

PAWPRINTS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE **COMFOR T** PROGRAM

ComForT Pet Social

SAVE THE DATE PLEASE . . .

As spring is just around the corner and
a time to enjoy visiting with our special ComForT family!

To all ComForT volunteers and their special ComForT pets . . .
please join us for great fellowship and pet socializing
at our annual ComForT Pet Social.

Date: Sunday, March 21, 2010

Time: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Location: Gayle Morton's Home
Please contact Deborah Swilley for directions

RSVP: Regrets only by March 15, 2010
to Deborah Swilley at
swilley.deborah@ccbq.com or 402.7460

Your ComForT Advisory Board

Stephanie Perkins comfortpet1@yahoo.com
Gail Parker parker@nettally.com
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Michele Shapley mshapley@nettally.com
Chuck Mitchell cmitchell90@comcast.net
Vickie Hooks hooksv4563@aol.com

Susan Wilson (susankayw@hotmail.com) will be an alternate

The regularly scheduled meeting of ComForT's Advisory Board will be the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Area Agency on Aging. All members are invited to attend.

To add anything to the Agenda, contact Stephanie Perkins at least 2 days prior to the meeting.

Reminder: To remain on ComForT's Active Volunteer list, you must give a minimum of 10 hours of service to the ComForT program during a 12 month period

Exciting TMH Opportunities!!!

The hospital is interested in expanding our presence in all their facilities and beginning to match our teams up with students in the various nursing schools in order to be able to track our visits and record data about the positive impacts our teams have on the patients, staff and families.

In this way, they will be able to document our good work and ultimately publish the results, thereby helping to affect behavior in other health facilities across the country. This also will improve the perception of animals in health care settings and their value to humans.

TMH is also interested in expanding their work linking therapists with teams for specific therapy programs for individual patients. Such medically directed work is what Delta Society calls AAT (animal-assisted therapy), and we are looking for more qualified volunteers to engage in this program.

If you are interested in this exciting opportunity, please contact Stephanie Perkins at comfort-pet1@yahoo.com or 850-671-6342 for details

Welcome to our Newest ComForT Teams!

Kay Baggett and Savvy
Paul Brazier and Gracie
Ginny Coile and Agnes
Jean Coyne and Beau
Mary Z Cox and Priscilla
Sullivan Ellinor and Blue
Laurie Gilbert and Bitsy
Marlee Head and Keith
Candase Heinrichs and George
Jean Hewitt and Keith
Brian Knepper and Knola
Chris McGuire and Ari
Melanie Mitchell and Maggie
Ruth Nickens and Ari
Anne Pfund and D'Artagnan
Dawn Saucier and Murray
Meg Shannon and Zoe
Michele Shapley and Rufus
Jack Silverstein and Josette
Carole Smith and Truman
Kate Torning and Frasier
Brooks Wade and Pearl

Pet Therapy in the Courts Program Expands Beyond the Criminal Courts

The Pet Therapy in the Courts program is no longer present in just the criminal courts. On December 7, 2009, at the request of Wakulla County Court Judge Jill Walker, ComForT teams Mary Pat Morris and Ruggles, Bobbie Jo Finer and Honey Girl, Julie Bogenreif and Coxton, as well as Mike Bogenreif and Heike made the first visits in the Dependency Courts in Wakulla County. Not only is this a first for ComForT, it is a first for the State of Florida. This visit was to be the first of two pilot visits to see if the program was worth implementing permanently. The first visit was deemed so successful that Judge Walker made it permanent after the first visit!

Dependency court can be extremely stressful for everyone involved. Dependency proceedings include all matters relating to children who may have been abandoned, abused or neglected by parents or custodian; terminations of parental rights and custody; children in need of services and children surrendered for adoption.

In order to get as much information as possible, Judge Walker began requiring that children be present for dependency proceedings. "It's my hope that every time a child comes to court they see it as a positive," Judge Walker said. "I want them to be excited about coming to court." Besides the ComForT teams, the waiting room is open for kids to use, stocked with donated toys and books, and, after court the children are allowed to take a book or toy home with them.

Judge Walker says that the dogs and toys and books have appeared to put the children at ease. Judge Walker noted that the presence of the therapy dogs has also had a positive impact on the parents, saying, "Some of the parents have looked less stressed coming into the courtroom as well."

Duval County Courts Seeks Pet Therapy Program

WJXT, Channel 4 in Jacksonville, Florida, reported that a local Duval county court judge was interested in bringing service dogs into the courthouse to comfort children who are victims or witnesses to crime. The report noted that a similar program was underway in Tallahassee, and that program is ComFort's Pet Therapy in the Courts Program.

Helene Potlock, Victim Advocate for the Office of the State Attorney made this statement for the report: "I've been a Victim Advocate for over 20 years and have assisted thousands of victims prepare for their testimony in court. I can tell you that it is one of a crime victim's biggest fears to testify in a court room in front of the accused defendant. The Pet Therapy Program in The Second Judicial Circuit has been incredibly helpful to our child victims and witnesses. Specially trained dogs and their trainers attend pre-trial meetings with the child and prosecutor to get acquainted. The dog and trainer then return on the day of the child's testimony and sit with the child sometimes for hours while the child waits to testify. This makes an incredibly stressful waiting situation much more tolerable. Our dogs and trainers then wait outside the courtroom for the child to finish. The child knows that the dog will be waiting and that gives them great comfort. I love this program and look forward to the day we allow the pets inside the courtroom to sit with the child."

We've offered to assist Duval County in their efforts and wish them the best of luck!

SCHEDULE FOR GROUP VISITS**IMPORTANT NOTE!**

To sign up for a visit, please call Stephanie Perkins at 671-6342 (work), or 321-3787 (cell) or email at comfortpet1@yahoo.com

January 2010			
1/2/10	10:45 am	Saturday	Centre Pointe Health & Rehab
1/4/10	6:30 pm	Monday	Clare Bridge
1/8/10	10:00 am	Friday	Heritage Health Care
1/9/10	10:00 am	Saturday	Harborchase
1/11/10	1:30 pm	Monday	Cherry Laurel
1/13/10	10:30am	Wednesday	United Cerebral Palsy-Lifelinks
1/16/10	10:45 am	Saturday	Consulate Health Care
1/18/10	6:30 pm	Monday	Clare Bridge
1/21/10	10:30 am	Thursday	Elder Day Stay
1/22/10	9:30am	Friday	Pyramid Inc.-W Tennessee St
1/30/10	10:00 am	Saturday	Woodmont

February 2010			
2/1/10	6:30 pm	Monday	Clare Bridge
2/4/10	10:00 am	Thursday	St Augustine Plantation
2/6/10	10:00 am	Saturday	Westminster Oaks Parry Center
2/8/10	1:30 pm	Monday	Cherry Laurel
2/10/10	10:30 am	Wednesday	United Cerebral Palsy-Lifelinks
2/13/10	10:00 am	Saturday	TMH Rehab
2/15/10	6:30pm	Monday	Clare Bridge
2/18/10	10:30 am	Thursday	Elder Day Stay
2/20/10	10:00 am	Saturday	Broadview
2/26/10	9:30am	Friday	Pyramid Inc.-W Tennessee St.
2/27/10	10:00am	Saturday	Woodmont

March 2010			
3/1/10	6:30 pm	Monday	Clare Bridge
3/6/10	10:00 am	Saturday	Capital Health Care
3/8/10	1:30 pm	Monday	Cherry Laurel
3/10/10	10:30 am	Wednesday	United Cerebral Palsy-Lifelinks
3/13/10	10:00 am	Saturday	Westminster Oaks Health Care Center
3/15/10	6:30 pm	Monday	Clare Bridge
3/18/10	10:30 am	Thursday	Elder Day Stay
3/20/10	10:00 am	Saturday	Sterling House
3/26/10	9:30am	Friday	Pyramid Inc.-W Tennessee St.
3/27/10	10:00 am	Saturday	Woodmont
3/29/10	1:30 pm	Monday	TMH Adult Day Care

Dates set for ComForT's 2010 Spring Training Classes and April/May 2010 Delta Society Evaluations

Please pencil these dates into your calendar. If you know someone who is interested in joining ComForT, let them know about our spring training schedule. Prospective volunteers interested in joining ComForT should contact ComForT's program coordinator, Stephanie Perkins at comfortpet1@yahoo.com or 671-6342. Folks interested in assisting in our prescreening, training, or evaluating activities should contact ComForT's training coordinator, Gail Parker at parker@nettally.com or 893-5749.

We need helpers on dates marked with an asterisk below. Even if you can be there only one day or one hour, your help would be greatly appreciated.

Prescreening (by appointment only):

	Date		Time (approximate)
*	February 20	Saturday	9:00 am to 12:00 pm
*	March 1	Monday evening	6:00 pm to 7:45 pm
*	March 6	Saturday	9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Monday evening Training Classes :

	Location	Date	Time	Topic
	AAANF	March 8 NO DOGS	7:00 pm, 1.5 hours NO DOGS	Orientation to class: pass out materials and make assignments NO DOGS
	AAANF	March 15 NO DOGS	7:00 pm, 1.5 hours NO DOGS	Overview of ComForT programs NO DOGS
	Smith-W	March 22	** 6:30 pm, 1 hour	Training for prospective new dogs
	Smith-W	March 29	** 6:30 pm, 1 hour	Training for prospective new dogs
	AAANF	April 5 NO DOGS	6:30-9:00 pm, 2.5 hours NO DOGS	ComForT and Delta Society policies/ procedures. NO DOGS
*	Smith-W	April 12	** 6:30 pm, 1 hour	Training for prospective new dogs
*	Smith-W	April 19	** 6:30 pm, 1 hour	Training for prospective new dogs
*	Smith-W	April 26	** 6:30 pm, 1 hour	Training for prospective new dogs

** Tentative time. Depending on the number of dogs enrolled, we may split into groups that meet at different times (e.g. 5:45pm and 6:50 pm). Exact times will be set after prescreening has been completed.

AAANF denotes the Area Agency on Aging for North Florida, Inc. located at 2414 Mahan Drive.

Smith-W denotes the Smith-Williams Community Center at 2295 Pasco Street, next to Walker Ford.

Formal Delta Society Evaluations (by appointment only):

	Date		Time (approximate)
*	April 10	Saturday	9:00am to 12:00pm
*	April 17	Saturday	9:00am to 12:00pm
*	May 1	Saturday	9:00am to 12:00pm
*	May 3	Monday Evening	5:30pm to 8:30 pm
*	May 8	Saturday	9:00am to 12:00pm

I WANT TO HELP ...

the ComForT Program by donating ____ \$10 ____ \$25 ____ \$50 ____ \$100 or \$____
to support its many worthwhile activities.

Please make your check payable to the **Area Agency on Aging for North Florida, Inc.**
Fill out this box, clip, and mail it **with your check** to: Area Agency on Aging for North Florida, Inc.,
2414 Mahan Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32308.

Many Thanks for your tax-deductible donation!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

* If you are not already receiving this newsletter and would like to, please check here: _____

PAWPRINTS is a publication of the Area Agency on Aging for North Florida, Inc., a private non-profit organization funded in part through a grant by the State of Florida Department of Elder Affairs. The ComForT (Companions for Therapy) Program is sponsored by the Agency utilizing federal funds. **PAWPRINTS** is published quarterly for the purpose of informing ComForT volunteers, health care professionals and the general public about activities and benefits of the Program.

**To be added to our mailing list, or to make submissions for inclusion in future issues of PAWPRINTS, contact Stephanie Perkins at the Area Agency on Aging: 850-488-0055.*

Area Agency on Aging for North Florida, Inc.
2414 Mahan Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308