad I met ya' was the company slogan for many years and it has made me so happy to be able to bring this annual volunteer grant each year to Our Companions, another organization that also gives back so much to their community through education, training, rescue, and placement of animals in their forever homes...so to Our Companions as well, 'I'm glad I met ya!'"



The Growing Popularity of Integrated Veterinary Care

Chiropractic. Acupuncture. Cold Laser Therapy. Herbal Supplements. These and other alternative therapies are commonly used to treat humans. It really isn't a surprise, then, that humans are turning to alternative therapies to treat pets, as well. Veterinarians aren't necessarily replacing Western or traditional medicine. Rather, they are blending traditional vet care with modalities such as acupuncture, chiropractic, alternative medicine, supplements and laser therapy, to name a few, in an integrated or complementary approach.

Petcare Veterinary Services in West Hartford and Chippens Hill Veterinary Hospital are two of several veterinary practices in the area that offer both traditional and alternative veterinary services to their patients.

"We strive to provide Western medical therapies according to best medical practices to get the best health with minimal or no side effects," explains Dr. Emily Elliot from Chippens Hill. "At the same time, we integrate viable complementary medicine to support the patient."

Dr. Elliot offers several examples of how traditional and alternative practices can be used together. "When an animal needs antibiotics, we place them on probiotics, too. When a pet needs anti-inflammatory medication, we may put them on a nutritional chondroprotective supplement." In the case of arthritis, this supplement works in tandem with the anti-inflammatory to ease the narrowing of joint spaces caused by the condition.

Examples of Alternative Treatments Being Used with Traditional Medicine

- Acupuncture, or the practice of applying small-gauge needles to various points on the body to stimulate nerves, improve appetite, increase circulation, relieve muscle spasms, and reduce nausea. Recommended to reduce pain and stress, and as treatment for chronic pain like arthritis.

- Cold Laser therapy, similar to acupuncture but using focused low-level laser on specific parts of the body to treat ailments ranging from ear infections to recovery from surgery.



- Nutritional therapy, a diet tailored to your pet's particular needs, possibly including herbal supplements.

Success in Treating Degenerative Joint Disease/Arthritis

Dr. Lauren Mascola, of Petcare, has used various traditional and alternative treatments for Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD) or Arthritis. In many cases of DJD, Dr. Mascola uses a combination of supplements, laser therapy and traditional NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). "In many DJD cases, I put the pet on a joint supplement, treat the affected area with laser therapy and provide the owners with an NSAID they can give their pet on a particularly bad day," says Dr. Mascola.

This integrated approach works well in many cases because each treatment offers something different towards the patient's overall wellness. Joint supplements take some time to become effective but have little or no side effects. While NSAIDs are a pain reliever and faster acting, they are known to cause side effects and can have long-term risks so should be used sparingly and only when needed. Laser therapy decreases inflammation in the affected areas and stimulates blood supply and new healthy growth.

Dr. Elliot says that one of her patients has benefited greatly from the best of this integrated

approach. "Our oldest patient has had surgery and chemotherapy for lung cancer while receiving acupuncture; he has also had acupuncture and chiropractic treatments for DJD, Western medicine for pancreatitis and aspiration pneumonia, while also being supported with acupuncture and dietary recommendations."

Little or No Risk

"What makes owners more apt to try alternative therapies is the very low risk of side effects," says Dr. Mascola. "Owners want the best for their pets and like the idea of helping their pet without doing harm. I think it goes hand-in-hand with what many owners want for their own health."

Laser therapy, for example, has minimal risk to pets and Dr. Mascola says the results in her practice have been no less than miraculous for some patients.

"I had a patient who had lameness in her front leg for several years. The family was skeptical that laser therapy would work since she had been lame for so long. But we discussed the low risks involved and the family decided it was worth a try. After six 20-minute sessions over a three-week period, her leg became sound again. We don't get miracles in every case but I always tell owners that there is a good chance of improvement and it's certainly worth trying because of the low risk involved."

Working for a Living: Blue-Collar Cats Earn Their Keep

By Lindsey Pellino

We're all familiar with the different career paths for dogs: therapy dog, police canine, guide dog...the list goes on. But have you ever thought of cats as professionals? There's a burgeoning field now for cats wherein they are often referred to as blue-collar kitties. This new role became popular in Washington, D.C., where a slew of construction projects led to a rat resurgence. The solution? Putting cats to work as professional rodent catchers. This allowed companies and building project managers to help take care of their pest problem, without resorting to costly exterminators or harmful chemicals. It has been a mutually beneficial relationship: the cats have people making sure all their physical needs are met, while the cats, in turn, take care of business – literally. Even the mere presence of cats can be enough to ward off any curious rodents who might think of nesting up in a building.

Not every cat is cut out to be a blue-collar cat, but this important role has been a boon for feral and semi-feral cats, who must otherwise eke out an existence along the margins of society. These are cats that have lived their lives outdoors, and aren't socialized – meaning they are very afraid of people and would be miserable being adopted into a home. The ideal situation is to provide TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) services to them, where they are humanely trapped, brought to the vet to get neutered/spayed and vaccinated, and then returned to their colony. A colony caregiver then provides them with food, water, and sometimes outdoor shelter during the colder months. Feral cats that have been TNRed usually live long, healthy lives in the great outdoors. TNR helps reduce stray cat populations, and stems the spread of disease.

Unfortunately, not all feral cats end up so fortunate. Humans may try to help a cat they assume is a stray, but may be causing more harm than good, by not realizing that the cat they are dropping off at a shelter is feral. Other times, the location of the cat colony is in a dangerous spot and needs to be relocated, which is a huge challenge. Injured feral cats, who might be disadvantaged if left to fend for themselves, are sometimes brought to rescues. Shelters and rescue organizations around the country find themselves taking in feral cats with no prospect of their being adopted. In many cases, these cats are euthanized. For those rescues that try to house them like typical house cats, the cats hide and avoid human contact, greatly diminishing their quality of life. So what's a shelter to do with all of these unadoptable cats?

Hats off to the innovative rescues who came up with a seriously creative alternative. Blue-collar cat programs provide a far better fate for these perfectly healthy cats who simply prefer not to be around people. One of the groups that started it all is the Cat Neighborhood Partnership Program (cleverly nicknamed CatNiPP) in D.C. Putting these feral felines to work is a win-win situation. The organization helps manage and ultimately reduce the population of outdoor cats, through spaying and neutering; the cats, in turn, have the security of guaranteed food and shelter, provided by whatever business or neighborhood "adopts" them. The cats patrol the area to keep pests at bay. These are cats that, if left at a shelter, would most likely be euthanized due to their feral nature. Local businesses truly rescue these wayward felines, giving them their best shot at a happy life.



Businesses and building managers apply for a blue-collar cat in much the same way as a homeowner would apply to adopt a typical house cat. Rescues and animal shelters assist them in finding the best cat match to help ensure an ideal adoption.

Similarly, many rescues throughout the country and beyond have "barn cat" programs in place. The cats in these programs are ideal for living in barns or other outbuildings of homesteads or farms. The homeowners who adopt these cats provide them with all their living needs, but the cats live in one or more of the outbuildings, rather than in the main house among humans.

Some people are less convinced of the value of the blue-collar cat concept. It's no secret that cats are prolific hunters – and purposefully introducing more cats into an ecosystem could have unforeseen consequences. A study in *Nature Communications* titled, "The impact of free-ranging domestic cats on wildlife of the United States" posits that unowned cats kill anywhere from seven billion to 26 billion birds and mammals per year. There's no way to guarantee that blue collar cats would only go after the undesired species (i.e., rats). Birds and other rodents would also be at their mercy. Scientists argue that more research is needed before communities widely promote the benefits of such programs.

Either way, there is always a need for more inventive programs to help save the lives of community cats. Through colony management, trap-neuter-return programs, and the growing availability of feline jobs, there are more options than ever for homeless cats that can't be adopted into a traditional home environment.

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You read that right – fuzzy butts are virtually guaranteed every Saturday from 1-3PM at Our Companions' Sanctuary in Ashford, Connecticut.

Yes indeed, that's where the action is, so mark your calendar and come get cozy with our furry friends, who will delight you with their crazy antics and offer you lots of warm snuggles. It's a win-win scenario: the animals look forward to the visits each week, as it helps them to become more sociable; you, in turn, can take a break from the cold and warm up with wet kisses and purrs.

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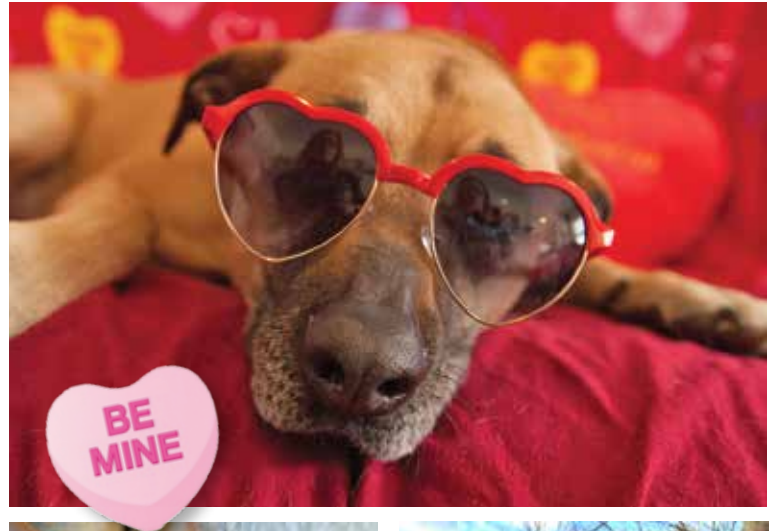
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As a result of the successful completion of a \$1.2 million expansion at our Sanctuary, this year we will have doubled the amount of housing available to help animals who need us the most. It's a good problem to have, but we also will be faced with higher operational expenses, as a result.

In fact, this year, our Pet Care Supply budget is a whopping \$20,000! To save money so we can help even more animals, we have set up a special Valentine's Day Amazon Wish List that has links to many of the necessary supplies for our animals at the Sanctuary.

What better time than Valentine's Day to send a special gift of love to animals in need. Items such as Pill Pockets®, calming collars, food, toys and treats really add up -- and if donated, make such a difference to us. We hope you will take a look at our Amazon Wish List at www.ourcompanions.org/pages/getinvolved_amazon.htm and consider donating some supplies that will be shipped straight to the animals at the Sanctuary.

Thanks in advance for your support!



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Amazon doesn't tell us who donates supplies, so if you place an order, please email us the confirmation at info@ourcompanions.org so we can thank you properly and send you a receipt for tax purposes, since all in-kind gifts are tax-deductible.

Help Us Keep Feral Cats Warm and Safe this Winter

During the winter months, feral cats (cats that live outdoors and have had little or no human contact) require a large amount of food to keep warm and healthy. Our Companions' feral cat food program is solely reliant on public food donations to provide desperately needed cat food for our feral cat colony caregivers. We have a Cat Food Wish List on Amazon.com that is available throughout the year for individuals or groups to purchase cat food to help improve these kitties' lives. We also accept cat food donations at our Valerie Friedman Program Center in Manchester and at our Sanctuary in Ashford.

We are always looking for creative ways to help the cats, so please keep us in mind, if you are seeking a community service project or just wish to become more involved in helping animals in need. Perhaps you might consider hosting a feral cat food drive at your workplace, church or school? Cat food donations are always greatly needed and deeply appreciated by both the cats and their caregivers, and food drives can be rewarding and fun, especially for young people to organize and participate in.

Many of the existing colonies in our area are managed with the help of Our Companions' Sterile Feral Program, which provides TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) services. After the feral cat colony is successfully TNRed, we provide donated food and warm shelters to our Sterile Feral clients. Now that winter is in full swing and daylight hours are limited, with temperatures dipping dangerously low, cats need a place to tuck in. Building feral shelters is an enriching activity for families or groups to do together. We've had several Eagle Scout candidates choose to make shelters as their final project, as well as high school students' needing to fulfill their community service requirement. We have shelter plans available for anyone who may be interested.

If you can help provide food or shelters for our community cats, please contact Caroline at Caroline@OurCompanions.org or 860.242.9999 x 306 for more information.



Connor's Eagle Scout project



Ear-tipped feral cat



Homemade feral cat shelter



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If you wish to learn more contact Marc Gotler at 800-588-8330 or mgotler@goodworksinsurance.com





Pippi, a young cat with mild neurological issues, playfully teeters around her room at Our Companions' Sanctuary in Ashford. She prances about, poking into and out of the cat door flap, but when it comes time for her massage treatment, she settles in quietly – nodding off, and easing into a deep sleep – sometimes even snoring. Vivian, a geriatric cat with painful arthritis, allowed only brief sessions in the beginning, until she made the connection that touch equals healing.

Therapeutic massage has long been an effective treatment option, alleviating pain, reducing stress, and promoting general well-being in humans and animals alike. Now backed by scientific evidence, massage is becoming more widely accepted in veterinary medicine as an adjunct, or in some instances an alternative, to pharmaceuticals or surgery.

What Is Therapeutic Animal Massage?

Massage generally refers to manipulation of soft tissues of the body through a variety of hands-on methods. The term medical massage does not encompass a particular technique but rather indicates therapeutic massage treatment prescribed by a veterinarian for a specifically diagnosed condition. Massage sessions usually last 30 minutes to one hour and begin with a head-to-tail assessment, including joint range of motion and gait evaluation. On first glance it may appear the massage therapist is merely petting the animal. However, they methodically palpate (examine by touch) the skin and underlying structures to detect and work on areas of pain, restricted movement, inflammation and swelling.

What Are The Benefits of Massage Therapy?

In addition to maintaining general health and wellness, therapeutic massage has been proven to:

- Reduce pain
- Alleviate muscle tension
- Increase flexibility
- Reduce inflammation and swelling
- Improve mobility and joint range of motion
- Increase circulation
- Strengthen the immune system
- Accelerate recovery time after injury or surgery
- Decrease scar tissue
- Promote healthy skin and coat
- Stimulate the body's natural ability to heal itself

What Medical Conditions Can Be Helped By Therapeutic Massage?

Massage can be utilized to relieve diarrhea or constipation, and can help stimulate appetite in pets who are not eating. Improvements in respiratory function may decrease frequency or severity of asthma attacks. Orthopedic conditions such as hip dysplasia, knee injuries, and arthritis can be managed conservatively in animals that are not surgical candidates due to age or other risk factors. Tendinitis, intervertebral disk disease, and degenerative myelopathy can all be helped through massage. Animals with behavior problems or stress-related issues may benefit from massage treatment due to its relaxation qualities that stimulate the release of endorphins (hormones that produce a calming and happy effect).

How Massage Helps Cats

With more than 500 muscles of various shapes, sizes and types throughout their body (compared to 650 in humans and over 700 in dogs), cats benefit from massage in all the same ways as dogs and people do. Sore, tight or knotted muscles can result either from injury, disease or lack of movement. Muscles generate heat with motion so when older cats become more sedentary they lose muscle mass from non-use, and then subsequently lose body heat



Pippi receiving a much needed massage.

more easily. Massage can help these senior cats stay active by keeping muscles and joints moving freely with less pain. While massage positively influences all body systems, it is especially beneficial for cats with arthritis. Studies have shown that more than 90 percent of cats over 12 years of age have some form of arthritis, but cats as young as two years old can also be affected.

Is Massage Therapy Safe?

Therapeutic massage is known to be safe and effective but it should never be substituted for veterinary medical care. Always consult with your veterinarian first, then work together with a certified animal massage therapist. Massage should not be directed over tumors, however, animals with cancer can be treated if a veterinary referral is obtained. Skin rashes, open wounds, lacerations, or fractures should not be massaged, and massage should not be performed on animals with fever, infection, or cases of sudden disk rupture.

Massage at the Sanctuary

The dogs and cats residing at the Our Companions Sanctuary, while awaiting their forever homes, receive therapeutic massage treatments from several Our Companions volunteers who are certified animal massage therapists. Comical Pippi, along with many other cats, packed their bags for their forever homes this past year, but beautiful Vivian still waits for hers. She arrived at the Sanctuary barely able to move, but most recently was spotted lounging high up in the window hammock, and now even leaps into the arms of volunteers! For Vivian, massage – much like the Sanctuary itself – is peace, love, and the gift of healing.



Technically Speaking is written by Certified Veterinary Technician, Lyn T. Garson, to address basic information on animal health issues and how they needn't be barriers to adopting a great pet.

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of Technically Speaking, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.



The day started as any other for our 10-year-old tabby P, until she spotted a bold feral strolling onto our back deck in clear view of the screen door. Agitated by the mere sight of this wandering feline, P was in a terribly unpleasant mood for the remainder of the day.

While P had a relatively mild reaction to this interloper, some cats become highly aroused at the sight of another cat in their territory, and react in a more aggressive manner. Unable to reach their intended target, they may lash out at the first “victim” who crosses their path, whether that is their feline sibling of many years or their unsuspecting human casually strolling in to greet them. This relatively common scenario is an example of a type of behavior known as redirected aggression.

What Stimuli Trigger Redirected Aggression?

While the most common scenario that causes redirected aggression is when an indoor cat observes an outdoor cat, many other triggers can cause this type of aggression as well.

Cats may be surprised, or even startled, by a sudden loud noise, or as a result of observing an unfamiliar person or animal visiting their home – or for almost any seemingly innocuous (to us) reason. What distinguishes this type of aggression is the fact that the cat is agitated by an inaccessible stimuli and that misplaced agitation then becomes directed at the first available target. Often times we are absent when the original stimulus occurs and may never be able to identify the initial trigger. To us, this aggression may seem “out of the blue.”



Managing Redirected Aggression

Once the cat is aroused by the particular stimulus, he might remain in a reactive state for some time, even if the original stimulus is no longer perceivable. Careful management and handling of the cat at this point is important to help de-escalate his emotional state.

If your feline companion's normally calm behavior suddenly and unexpectedly changes without an observable cause, a veterinary visit is always recommended. If you do observe the original stimulus and see that your cat has become aroused or frightened, do not approach him; leave him alone to calm down. It is impor-

tant not to approach your cat to comfort him at this time, as he might then associate you with the scary event. Letting him settle in a quiet, darkened room is best.

If you happen upon your cats suddenly fighting, don't get in the middle, but do try to disrupt the fight with a pillow or blanket or by making a distracting noise. Do not let them fight it out. Both cats should then be placed in separate rooms to calm down. These rooms should be free of stimuli, and preferably dark. Owners should observe the cats for a return to normal behavior (e.g., sleeping, playing) before reintroducing them. This process requires careful monitoring and patience as it may be some time before the two cats can coexist peacefully.

If the original trigger can be identified, managing the environment to block or remove this stimulus will hopefully prevent any future episodes and keep your feline companions feeling safe and secure in their home.



Karen Aseltine is the Feline Behavior Manager and Caregiver at the Our Companions Sanctuary. Karen is a Certified Cat Behavior Counselor and serves as one of our resident “kitty psychologists.” She receives questions every day about cat behavior. This column will highlight the most commonly asked questions.

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of *The Scoop*, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.



When you brought your new baby home, you probably worked with your dog to make sure that he would accept this new human into the pack. After all, babies have different scents and sounds, and it probably did not escape his notice that dog/human play time may have been reduced as you focused on your new addition.

The peaceful cohabitation of children and dogs can change in an instant – the moment the baby discovers mobility and becomes a toddler. This transformation can be very confusing to a dog. Dogs are not accustomed to their human pack members crawling around on the floor while grabbing, poking, and prodding them. This is a common issue in growing families so I sat down with Marie Joyner to gather some advice on how people can best build a safe and happy relationship between dogs and toddlers.

Preparing the dog

- Attend a positive dog training class. This will strengthen your bond and deepen the trust between you and your dog.
- Crate- and/or gate-train the dog. Doing this prior to the baby's becoming a toddler will ensure that the dog views this private area as a safe place to take a break. The area should be off-limits to the child and should be a secure place for the dog's toys and treats.
- Train your dog to greet people politely. If your dog becomes agitated when new people arrive, use the crate or gate until the dog appears calmer, and then lead the dog in on a leash to meet the visitors.
- Dogs need physical and mental exercise every day. Exercise relieves stress, and play time is a great opportunity to practice skills learned in training class.



Prepare the toddler

- Teach your child to respect the dog, including the dog's space, food, and toys. Toddlers need to learn that a dog is not a stuffed animal. Poking, prodding, and pulling hair on a real dog can hurt them.
- Teach your child how to recognize when to leave the dog alone.
- Growl zones are tight areas where a dog can feel trapped. FamilyPaws.com has a free video on growl zones and how to limit them in your home.
- Teach your child that dogs are allowed to have their private time and if the dog walks away, they should not follow.
- Make sure that dogs are allowed to enjoy their meals in peace.
- Let sleeping and resting dogs lie until the dog is ready to engage in play time.
- Be aware of subtle signs of stress like a tongue flick, pacing, sweaty paws, excessive shedding, scratching, and panting.

Positive dog and toddler interactions

It may seem overwhelming, but there are plenty of opportunities for your toddler and dog to have fun. Active supervision is important, but these interactions can lead to a deep and life-long relationship between the dog and child.

Toddlers can:

- Play games like fetch and hide and seek
- Sing songs, tell stories, and "read" books to the dog while gently petting
- Draw pictures of the dog
- Help bake dog treats
- Bring the dog along while the toddler rides in a stroller
- Assist with positive reinforcement by rewarding good behavior with treats.

Include your dog in activities with your toddler so the dog still feels like an important and vital member of the family. This will ease the stress the dog feels with your newly mobile bundle of joy.

Visit OurCompanions.org for a list of affordable dog training classes. For resources and more information on keeping dogs and children safe, contact Marie at Marie@OurCompanions.org, or call 860-242-9999.



Our Companions Canine Operations Director, Marie Joyner, receives questions every day about dogs and their behavioral issues. Marie's Den answers some of the more commonly asked questions.

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of Marie's Den, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org



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Each week dozens of volunteers from all over Connecticut assist us in providing care to the deserving animals at our Sanctuary in Ashford. We currently have more than 200 individuals who give some 180 hours of their time per week. With the upcoming construction of the new buildings that will double the number of animals we can house, we are sure to need much more help! We hope you will consider getting involved as a Sanctuary volunteer.

Visit our OurCompanions.org for full job descriptions and volunteer requirements.

