

PAWPRINTS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE **COMFORT** PROGRAM

Stella Award Recipient for 2009

by Shirley Roux



It is with heartfelt thanks that Maggie Mae and I accepted the Stella Award for 2009.

Sadly I was unable to attend the awards dinner due to some health issues. In January, Stephanie Perkins, Patty Mitchell and Jennifer Langford came to our home to present me with the impressive etched glass award. I am overwhelmed to have been chosen for this distinction especially since it carries the name of such a special person.

Stella exemplified the best characteristics of a great volunteer. She pitched in whole heartedly when a project spoke to her. Even though Maggie Mae and I only knew Stella for a relatively short period of time, she inspired us to always try to do our best.

I have been fortunate to have been working with Maggie Mae for six years and we have enjoyed working in all of the different venues. Maggie, however, made it clear to me that she especially liked working with the patients at TMH and the children associated with the R.E.A.D. program.

I am proud to be associated with so many hard working dedicated people. What better way to spend our time than sharing our best furry friends bringing joy to so many others in our community.

Your ComForT Advisory Board

Stephanie Perkins comfortpet1@yahoo.com
 Gail Parker parker@nettally.com
 Deborah Swilley dswilley@cdbg.com
 Ed Fangmann jandefangmann@netzero.com

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

In Memoriam



Clovis 1996-2010

By Bev Budden

Clovis was a Humane Society dog and was 4.5 years old when he came to me. I've had a dog continuously for over 50 years but never one that gave me such complete devotion. He loved the trails at Tom Brown Park and was always excited and happy to "visit" people. He considered it dog paradise when he could chase chipmunks in Maine. Now he can forever!

Annie Wenhold 1995-2010

By Fran Wenhold



"Little Orphan Annie" was turned in to a shelter in Orlando at 12 weeks old. The reason her owners gave for giving her up was that they couldn't potty train her (guess they didn't try too hard!).

I first met Annie at the National Sighthound Rescue in Thomasville, Georgia when I was there one Saturday doing some volunteer work. I volunteered to foster Annie since I was working at a place where I could take a dog to work. That way she could get full daily potty training lessons. Annie was one crazy puppy! She enjoyed racing in circles around the living room, leaping across the coffee table, landing on the couch where she promptly did a somersault, leaping back across the coffee table and off to run circles again! At the age of one year old, the rescue said they had no one who had expressed an interest in adopting her, and

they would be thrilled if we would keep her permanently! At the age of 4 Annie went through the Pet Partners Training, but she did not pass the examination. Every time the evaluators tried to do a restricting hug, she got so excited that she "talked" about it and tried to play with them! They said she was still too immature.

She never did get much more "mature". Finally at the age of 11 I decided to give her another shot and she was PERFECT! A perfect, graceful, MATURE older lady! She was able to participate in group visits for one year before her sight began to deteriorate. She began flinching every time a resident petted her as she couldn't see their hand coming towards her. I didn't feel it was fair to continue with visits if she would spend the entire time being startled by the petting. It's a shame she couldn't visit longer as the residents, especially at Clare Bridge, enjoyed running their fingers up and down her LONG legs. This year Annie turned 15. About a month ago Annie's hind end started getting weaker and weaker. Within a short time she could no longer walk or stand on her own, her heart was weak, and she was losing weight. I made the difficult decision to send her to the Rainbow Bridge. Goodbye crazy puppy - Love you forever.

Mango Sangaree

By Jan Sangaree



Mango was a standard poodle with a heart of gold, and was very proud of us – the family she owned. She was her mama's most devoted companion, and took her responsibilities to her kitty brother Bamboo -- who adopted her as his surrogate mama on sight – very seriously. Ever the polite girl, Mango was careful never to mention the fact that her other kitty brother, Cowboy -- who came to us with only 3 legs -- was a tad on the "different" side. Mango never liked her mama to be out of her sight, and adored her grandmother "Mimi".

Mango found her career with ComForT both rewarding and fun; she thought it was important to "give back" to her community. Her favorite ComForT visits were to Hospice House (and to the nice folks in Hospice Administration), to assisted living facilities, and to the homes of hospice patients. Mango took pride in being a ComForT Neutral Dog, always insisting that we arrive early for attention and appreciative pets from all the evaluators and volunteers before beginning her shift. There will always be other wonderful dogs, but there will never be another Mango. She was one of a kind, and we'll always miss her.

Dates set for ComForT's 2010 Fall Training Classes and September/October 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 fall training schedule. Prospective volunteers interested in joining ComForT should contact ComForT's program coordinator, Stephanie Perkins at comfort-pet1@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.

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) |
|---|-----------|----------------|---------------------|
| * | August 14 | Saturday | 9:00 am to 12:00 pm |
| * | August 16 | Monday evening | 6:00 pm to 7:45 pm |
| * | August 21 | Saturday | 9:00 am to 12:00 pm |

Monday evening Training Classes :

| | Location | Date | Time | Topic |
|---|----------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| | AAANF | August 23 NO DOGS | 7:00 pm, 1.5 hours NO DOGS | Orientation to class: pass out materials and make assignments NO DOGS |
| | AAANF | August 30 NO DOGS | 7:00 pm, 1.5 hours NO DOGS | Overview of ComForT programs NO DOGS |
| | Smith-W | September 13 | ** 6:30 pm, 1 hour | Training for prospective new dogs |
| | Smith-W | September 20 | ** 6:30 pm, 1 hour | Training for prospective new dogs |
| | AAANF | September 27 NO DOGS | 6:30-9:00 pm, 2.5 hours NO DOGS | ComForT and Delta Society policies/procedures. NO DOGS |
| * | Smith-W | October 4 | ** 6:30 pm, 1 hour | Training for prospective new dogs |
| * | Smith-W | October 11 | ** 6:30 pm, 1 hour | Training for prospective new dogs |
| * | Smith-W | October 18 | ** 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. 5:45 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) |
|---|--------------|----------------|--------------------|
| * | September 18 | Saturday | 9:00am to 12:00pm |
| * | September 25 | Saturday | 9:00am to 12:00pm |
| * | October 30 | Saturday | 9:00am to 12:00pm |
| * | November 1 | Monday Evening | 5:30pm to 8:30 pm |
| * | November 6 | Saturday | 9:00am to 12:00pm |

Current volunteers - check your Delta Society badge for your expiration date. If your own Delta Society certification will expire in December 2010, you are encouraged to sign up for one of the September/October evaluation dates. Contact Gail Parker for scheduling.

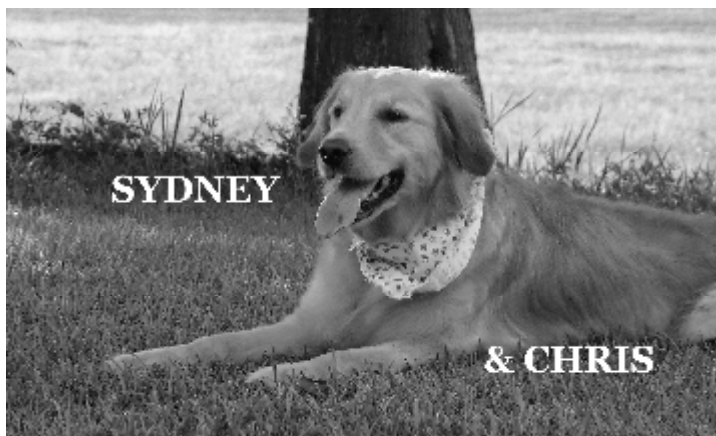
SCHEDULE FOR GROUP VISITS**IMPORTANT NOTE!**

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

| July 2010 | | | |
|------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 7/3/10 | 10:45 am | Saturday | Centre Pointe Health & Rehab |
| 7/5/10 | 6:30 pm | Monday | Clare Bridge |
| 7/9/10 | 10:00 am | Friday | Heritage Health Care |
| 7/10/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | Harborchase |
| 7/12/10 | 1:30 pm | Monday | Cherry Laurel |
| 7/14/10 | 10:30am | Wednesday | United Cerebral Palsy-Lifelinks |
| 7/15/10 | 10:30 am | Thursday | Elder Day Stay |
| 7/17/10 | 10:45 am | Saturday | Consulate Health Care |
| 7/19/10 | 6:30 pm | Monday | Clare Bridge |
| 7/23/10 | 9:30am | Friday | Pyramid Inc.-W Tennessee St |
| 7/24/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | Woodmont |

| August 2010 | | | |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 8/2/10 | 6:30 pm | Monday | Clare Bridge |
| 8/5/10 | 10:00 am | Thursday | St Augustine Plantation |
| 8/7/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | Westminster Oaks Parry Center |
| 8/9/10 | 1:30 pm | Monday | Cherry Laurel |
| 8/11/10 | 10:30 am | Wednesday | United Cerebral Palsy-Lifelinks |
| 8/14/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | TMH Rehab |
| 8/16/10 | 6:30pm | Monday | Clare Bridge |
| 8/19/10 | 10:30 am | Thursday | Elder Day Stay |
| 8/21/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | Broadview |
| 8/27/10 | 9:30am | Friday | Pyramid Inc.-W Tennessee St. |
| 8/28/10 | 10:00am | Saturday | Woodmont |

| September 2010 | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| 9/4/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | Capital Health Care |
| 9/6/10 | 6:30 pm | Monday | Clare Bridge |
| 9/8/10 | 10:30 am | Wednesday | United Cerebral Palsy-Lifelinks |
| 9/11/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | Westminster Oaks Health Care Center |
| 9/13/10 | 1:30 pm | Monday | Cherry Laurel |
| 9/16/10 | 10:30 am | Thursday | Elder Day Stay |
| 9/18/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | Sterling House |
| 9/20/10 | 6:30 pm | Monday | Clare Bridge |
| 9/24/10 | 9:30am | Friday | Pyramid Inc.-W Tennessee St. |
| 9/25/10 | 10:00 am | Saturday | Woodmont |
| 9/27/10 | 1:30 pm | Monday | TMH Adult Day Care |



From the Field

By Chris Herig

As most of you have heard by now, ComForT has been featured in some very prominent media coverage for our work with Tallahassee Memorial Hospital. Earlier this year, ComForT became the exclusive provider of animal-Assisted Therapy for the hospital. In turn, TMH gave us extensive coverage in their internal and external publications as well as partnering in an extensive article for Tallahassee Magazine. As our relationship with the hospital has grown, we have strived to meet the needs of both the patients and most recently, the staff. During the month of May, ComForT embarked on a trial program to provide support to some of TMH's most dedicated and hard working staff, the Emergency Room personnel.

It was my honor to accompany my Pet Partner Sydney, a five year old Golden Retriever, in the initial visit to the ER staff. As a long time former hospital volunteer, the emergency room was a familiar place for me and my partner is always up for trying out new places and meeting new friends. As a matter of fact, we got to meet a great new friend in Robin Mariutto, a new ComForT team member who was anxious to get started at the hospital. She was a great addition to our team and made our visit with staff that much better.

Our initial tour through the nurses' stations and triage area did not take long. However, with each subsequent round, we encountered different staff members who were encouraged by their dog friendly coworkers to take a break for some warm fuzzies.

As is often the case, we were not quite sure of the impact of our visit until afterwards. Although we knew we had a positive impact on a few individuals, the story kept getting better. A couple of weeks after my initial visit, I accompanied Gayle Morton and Stryker on their first ER visit. As we met more and more staff, we realized that some of them remembered each of the dogs that had visited. They were quite happy about the program and took full advantage of our time with them.

Since our visit, I did get some of the nicest feedback ever. Apparently, on our first visit, Sydney and I happened to be in the right place at the right time. One of the hospital staff present that night had experienced one of their worst days ever. As he was trying to get through the end of his day, he happened to round a corner, and what to his weary eyes should appear, but a happy, tail wagging Golden Retriever! This totally unexpected, but positively soothing encounter made all the difference in how his day ended. He was so moved by the experience that he shared the story with one of his neighbors, another Golden parent, ComForT 's own Chuck Mitchell.

While I was elated to hear this story, it reminded me of an important aspect of visiting. In almost every case, we are primarily focused on the patients or residents of any given facility. But, truth be told, all of those individuals are affected by the staff that provide for them. If you can improve the life of a staff member, you affect every person or patient with whom they come in contact. Just think about how much better your days are when your boss is in a good mood!

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