

Winter 2008

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OTD Spotlight

If you would like to nominate a fellow member for future newsletters, please email the newsletter coordinator Lisa Damien at newsletter@ottawatherapydogs.ca.

Member Profiles

Just a reminder that if you have not sent your member profile update to the web page coordinator, please do so as soon as possible.

Teresa L. at
memberpage@ottawatherapydogs.ca

Make sure to send a picture too!



OTD Board

Chairperson - Julianne Labreche

chair@ottawatherapydogs.ca

Vice-chair - Sharon McGladdery

vicechair@ottawatherapydogs.ca

Secretary - Margot Montgomery

secretary@ottawatherapydogs.ca

Treasurer - Tanja Mackin

treasurer@ottawatherapydogs.ca

Director - Susan Roberts

director@ottawatherapydogs.ca

Director - Carole Eldridge

director@ottawatherapydogs.ca

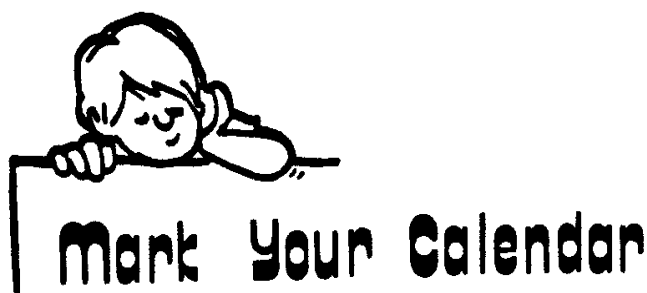
2008 Ottawa Therapy Dog (OTD) Annual General Meeting

Date: Thursday, May 22, 2008

Time: 7 pm

**Place: Paramedic Headquarters
2465 Don Reid Drive**

Parking is free. Door prizes and refreshments will be served. Our educational this year will be a lively panel discussion with pre-selected OTD members. Come and meet other therapy dog handlers. Take part in deciding the future of a little organization with a big heart.



Celebrating Marilyn: Sharing Memories

Julianne Lebreache

On a snowy winter's day in mid-February, members and friends of Ottawa Therapy Dogs gathered at St. Timothy's Church to share stories and memories of their leader, mentor and friend: Marilyn Benoit. Tragically, Marilyn was killed suddenly in an automobile accident this past fall.

"When we gather here, we remember who Marilyn Benoit was, and who she is to us today as members of OTD. Marilyn is not forgotten," said Dr. Karine Langley, the key note speaker and an OTD member. "Marilyn chose to live her life in service, to her family, to her community. Marilyn chose to walk quietly in the halls of the dying with her dog by her side. There was no glory in that work...there was no fanfare...no sound save the soft footfalls of Ruby. Marilyn chose the path that I would submit is the way to true fulfillment in life."

There were so many stories, some funny, some sad, all with moments of memories about Marilyn. Carole Eldridge, for instance, an OTD member, remembered her first mentored visit with Marilyn and her own dog, Sufur, who tragically passed away just days prior to the lunch. Carole remembered Marilyn's high standards of dog hygiene, contrasted with a very wet day when her hairy dog's very muddy and soggy feet led Marilyn to take them straight to the nearest washroom at the hospital prior to any therapy dog visits.

Marilyn's daughter, Rebecca, recounted some very humorous stories of her mother's love of Ruby, her own dog, and her passion for therapy dog work which frequently extended into the dinner hour, thereby causing her family to limit her dinner table chats about OTD to twenty minutes. She remembered her mother as an enthusiastic, caring woman who always became completely immersed in her interests including her therapy dog work.

Honorary member Chloe Worthington, a young girl who had met Marilyn many times through her involvement with OTD, provided a testimonial of Marilyn in French that had been prepared for a public speaking competition. Her family provided a short film clip of her speech which was shown that day.

There were songs, poems and music to celebrate Marilyn. There were therapy dogs to console those who needed some canine touch. Some forty members, facility representatives, family and friends attended the lunch, which was catered by OTD. Thanks to John Rathier, our OTD registrar, his wife Stephanie, and family members, all members of Scouts Canada who catered the event, a fine meal was enjoyed by all.

Marilyn will be missed, but she will not be forgotten. As Dr. Langley said: "Where is Marilyn today? Her spirit lives on through us all. Her love of others, her love of God, her love of community....did not die."

Excerpt from Dr. Karine Langley's Speech Given at the memorial in memory of Marilyn Benoit February 16, 2008

"I cannot add to the rich memories of Marilyn here except to thank her. I cannot give a warm anecdote but I can speak about grief and how we grieve and what I as a person of faith believe.

When we grieve a loss of someone whom we love and have come to know, initially we are in a state of unbelief. It happens so quickly and we ask ourselves why. Why her? Why now. We wonder what we could have done to change matters. And so we are dazed. As a society, we are encouraged to get on with things. The Jewish tradition is to mourn for seven days, to have a Shiva in ones home where people visit...but in my Presbyterian tradition....this is not the case. There is a funeral and we go on.

We try to pick up where we left off and are left feeling terribly guilty. We search for the balance of having such crippling grief and guilt that we cannot go on, versus shrugging as if nothing happened. That is why I suggested this service. When someone dies, we honour their memory, we remember them with joy and with thanks for all that they have meant to us, for the difference they have made in the world. We laugh, we cry, we remember them. It is important to do this as a group. I felt as OCD members it was important that we get together to remember Marilyn. To grieve together."



My Story as an OTD Member

Carole Eldridge

2006: the year in summary

My two hairy puppies (Tara and Sufur) and I visit a close friend's father at a Nursing Home in Toronto. My friend says – you should think about doing this on a regular basis. The thought resonates over the summer. Tara is an old girl with a bad heart. 12 years is an amazing accomplishment. Sufur grieves for his friend. The time is right to explore the Therapy Dog option. Find Ottawa Therapy Dogs. Complete all applications – and wait. One day this amazing lady calls. Marilyn. We talk – for hours. Orientation...

2007: the year in summary

Evaluation... Mentoring... Feb 07 we start at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre (ROH). As you may realize from the past Newsletter article (and pics) – Sufur won the unofficial award of being the hairiest pup in OTD. Marilyn insisted he should be clean – we start with the weekly baths and nail clips. He learns to hop into the tub for his bath. I realize that this volunteer commitment of a couple of hours a week really means a day. I organize my business life around the fact that no meetings should be set for Mondays.

The rewards.... We meet the most amazing folks – staff, day patients who have moved on and continue to learn, and in-patients with the most wonderful stories and abilities to relate to touch. In-patient staff provide Sufur pics for sharing. You find him on walls in patient rooms, book marks in bibles, and an experience I will never forget. Memory says that there were 5 folks touching some part of him and a sixth saying – “*and he was on my bed*”. He is both an AAA and an AAT dog as patients exercise by walking him (with me secretly keeping him on that second leash), and he provides many much needed leans and hugs.

People ask me how Sufur got his name. I explain – his predecessor was called Rufus – and I reversed the letters.

In June I begin to volunteer as a facilitator with the OTD Board and its Committees to assist them to sort some challenges as the small organization dramatically expands. The unimaginable happens. Heavy rain, a turn in the road, a collision. Marilyn is gone. We continue to work together and deal with this unimaginable reality.

2008: the year in summary

The reorganization of my business life continues. I have the privilege of working with amazing OTD members as we reorganize and move forward. Such wonderful learnings. I am invited to join the Board of Directors.

Sufur – my wonderful pup showed his discomfort at the end of January. He became one's worst nightmare of the 'slobber' pup and swallowing seemed to be a challenge. Two weeks later – x-rays. The cause – a non-operable oesophageal tumour. There will be no more visits with him to the ROH. The support... has been unbelievable. There are those of us who are seen by others as being anthropomorphic as we not only assign human characteristics to our animals, we also see them as our best friends. With my OTD involvement I have met kindred spirits. They understood that I lost my best friend and have been there in a myriad of ways.

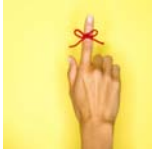
March ... I attend my first Board meeting as a Board Member at Large. AND, the unexplainable happens. There is a 17-month old hairy pup called Rufus looking for a home. I am told he is a leaner who loves people and am sure this is a sign of Therapy Dog potential. Keep posted.

Do you have a story to share?

Please let us know by sending an email to newsletter@ottawatherapydogs.ca.



Sufur



A Few Reminders...

Susan Roberts

For many of us our Orientation learnings are far in the distant past. The Board of OTD thought it might be helpful to provide Member Teams with the best practices to which we aspire when visiting our clients.

Rules for your dog

- ALWAYS keep your dog on at least one leash. When it is appropriate for a patient to hold the dog's leash, always make sure that you are holding a second leash to ensure that you are in control at all times. If there is ever a situation that you feel might call for the dog to be off-leash in a facility, you **must** contact OTD before the situation happens. An OTD evaluator will assess the situation and report back with respect to whether an off-leash situation may occur or not.
- For sanitation reasons, make sure that the leash and collar on your dog are exclusive to OTD work and that these items are cleaned on a regular basis.
- The dog must meet the highest standards of cleanliness and grooming. This includes short and buffed nails.
- OTD identification items on you and your dog can only be used for OTD specific activities.

Appropriate Dress and Identification

- Choose shoes and clothes that are both comfortable and presentable.
- Wear comfortable, closed, low-heeled shoes with non-skid soles, if possible.
- Wear clean shoes other than the ones you wear when walking your dog, especially if you walk your dog in parks frequented by dogs.
- Remember that older people may be more conservative in their outlook on dress and manners. (Jeans & shorts are usually inappropriate attire).
- Emphasize moderation in clothes and accessories.
- Some people are very sensitive to perfume and a heavy scent could make them ill.
- Please wear your OTD badge with your picture and your dog's picture when on duty. It helps staff identify you and your dog as belonging on the premises and clients can use it to remind themselves of your name.

Introduction

- Always introduce yourself and your four-legged partner. ("Hi, I'm Suzie, a volunteer here and this is my dog, Rover, a therapy dog volunteer.")
- When working with older clients, it is always best to re-introduce yourself, especially if some time has elapsed between visits. ("Hi, Mrs. Smith. It's Suzie and Rover.")
- Always call a client by their last names (Mrs. Smith, Mr. Brown) unless instructed otherwise by them, particularly with older clients.
- Always knock and ask if you may enter someone's room or, if in a public situation, ask if a person would like to meet your partner before walking up to them. ("Would you like to meet Rover?")
- Some people like to see your dog but do not wish to pet him/her. Be sure to ask, "Would you like to pet Rover?"
- Remember to maintain eye contact at the same level as the person being visited by kneeling, sitting on a chair or whatever position facilitates level eye contact.
- Ask before placing Rover on someone's bed or lap. Do not allow jumping onto the bed. Use a gradual approach by having the dog get onto a chair on the bottom of the bed.
- Use fresh linen for each bed visit. Do NOT transfer linens from bed to bed.
- BE OBSERVANT – Watch for non-verbal cues – Your partner may no longer be welcome, the client may be afraid or may be tired. Do not overstay your welcome or impose your partner on anyone.
- When saying good-bye, do not commit to a certain date for your return in case you can't make it and potentially disappoint the client. Be general by saying you will see them 'next time'.

Ethics

- BE DISCREET – Any information you acquire from residents, staff or other volunteers is strictly confidential; if you hear anything unusual or worrisome, report it to your supervisor. Do not discuss it with anyone outside the facility.

- If you are discussing a success with a friend, family member, etc., be sure to change the person's name. Do not describe any characteristics that could lead to identifying the person.
- Individuals have an absolute right to privacy. Anything learned about any individual (e.g., name, birthday, diagnosis, prognosis) is privileged and not to be discussed with anyone at all. It is a violation of the policy of confidentiality to take pictures or videotapes of any individual without release forms signed by the individuals. Facilities may require their own additional release forms.
- Clients have a right to their privacy and dignity. Never repeat a story that is derogatory, condescending or humiliating.
- DO NOT IMPOSE – You should not use your position to distribute literature, sell products or services, or solicit charitable donations.
- DO NOT ACCEPT MONEY – As relationships are established, clients may want to express gratitude for your visits by offering money or gifts. These offers should be refused tactfully but firmly.
- Similarly, if a client gives you money to buy something for them (cigarettes, candy, a birthday card for a relative), verify with staff that this is acceptable.
- Gifts of nominal value may be accepted in the right circumstances eg. a picture drawn by a client, a plaque for Volunteer Appreciation Week. Please let OTD know you have received the gift.
- It is essential that you neither lend nor borrow money from clients.
- Respect the people you work with – residents and staff. Remember you are there to help. It is necessary to be patient with people who may move slowly, have difficulty hearing or understanding you, or who are confused.
- Think of the client's capabilities. Do not pity. Try to understand. Encourage minimum reliance and independence while providing warmth and care.

What to do if you can't make a visit

- Be regular and prompt in your attendance.
- If, for any reason, you cannot make a scheduled visit, notify your supervisor immediately. Always have the name and number of a contact person or two for each facility you visit.
- If you work with specific clients and will be away for a longer period of time (summer vacation), mention this to your client on your last visit. (Suggestion: circle your return date on a calendar for them.)
- Keep in mind that visiting may be especially needed during the holiday season or on statutory holidays when many scheduled activities are cancelled. If you can, visit.
- Keep your supervisor informed of changes to your address and phone number, the times you are available for visits, and your preferences for assignments.

Commitment

- Available on a regular basis, for minimum period of 1 year.

Professionalism

- After regular visits, you can easily become attached to "favourite" clients. Sometimes clients are transferred to a long-term care facility. While it is understandable that you want to check on their progress, please remember that your responsibility is to the facility and not to individual clients. Keep in mind that another team may be assigned to the second facility. You'll be missed but the void will be filled with another caring canine.
- If you want to ensure continuity of visits to a 'favourite' client please let OTD know so that we can ensure they are added to the next visiting team's list of clients.

NOTE: If you have any questions about the above standards and requirements, please do not hesitate to contact Susan Roberts at (613) 726-0853 or by email at director@ottawatherapydogs.ca.

Hug-a Bubba!

Karine Langley

Bubba and I were visiting the Billings Lodge in early Sunday March and as we entered one of the locked wards, a nurse came up to us, rather quickly and said:

"Oh Bubba thank goodness you are here, Dot is having a sad moment"

Dot is a lovely lady with Alzheimer's who loves dogs. We spent 40 minutes with her and after Bubba kisses and her brushing the dog, she felt happy enough to leave the window sill and join the rest for lunch. The nurse on duty was thrilled and exclaimed how great it was that Bubba visits.

Just a little example of what Therapy dogs can do!



Lost in Translation

By Julianne Labreche

Chair, Ottawa Therapy Dogs

In many ways, this has been a year lost in translation for Ottawa Therapy Dogs. How do you translate loss and chaos into action and energy?

These have been the challenges for our board this past year following the tragic death of our beloved founded and volunteer coordinator, Marilyn Benoit. Marilyn was the glue who held us together. For awhile, it felt as if we were becoming undone.

It has been a year of restructuring and massive reorganization for our volunteer organization. From a community perspective, little appears changed. Therapy dog visits continue. Those patients who love dogs continue to take the greatest of pleasure in our pets. New teams continue to go through evaluation and orientation. Behind the scenes, heads have been bent over computers, board room tables and kitchen counters, sorting out solutions to save OTD



Our idea of teamwork!

Through the efforts of many people, dedicated, talented and committed people including Susan Roberts, Margot Montgomery, Tanja Mackin, Carole Eldridge, Ann Lambert and others, OTD is going through a renewal. By spring and ready for our AGM, this board will have a new organizational model to propose to its members.

In reality, and because of necessity, some changes have already occurred. The role of Volunteer Coordinator job, formerly a one woman job, now involves several people responsible for intake, mentoring, problem solving, and contact with our facilities across the region.

Over a hot chili lunch in mid-February, hosted by Susan Roberts, surrounded by therapy dogs, the orientation and education sessions formerly done by Marilyn were split into sections and handed back to six of us. Food is always a good energizer and motivator.

Administration, a necessary but not very glamorous aspect of therapy dog work, is being handled by John Rathier. When John is not working full time as a paramedic or catering to raise money for Scouts Canada, he's handling OTD member questions about registration and renewal.

Other committees have expanded their mandate. Claire Heistek and our communication committee, for example, have been busy reorganizing our web site, sending out our newsletter, and creating new policies and procedures to make the communication flow more manageable. Meanwhile, she continues to work with her own therapy dog, Tobie, and to mentor new therapy dog teams.

Susan Roberts has become our Orientation, Evaluation and Placement "expert", following Marilyn's attention to detail, interviewing prospective new members, sorting challenges with existing member teams, supporting Ann Lambert as we look for new Facility placements, and ensuring that our day-to-day realities continue. She has been incredible.

Meg Ogden, meanwhile, new in her volunteer role, is getting up to speed to tackle fundraising, so vital to support our many teams. People have stepped in to help when needed. Sharon McGladdery, despite a frantic year in a new job and international travel, somehow still finds time to translate a speech, run an errand, or pay a special visit with her therapy dog Caffrey. Dr. Karine Langley was there when needed to provide her wonderful music and her words of wisdom at our lunch in memory of Marilyn, despite being called as a key note speaker less than twenty four hours before the event. Karen Luker is helping out with referral checks and orientation, along with continuing to replace Marilyn in her work in palliative care. She and Gogo, her sweet miniature dachshund, are very popular there.

Marilyn used to say that just as it takes many villagers to raise a child and so too, it takes many volunteers to mentor and support a therapy dog team. Our volunteers lead busy lives, working for wages, raising families, cooking and cleaning, helping aging parents, caring for their pets. OTD work is getting done.

This year, national volunteer week is April 27- May 3. The theme this year for volunteers is from compassion to action. At OTD, everyone is lending a hand. From compassion to action, together, members will continue to provide the highest quality of care to both our patients and our pets.

Talk and Walk – When Life is the Pits

Grab a cup of coffee, bring your therapy dog and join us this spring for a couple of casual walks and a meet-and-greet. Come and get to know some fellow therapy dog handlers while letting your therapy dog de-stress with a fun romp on or off leash. We'll meet at the front entrance to the dog park. Wear something red to help us recognize one another. Let's let our dogs just be dogs and get a little dirty!

Bruce Pit Talk and Walk

Saturday, April 12, 2008

10 a.m.

Bruce Pit - From Highway 416 take exit 72 (West Hunt Club Road). If northbound, the 0.2 km offramp brings you to Cedarview Road, where you will turn left or NW onto it. If southbound, a 0.4 km offramp dumps onto West Hunt Club Road, where you will turn left or northeast and in 0.4 km turn left or NNW onto Cedarview Road and in 0.2 km join the northbound offramp traffic. Both groups will now follow Cedarview Road NNW for an additional 1.4 km to the parking area, on the right, for the Bruce Pit Trails.

Conroy Pit Talk and Walk

Saturday May 10, 2008

10 a.m.

Conroy - on Conroy Road, immediately south of Hunt Club.

Shell Busey's Dog Friendly Weed Killer Formula

While not a permanent solution, this is certainly more environmentally friendly than things like Roundup.

4 cups (1 Litre) of white vinegar

1/4 cup (50 ml) of table salt

2 tsp (10 ml) of your favorite liquid dish soap

Put this mixture into a spray bottle and spray it on your weeds when it is hot out.

For 1 gallon of mixture multiply by 4.

Remember, this formula really works and is only recommended for driveways, sidewalks and the like. If you spray it onto the weeds in your lawn, you're going to kill the grass too and create a big ugly brown spot. Mix can be effectively applied to larger areas using a 1 or 2 gallon pressure sprayer.

Many Thanks to Shell Busey's House Smart Center.



OTD Discounts and Member Privileges

Member Rebates :

La Librairie du Soleil

in Gatineau 25 Chemin de la Savane 819-246-3660
 in Hull, Village Place Cartier, 425 boul. Saint Joseph 819-595-2414
 in Ottawa 321 Dalhousie st. 613-241-6999
 offers R.E.A.D. team 20% off all children books

Bark & Fitz offers Ottawa Therapy Dog members 10% off apparel for dogs and 6% off of all food, treats, and grooming. You must show Lynne or Pamela your OTD membership card. Bark & Fitz is located at 354 Richmond Road in Westboro and can be reached at (613) 792-3711. The website is www.barkandfitzottawa.com

TLC Grooming Studios continues to offer a 5% discount to OTD Members who pay cash or Interac and present their current OTD ID Badge

Natural Pet Foods Store is offering us a 10 % off on all food and accessories. All we need to do is show our OTD ID card. It is a family run business, they are so friendly! They are located at 337 Churchill Ave. north, Ottawa Tel # 321-7282 www.naturalpetfoods.ca. They have a great selection of pet food, they carry Nature's Miracle dander remover and body deodorizer products, some hypo-allergenic and fragrance free grooming wipes.

Ottawa Therapy Dogs is very grateful to **Blair Animal Hospital** for granting our Members and their registered therapy dogs corporate support in aid of the services we provide to the community. In order to qualify for the discount program, OTD Members are advised that only when they show their current, valid ID Badge, are they able to ask for the new discount program for Ottawa Therapy Dogs. Staff at Blair are advised that all Memberships expire on December 31 each year and will check to see that badges are up to date. Please be courteous and grateful to the good folks at Blair Animal Hospital for this support.

Critter Jungle in Hampton Park Plaza has joined the list of those offering support for Ottawa Therapy Dog members. Show them your OTD ID Badge and you will receive 10% off both food and general merchandise. Their website is www.critterjungle.com

Berry's, in the Glebe, offers 15% off general merchandise and 10% off food and treats when you show your OTD Badge. Say "Hi" and "Thanks" to Sue Breen, the Manager!

Our Supporters

OTD deeply appreciates the help of our corporate sponsors who assist us in our continuing goals of bringing joy, comfort, and healing to those in our community who benefit from the furry friendship of our therapy dogs and to children in our reading programs where our specially trained reading assistance dogs turn reading from a glum time to fun time!

Best Friends School of Dog Training. Thanks to Kim Cooper for once again for supporting Ottawa Therapy Dogs with her gift of time and space for another evaluation.

Thanks again to Mary Zion and staff for making **Osgoode Hall** (Carleton Lodge) available to us for these evaluations.

Thanks to the **Community Foundation of Ottawa** for their generous grant which will enable OTD to purchase materials for our members who volunteer with their therapy dogs using the R.E.A.D. Program (Reading Education Assistance Dogs) in schools and libraries. R.E.A.D. is a valuable application of Animal Assisted Therapy.



How to Donate

Remember that you or friends and family can support Ottawa Therapy Dogs by making a donation via Canada Helps right on our website. WWW.ottawatherapydogs.ca. Click and follow the links.

Notes from the Editor

Lisa Damien

There are a lot of reasons why I like to be the editor of our newsletter: getting an insider's view into the organization; reading the great newsletter contributions; being part of a community; and being creative. This particular edition though, reminded me why I like to be part of OTD: we share a love of the community; we support one another; and we love our pets.

Reading through this edition's submissions, I felt many different emotions. While I knew Marilyn, I didn't know her like many of you. Hearing your stories, feeling the heart they were written with, restored my faith in the modern cliché that one person can make a difference in the life of many.

When I read Carole's story about Sufur, particularly about the loss of her best friend, I went and found Atlas and just hugged him and cried for about 10 minutes. I've never understood how people don't like dogs. I'll never understand how anyone can be cruel to an animal. Carole's words resonated so deeply with me. Atlas is my best friend, and nothing makes me happier than seeing him wag his tail and smile (*we know that dog's smile, don't we!*). His little quirks, his obsession with food (*and anything that might even closely resemble or smell like food*), the way he runs, the way he's protective of "his" family, the way he sulks – these are all characteristics that make Atlas more unique than most people I've met. I love Atlas so much. I really would do anything for him. I'm so thankful that he was picked by his breeder for me (thank you Ann Lambert).

Over the past few months, we've all felt loss – be it through the death of Marilyn or a beloved four-legged friend. While tragic and heart-wrenching to us, I think that those who have crossed Rainbow Bridge or into another World would be very happy that through their loss, they reminded us of how much we hold OTD dear to us, the organization and the people we've met through it, and the real reason why OTD can exist – our best friends.

This is a newsletter for and by the members of Ottawa Therapy Dogs, published three times per year. The deadline for submissions for the spring/summer issue is: August 1, 2008.

Submissions are welcome on any issue concerning dogs, their needs, care and value as allies in therapy work. Please send your input to Lisa at newsletter@ottawatherapydogs.ca.

