

THE Latham Letter

VOLUME XLVI, NUMBER 2

Spring 2025

PROMOTING RESPECT FOR ALL LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION

FRIENDS CAN HELP



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MANDATE

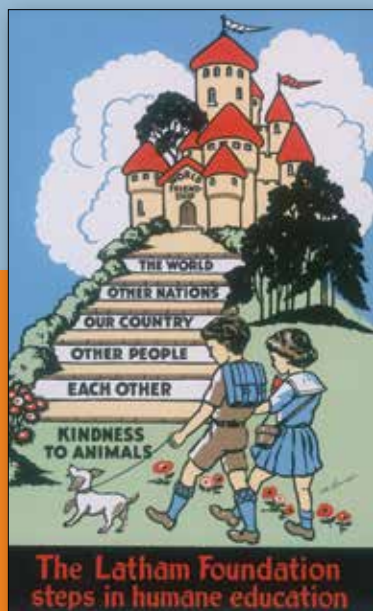
Edith Latham's **MANDATE:**

"To promote, foster,
encourage and
further the
principles of
humaneness,
kindness and
benevolence to
all living creatures."



WELCOME BACK, BROTHER BUZZ!

Brother Buzz, star of Latham's
Brother Buzz films and our former
Spokesbee, marks the end of articles.



The Latham Letter

Balanced perspectives on humane issues and activities

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Promotion of Humane Education

The Latham Letter

Volume XLVI, Number 2, Spring 2025

**BALANCED PERSPECTIVES ON
HUMANE ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES**



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The Latham Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation
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Latham welcomes partnerships with other institutions and
individuals who share its commitment to furthering humane
education.

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**Stacey Zeitlin, Vice President
The Latham Foundation**

THE HEALING POWER OF THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND

As we dive into this issue of The Latham Letter, we are reminded of the profound impact animals have on our lives—not just as companions, but as partners in healing, learning and growth. From service dogs transforming the lives of veterans to therapy animals bringing comfort to those in hospitals and trauma recovery programs, the human-animal bond continues to be a source of hope and resilience through challenging times.

This issue highlights the incredible work being done by organizations like the Dog Alliance, which empowers veterans to train their own service dogs, fostering independence and emotional well-being. We also explore the legacy of pet therapy through heartfelt stories of Arlo, Kale and Max—dogs who have brought comfort to countless individuals in their moments of need. These stories remind us that the love and connection we share with animals can transcend challenges and create lasting change.

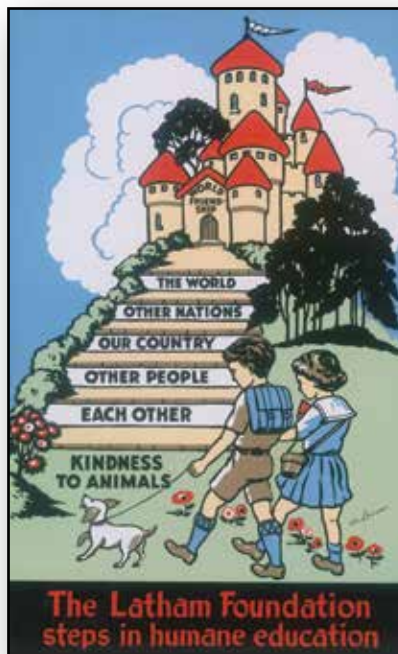
Humane education is another cornerstone of this newsletter since it is a cornerstone for The Latham Foundation. Programs like The Restricted Adventures of Raja teach empathy and kindness to children, equipping them with the social-emotional skills needed to build a more compassionate future. Empathy is not just a skill—it's a tool for preventing violence, fostering understanding and strengthening relationships, both human and animal.

This issue also addresses loss – of loved ones, both human and animal. While we can never be sure how our

animals process loss, we can definitely see changes in their behavior when they are faced with loss. The human-animal bond can bring both humans and animals through these challenging times, providing support, strength and purpose to each other.

As we look ahead, we encourage you to consider how you can contribute to these efforts. Whether it's supporting service dog programs, volunteering with therapy animals or advocating for humane education, every action makes a difference. Encouraging your organization or ones you know of to submit an application to this year's grant process is another way to contribute to these efforts. Highlighting the impactful work happening throughout the country through our grant recipients, like the Dog Alliance, helps others create their own local programs furthering the effects of humane education. Together, we can promote respect for all life and create a world where kindness and compassion thrive.

We hope this issue inspires you to reflect on the healing power of animals and the ways they enrich our lives. If you have a story, anecdote or idea to share, we'd love to hear from you. Let's continue to celebrate and nurture the human-animal bond—one step at a time.



Stacey Zeitlin, MAT, is the Vice President of Community Impact at San Diego Humane Society and oversees the organization's Resource Center and Community and Volunteer Engagement Departments. Stacey holds a multiple-subject teaching credential for the state of California, as well as a certificate in Nonprofit Management from the University of San Diego, a bachelor's in psychology from the University of Colorado Boulder and a master's in teaching with a focus on humane and character education from Webster University. She serves as a board advisor to the Association of Professional Humane Educators.



APPLY FOR LATHAM GRANTS JUNE 23-27, 2025

2025 ELIGIBILITY:

Programs that focus on animal-assisted activities that demonstrate people and animals working together for the benefit of both, and include humane education.

This year we are focusing on innovative humane education programs directed at teenagers.

Applicants must be U.S. organizations with domestic programs.

Nonprofit organizations will have priority but grants will not be limited to those who have attained 501(c)(3) status.

Website General Information:

[latham.org/grants/general-information/](https://www.latham.org/grants/general-information/)

A downloadable page detailing the 2025 Grant Program is here:

<https://www.latham.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Grant-Requirements-2025-Final.pdf>

Website Deadlines and How To Apply:

[latham.org/grants/deadlines-how-to-apply/](https://www.latham.org/grants/deadlines-how-to-apply/)

NOTE: Applications will only be accepted **June 23rd to 27th** and the online application will only work during those dates:

[latham.org/grants/application/](https://www.latham.org/grants/application/)

If someone has computer problems during June 23 – June 27 and cannot fill in the online form, this is an alternate form to fill in and submit:

<https://www.latham.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/ALTERNATE-2025-Grant-Application-form.pdf>

You can sign up at www.Latham.org to receive all the latest news from Latham.

Please share news of this opportunity with your colleagues.





A LIFELINE WITH 4 PAWS

By Joni Thompson
Austin Dog Alliance

“Doorway feels miles away. What if something happens? What if I lose control? The outside is too loud, too unpredictable. Safer to stay here—no surprises, no threats. But I’m trapped, aren’t I? I should go. I want to go. But my body says no... maybe tomorrow.”

A highly trained service dog provides a lifeline to a military veteran battling the demons of PTSD. Copper, a 5-year-old Blue Tick Coonhound literally changed the lives of Army veteran Tommy G., his wife, Laura, and their two children.

Tommy joined the U.S. Army at age 23 and was deployed to Iraq in 2010. While serving his country, Tommy endured a life-changing brain injury before returning home with severe PTSD. As recently as 2021, Tommy was quite literally

confined to his home. Laura shares that he rarely left their bedroom and was physically unable to participate in family activities including the kids’ sports and school.

HOW A VETERAN CAN RE-EMERGE

Laura, a Telecommunications Specialist – Emergency Management, learned about the Dog Alliance and their program of training service dogs to help veterans like Tommy. She encouraged Tommy to participate on a 90-minute online webinar to learn about our

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through pairing with a military veteran after 18+ months of training.

What Tommy and Laura heard on that impactful webinar spurred them both to action. They arrived on the Dog Alliance's Cedar Park, TX campus with a dog believed to be "perfect" for service dog training. Under the knowledgeable eye of our program director, it was quickly determined that this dog did not possess the necessary characteristics to become a service dog.

However, this was not the end of the story. Tommy owned a 2-year-old Bluetick Coonhound that he adored but hadn't considered as eligible for service dog training. Cop-

per passed his initial evaluation with flying colors and following month after month of hard work, perseverance, successes, setbacks, and determination, Tommy and Copper passed their Public Access Test on March 21, 2023 – 15 months after making a decision that changed a family!

service dog training program. Each month, the Dog Alliance shares relevant, instructional information to veterans and their support network regarding how to get started with securing a service dog. This mandatory first step leads to the veteran taking responsibility for scheduling a one-on-one interview with a staff member and then providing necessary medical and personal information to facilitate the next steps of their journey.

The Dog Alliance is one of 145 accredited Assistance Dogs International (ADI) organizations in the world. ADI is the global authority in the assistance dog industry, dedicated to the highest standards of human-dog partner-

ships. Our Texas-based program enabling a veteran to train his/her own service dog in partnership with our staff is one of only 11 such ADI-accredited programs in the U.S.

This training partnership between veteran, dog, and our professional trainers typically takes six months to one year after the dog has reached at least 18 months of age and has already passed the AKC Canine Good Citizen evaluation. It is a journey that requires dedication of both time and commitment. Our train your own service dog is a companion program to our in-house Service Dog Training program fulfilled by staff and volunteer puppy raisers fully guiding puppies from 8-weeks-old



Tommy & Copper

Continued on next page



actions of watching out for their “battle buddy.”

Service dogs provide crucial support to military veterans by helping with emotional and physical health challenges. They assist with tasks like mobility, balance, and retrieving items, while offering emotional comfort for PTSD, anxiety, and depression. These dogs promote independence, reduce isolation, and enhance veterans’ quality of life through companionship and therapeutic benefits.

Tommy and Laura agree that “without the Dog Alliance, we don’t know where our life would be today.” Now Tommy and Copper are inseparable and look forward to going to the movies with family, attending sporting events, and can now do something as seemingly mundane as shopping. Simply stated, this duo loves being “out and about” enjoying life.

Tommy and Copper regularly join the weekly public access outings to refresh their skills but also to provide encouragement and serve as role models for veterans who are currently working to train their own dogs to pass the Public Access test. Further, Tommy now volunteers with two fellow veterans to maintain a Dog Alliance Support Group for veterans.

Tommy stepped back into the world with a service dog by his side. At the Dog Alliance, we never tire of seeing this happen time and again with our wonderful

military veterans. Dog owners tend to gravitate to one another. Having this common interest sparks conversation and social interaction that is often otherwise absent. We regularly hear about how having to care for the dog gets the veteran out of bed each morning. Simple responsibilities such as feeding and walking their dog improves self-esteem and provides a reason to be engaged. Taking care of the dog while in public redirects the veteran’s thoughts from fear to the constructive



CAN SERVICE DOGS REALLY CHANGE LIVES?

Here are four ways service dogs assist military veterans battling PTSD like Tommy’s:

1. Emotional Support and Companionship: Service dogs provide consistent companionship, which can help reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation commonly experienced by veterans with PTSD.
2. Anxiety and Panic Attack Interruption: These dogs are trained to recognize signs of anxiety or panic attacks and can intervene by providing tactile stimulation, such as nudging or pawing, to help ground their handler and reduce the severity of the episode.
3. Nightmare Prevention and Response: Service dogs can recognize when their handler is experiencing a nightmare and will wake them up, providing

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SERVICE DOGS ARE NOT EMOTIONAL SUPPORT DOGS

In the United States, the legal definition of a service dog is outlined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). According to the ADA a “service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. The tasks performed by the dog must be directly related to the person’s disability.”

- The ADA only recognizes dogs (and in some cases, miniature horses) as service animals.

- The dog must be trained to perform specific tasks that help with the handler’s disability (e.g., guiding a person who is blind, alerting to seizures, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving items).

- Emotional support animals (ESAs), therapy dogs, and companion animals are NOT service dogs under the ADA because they do not have specific training to perform disability-related tasks.

comfort and reassurance to help alleviate night terrors.

4. Public Safety and Confidence: Service dogs help veterans feel more secure in public spaces by providing a sense of safety and acting as a buffer in crowded environments, which can reduce hypervigilance and anxiety.

Here are four ways service dogs assist military veterans with mobility challenges:

1. Retrieving and Carrying Items: Service dogs are trained to pick up dropped items, carry bags, or retrieve objects like phones, keys, or medications, making daily tasks easier for veterans with limited mobility.

2. Providing Balance and Stability: For veterans who have difficulty walking or maintaining balance, service dogs can act as physical support, helping them walk more steadily and preventing falls.

3. Assisting with Transfers: Service dogs can help veterans move from one position to another, such as from a wheelchair to a bed or chair, providing extra leverage and support during the transfer process.

4. Opening Doors and Operating Switches: These dogs can open doors, press buttons for elevators or automatic doors, and even turn lights on or off, increasing the independence of veterans with mobility impairments.



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- Businesses and public spaces cannot ask for proof or certification of a service dog but may ask two questions. Service dogs can be removed if they are not housebroken or are out of control.

1. Is the dog required because of a disability?
2. What task or work has the dog been trained to perform?



THE IMPACT OF A LATHAM FOUNDATION GRANT

The Dog Alliance has been privileged to receive a Latham Foundation grant in three different years supporting our service dog outreach program. In addition to the weekly classroom training, our volunteer puppy raisers alongside veterans training their own dogs are required to participate in Public Access Outings. Visiting stores, restaurants, parks, and public spaces including the airport and the train station provide puppy raisers and veterans the opportunity to use classroom skills in a real-world

setting. Their individual experiences are invaluable when finally taking their Public Access Test to be fully recognized as a service dog team. Each outing offers the opportunity for the dogs to interact with children and adults in varied situations. These interactions enable questions to be asked and answered including why it is not appropriate to approach a “working” service dog in public. Public access outings occur twice weekly and over the course of a single year, our service dogs in-training interact with hundreds, if not thousands, of children and adults.

Our Latham Foundation funding has supported People Greetings and Distractions workshops engaging service dogs in-training alongside employee volunteers and children from local Scout troops and/or our K9 Kids Summer Camp program. These on-campus experiences provide a positive setting to talk about the



legal and actual differences between a service dog, a therapy dog, and an emotional support animal. Workshops occur each month and typically involve at least 20-25 “volunteers” each session.


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AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE GUIDE

For more information about the (Austin) Dog Alliance, please visit <https://thedogalliance.org>.

To identify a local ADI-accredited organization, please visit <https://assistedogsinternational.org/> and click the Members Search button then “Accredited Member Programs in ADINA” (North America).

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org/chat – the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline). 

Tommy & Copper

The Latham Foundation grants have been transformative for our service dog program as funds directly offset the costs of community outreach and education. These funds have allowed our staff and volunteers to directly engage with children and adults throughout the Greater Austin community and talk about the importance of nurturing good mental health – whether for our military veterans or for each of us as individuals. By prioritizing mental well-being, individuals not only enhance their own lives but also contribute to creating healthier and more supportive communities. Commitment to good mental

health is an investment in one’s overall happiness, fulfillment, and resilience in the face of life’s challenges.

Regardless of where you live, if you know a veteran or civilian who may benefit from having a highly trained service dog by their side, please identify a local organization that is one of only 145 accredited worldwide by Assistance Dogs International. Doing so guarantees the overall quality of both the dog and its training. Many ADI accredited organizations, like the Dog Alliance, provide a service dog at no cost to qualified military veterans.





A LEGACY IN PET THERAPY: A WORTHY CAUSE

*By Denise Cahalan,
Latham Board Member*

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Back in the late 80s, I served on the board of an Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) non-profit where I learned about the important benefits when animals and humans share that special bond. The way dogs interacted with adults with disabilities, children, and others who were hurting drew me into a

desire to find a companion animal who could be a therapy dog. At that time, I was a volunteer dog walker at the Oakland SPCA. When my sights were high on adopting a dog for AAT, I bonded with Bodie, a shepherd mix who had been at the shelter for two months. After Bodie nipped a kennel attendant, his pathway

was headed towards euthanasia. Struggling with this potential outcome, I adopted him thinking he could be trained to be a therapy dog. As it turned out, adopting him was a challenge. Poor Bodie had separation anxiety, I worked full time, AND he flunked the therapy dog assessment when his paw was pinched!

Continued on next page



Arlo visits the Hospital

Sixteen years later, in 2007, Bodie passed away at age 17. It took time to repair his room in my home before I was ready to adopt another dog several years later. I was grateful to adopt Arlo, a 1½-year-old black lab, from Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) in California. As a “career changed” dog, Arlo was a great dog who had a calm temperament and the craziest wiggle butt. He loved and deferred to my cats even at his water bowl.

How quickly I forgot all the things that Arlo chewed and ingested, but a few stand out: a metal container of cat food, a plastic bowl, a Christmas Santa Claus which had a USB cord for lights. He survived!! We quickly moved ahead to earn his certification as a therapy dog with Therapy Dogs Inc, now Alliance of Therapy Dogs. Arlo provided love and comfort to those in hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, a facility for adults with disabilities

and for young women who had suffered some form of trauma.

He was always calm, loving and ready to share his wiggle butt. I remember when we were invited into a room at a teen facility to meet a young teenager who was in tears. Several months later we returned to this facility and this same teenager was there. She remembered Arlo and said, “thank you for helping me.” It was so gratifying to see how Arlo had provided comfort to this young woman. Arlo was a perfect height for those in wheelchairs to pet him which he enjoyed. I love AAT volunteering because of the compas-

sion that a dog can unknowingly share with others. It is truly a gift.

Arlo left such an impression on my friend, Joan, that she said: “I want a dog just like Arlo!!” She applied to GDB wondering how long it might take to adopt an “Arlo.” Within a few months, along came Kale, an exuberant black lab, six months old.



Joan & Kale on a visit

Luckily for me, Arlo already had significant training before he was “career changed” from GDB due to his reactions to sudden noises. Kale, however, never had any obedience training and was released for a medical reason. Joan began training with Kale soon after adopting him.

Continued on next page



Co-workers Arlo & Kale

He learned to walk on a leash, not to launch on people and to stop barking at guests when the doorbell rang. Joan participated in private training sessions with the goal of becoming a therapy dog team. Joan's dream was realized after about a year of basic training after which she went on to obtain Kale's therapy dog certification, an achievement Joan never thought was possible

THE REAL WORK CONTINUES

From there, the rewarding work continued. Kale and Joan, Arlo and I visited many facilities and special events, but our most rewarding program was starting a ministry at our church called "K9forCare." Training sessions were held at church where individual teams could work on their skills to be tested to be a therapy dog team. We loved this ministry.

The joy of seeing the handler and their dog connect with those who were hurting was a blessing. When we made visits to the local hospital and saw the reaction of staff, patients, and visitors, it was so gratifying. The director of the ICU would get down on his knees and say: "I just love these guys!!" What a model for stress reduction in a busy hospital! Many said to us that they were grateful for our presence. Joan and I both knew that sharing the love of our dogs with others and illustrating the

human-animal companion bond was a greater reward than we had ever imagined.

THE NEXT PHASE

Fast forward to 2018, Joan passed away unexpectedly leaving her kitty and Kale without a home. I adopted both and continued visits until Covid hit California in 2020. I moved to Arizona with two therapy dogs and three cats. While there, Arlo, Kale and I passed the Humane Society of Southern Arizona's (HSSA) "Pet VIP Therapy Program."

Soon after, Covid restrictions were lifted and both Arlo, now 10 years old, and Kale, age 9, began visits again. Our favorite was the local hospital where staff would ask whether there had been a "Kale sighting." We also visited a residence program through Gabriel's Angels for teens who had undergone some trauma.

Denise & Arlo, Joan & Kale on a visit



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One young teenaged girl said:
“Arlo baby, I love you so much! You have also helped me when I doubted staying here. Whenever I doubt staying here, I look at your picture and it reminds me I am not alone.”

We did special events such as a homicide vigil in Tucson, AZ, for families who had lost a family member. This visit brought some peace to those who could chose to interact with a therapy dog for comfort. Often, an opportunity arose to talk about their loved one, helping to preserve their family member’s memory. The stories shared by these family members were heartbreaking. To hear them talk about their loved ones with a calm dog present was a gift to me.

We also participated in a visit at the Tucson Police Department’s Dispatch office. We provided comfort to the dispatchers who had directed police and fire



personnel to a home where they were attacked by the person who initiated the 911 call. Sadly, people died in this horrific event. Having therapy dogs available provided comfort to those who were involved in the dispatch call.

Both Arlo and Kale continued to serve as therapy dogs with each getting the chance to visit through alternating visits. As I was concerned about my sweet dogs aging and eventually retiring from therapy work, in August 2022, I applied to adopt from two local rescues: Desert Labrador Retriever Rescue (DLRR) and Southern Arizona Golden Retriever Rescue (SAGRR).

My goal was to be ready to adopt another dog to continue therapy work. Arlo at age 13 ½ retired from his therapy job to enjoy his senior years. He had worked for about 12 years of his life and

blessed so many. Although he had recovered from two cancer surgeries, one at age six and one at age 11, it was weakness in his hind legs that impacted his quality of life.

With my trusted vet’s recommendation, I let Arlo go in July 2023. I wanted to honor Arlo’s legacy and continue this important work, so I started thinking about another dog.

As Kale and I mourned Arlo’s loss, I was fortunate to find Max at DLRR. His temperament was perfect to continue the therapy work alongside of Kale who was now almost 12, and whose therapy years were now numbered. As a black lab mix rescue, all I knew was Max had been surrendered to Pima Animal Care Center (PACC) in July 2023 after being found as a stray in Tucson. How long Max wandered the streets is unknown,





but a kind soul found Max and tried to find his owner but, in the end, surrendered Max to PACC. DLRR exited Max from PACC and found a foster home. Kale and I visited Max, Kale said “OK” and I adopted Max shortly thereafter.

After beginner and intermediate training, I thought we were ready for the therapy dog test at HSSA. I was wrong.... Max took two launches at a dog treat, so the program manager said, “Let’s try another day!” And we did!! After another training class, we passed. Max started visiting at the local hospital after Kale retired in April 2024. I was so grateful to continue the important work that a therapy dog does. The transition was easy although many mistook Max for Kale as they looked alike!

I remember a very special visit with Max in the rehab section of the hospital. We visited with Lisa, a lady who had recently lost her husband and was now helping

her 90-year-old mother, Liz, who was very ill. Lisa was from out of state and staying in her mother’s home. During the many visits, Max sat patiently as Liz gave him treats while I learned about Lisa and Liz’s family’s story. Sharing Max’s calm presence was a blessing to me but also to Lisa and her mom. Max was the reason we were all there visiting. This is the power of AAT, a unique way to bring dogs and people together in ways that are unexpected and healing. I was very moved by the connection and support that the visits provided, making the experience even more rewarding.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

And now, I have Max to be my own therapy dog. In February 2025, when Kale passed away at over 14 years of age, Max provided comfort by his mere presence in my home. He brings me joy

every day as he does with the staff and patients at the hospital. Every visit is a different one, where staff gets a break from stress, where families grieve over illness or loss, or smiles occur when Max sits in front of a cabinet at the nurses’ station, waiting for a treat if it is his lucky day.

Pet therapy is the finest example of the human-animal companion bond, bringing people and pets together for good. Everyone wins in these programs. This type of volunteering is transformative, not only for the handler, but also because it enriches the lives of the animals. Invaluable support is given to those in need. I am grateful to have been able to continue doing this work for all the years I had with Arlo, Kale, and now with Max. These great dogs leave a legacy of hope and healing, and I am grateful to be part of sharing the love of these dogs. 🐶



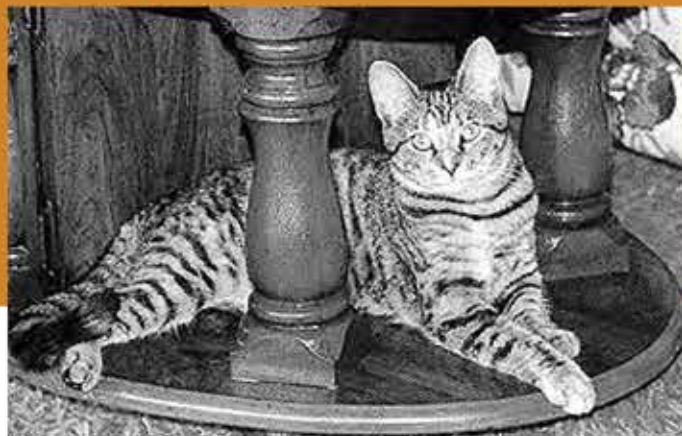
Denise & Max

Reprinted from *The Latham Letter* Fall 2008

Veterinary Hospice Care: Its History and Development

By Kathryn D. Marocchino, Ph.D., FT

Photos by: Gianfranco Marocchino



Nikki

Veterinary hospice care, or pet hospice care – as it is commonly referred to in lay terms – represents the cutting edge of all that is alleviative, compassionate and supportive in veterinary medicine. A newcomer to the field of animal health and welfare, its first beginnings can be traced to approximately thirty years ago, when most notably, Dr. Eric Clough, Dr. James Harris, and Dr. Guy Hancock – practicing veterinarians in New Hampshire, California and Florida, respectively – began quietly exploring the hospice option in their clinics and promoting it to their colleagues.

As enlightened and avant-garde as these practitioners were, however, exceedingly few of their associates were ready to follow in their footsteps, and their message was, for the most part, unheeded. Only a select few heard the call, among them Jane Clough, the human hospice director who had been instrumental in developing the concept with her husband Eric, and later on, Bonnie Mader, founder of the nation's first pet loss support hotline at the University of California, Davis.

It wasn't until 1996, when our own traumatic experience with our cat Nikki led to the creation of The Nikki Hospice Foundation for Pets (NHFP),

that the concept of palliative care for pets in the home slowly began to grow as a veritable movement. It grew tentatively at first in veterinary circles but then primarily among pet caregivers who were already familiar with the benefits and rewards of human hospice. NHFP officially incorporated as a nonprofit in 1998.

Eager to unite proponents of veterinary hospice care under one banner, The NHFP worked tirelessly to promote the hospice alternative to animal health care practitioners and to the public at large. Since then, it has been leading the endeavor as the first and only nonprofit in the nation “devoted to the provision of home hospice care for terminally ill companion animals”. With human hospice care rapidly setting the pace in our societal attitudes towards death and dying,¹ it is not surprising that this revolutionary concept has more recently begun to make headway.

In the past, traditional veterinary medicine has only been able to offer aggressive (and often expensive) treatments for terminally ill animals – usually followed by euthanasia. Now, a more discerning and empowered public has decided that it needs more, and better, options. Based on human hospice models, veterinary hospice care addresses the needs of people who wish to care for their dying animals in the comfort of their own homes, under the guidance and assistance of veterinarians and a professional, qualified staff.

The veterinary hospice care that The NHFP promotes offers dying pets the same kind of comfort provided for people. It gives families the opportunity to make their own choices about euthanasia; it allows them to spend “quality time” with their animals; and it reinforces the human-animal bond that is such a vital part of our lives. For pet parents who are seeking humane and compassionate ways to deal with the impending death of their companion animals, veterinary hospice care is the answer. It places them at the forefront of the decision-making process and empowers them to determine when – and how – their companion animals will die.

Continued on next page

Veterinary Hospice Care

It is essential for clients to understand, however, that veterinary hospice care in its purest form can also provide a comfortable, natural death for many companion animals. Ella Bittel, a holistic veterinarian in Buellton, California, has this to say about the true hospice experience:

"Caring for the dying is an art, and unless we prepare for it ahead of time, chances are we won't feel up to the task. It will seem daunting to us rather than sacred. Whether the caretaker is aware of it or not, much happens in the last days and hours of a dying human or animal, in terms of getting ready internally for the great passage. It is a privilege indeed to wave our loved one off, not holding it back, not trying to rush it, embracing the process and the farewell."

Ideally, clients will learn to recognize the animal's will to live, or not, because they are the ones closest to their pets, both emotionally and spiritually. As the availability of animal hospice care grows, more clients will opt for it over euthanasia. Veterinary hospice care gives primary caretakers a unique opportunity to deepen their relationship with their pet and to view the dying process as part of the life cycle. It is also crucial for all family members to share in the hospice experience, especially children, who should not be shielded from death. Rather, they should be encouraged to participate in the final phases of a pet's life, so they may gain a deeper and less frightening insight into this natural cycle.

By providing good comfort care, veterinary hospice seeks a "kind death" for pets, thereby accomplishing good living – and good grieving, especially if the pet's caregivers are willing to become involved in real "hospicing," where proper pain management becomes the prime concern, coupled with "quality of life" issues. Veterinarians skilled in palliative care who have opted to provide this service to their clients are more than willing to help families through the entire process, dispensing advice when needed and establishing a schedule for house calls.

The veterinary hospice team envisioned by The NHFP will not only have a veterinarian on board but also veterinary technicians and other qualified staff



including mental health professionals to counsel the family through the difficult stages of impending pet loss, and hospice volunteers who can provide the family with "respite care" or "comfort care" on a daily basis, as needed. The team may also include pastoral counselors or animal chaplains, professional pet-sitters, massage therapists, veterinary chiropractors, and holistic practitioners who are well-versed in alternative or homeopathic palliation.

Furthermore, family caregivers willing to take on the task will be trained in how to administer pain medication to keep the pet as comfortable as possible and ensure that the animal's last weeks or days are spent in the most soothing of environments – a familiar home with tender loving care. This is a far cry from the often frightening clinic that so many pets shun.

Predictably, those families who have opted for veterinary hospice care (and their numbers are on the rise³) have reported experiencing a strong spiritual bonding with their companion animals, almost no feelings of guilt (so often associated with end-of-life decisions), and the conviction that they would choose hospice care again for the other pets who share their lives. As more and more people shy away from "quick" euthanasia – an all-too-frequent reflexive response in our country – in search of more meaningful options for their dying animals, this alternative may well become the primary choice in veterinary clinics across the country.

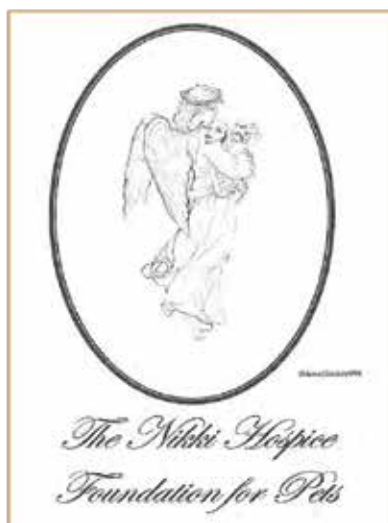
By training families to provide palliative care (or comfort care) for their

Continued on next page

Veterinary Hospice Care

pets, and by offering extensive support services, veterinary hospice programs give dying animals and the people who love them the opportunity for meaningful, quality time together.

It is here that The Nikki Hospice Foundation for Pets steps in to provide a much-needed and vital service.



Currently, The NHFP's primary activities are to:

- Assist the public in locating veterinarians willing to offer veterinary hospice care to companion animals;
- Disseminate information on veterinary hospice care to veterinarians and veterinary students as well as to mental health/hospice professionals and to the public at large;
- Provide information on pet loss support resources as well as hospice-related services and products;
- Promote standards of care for veterinary hospice and improve pharmacological protocols for end-of-life symptoms;

Current Website:
<https://www.pethospice.org>



- Elicit the support of national veterinary organizations as well as pet insurance companies;
- Encourage the teaching of veterinary hospice care in university veterinary curricula nationwide;
- Work with pharmaceutical companies to advance the development of new and increasingly effective pain medication;
- Offer local and nation-wide training programs for veterinarians, veterinary technicians, mental health professionals, nurses, hospice volunteers and others who wish to offer veterinary hospice care services to their clients;
- Operate a 24-hour pet loss support hotline for those who are grieving the loss or the impending loss of a beloved companion animal;
- Conduct pet loss support workshops in partnership with our local humane society;
- Produce quarterly newsletters to keep friends and supporters apprised of The NHFP's latest developments in veterinary hospice care; and
- Recruit and train local volunteers to assist families who are hospicing a terminally ill or dying companion animal.

The NHFP also offers additional services that provide information on pet cemeteries and burial-related products, promote the memorialization of pets (or loved ones) through The NHFP's online donor listings, and encourage further exploration into the emerging field of animal communication. Each of these services honors the memory of another beloved pet who shared its brief life with us.

With the AVMA's approval in 2001 of the hospice guidelines originally created by advisory board members of The NHFP—and the likelihood that veterinary hospice care will one day become a true specialty in university curricula – veterinarians who are thinking of offering this new service to their clients can rest assured that not only will they be in good company, but they also will be highly sought by pet lovers nationwide who are avidly beginning to embrace this compassionate option.



Veterinary Hospice Care

As Betty Carmack has so aptly stated,

*"Dealing with the dying pet and its owner is a challenge and responsibility for veterinarians. It calls not only for medical knowledge, but also for an understanding of the bond between animal and owner. It requires an appreciation of the grief response that accompanies the loss of a friend. And it begs for the sensitivity and sensitiveness that any bereaved individual deserves."*⁴



If veterinarians can come to appreciate and respect the ethical and individual dilemmas that so many clients are faced with when their animals are dying, and offer them the same alternatives they would reserve their fellow men, our society will indeed have come a long way towards preserving a high sense of personal responsibility in regards to animal death. **JF**

Endnotes:

- ¹ As evidenced by the critically-acclaimed Bill Moyers PBS special, *On Our Own Terms: Dying in America*, which aired in 2000.
- ² Bittel E. "Leaving this Life, in Rhythm with Nature." *Holistic Horse, Integrative Therapies for Horse and Rider*, Fall 2007: Issue 51.
- ³ Since 1996, veterinarians who provide home hospice care as an ancillary service have reported that the overall percentage of established clients who request this option has increased from 10% to 30%. Those now specializing in hospice/geriatric care as one of their primary services have reported that the overall percentage of established clients who request this option often exceeds 50%.
- ⁴ Carmack BJ. "When companion animals die: Caring for clients in their time of sorrow." *Veterinary Medicine* 1986; 81:311-314.



Dr. Marocchino

<https://www.animalhospicegroup.com/site/kathryn-marocchino>

Dr. Kathryn D. Marocchino is a Professor in the Department of Culture and Communication at California State University Maritime as well as a thanatologist, translator, public speaker, and author of several books and articles. She is also the president and founder of The Nikki Hospice Foundation for Pets (The NHFP), the nation's first non-profit devoted to providing home hospice care for terminally ill companion animals. She holds a doctorate from the University of Turin (Italy), where she held a lectureship for several years before coming to the United States, and has taught at both the University of California at Davis and at Stanford University.



CLICK FOR EPISODES

The Final Mile Podcast is a series featuring various guest podcasters.

Conversations focus on pet hospice and palliative care, pet caregiving, pet loss, and pet parent grieving and healing. For Episodes: [animalhospicegroup.com/podcasts/the-final-mile-podcast](https://www.animalhospicegroup.com/podcasts/the-final-mile-podcast)

Quality of Life Scale

(The HHHHMM Scale)

Pet caregivers can use this Quality of Life Scale to determine the success of Pawspice care. Score patients using a scale of: 0 to 10 (10 being ideal).

Score	Criterion
0 -10	HURT - Adequate pain control & breathing ability is of top concern and outweighs all others. Is the pet's pain well managed? Can the pet breathe properly? Is oxygen supplementation necessary?
0 -10	HUNGER - Is the pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does the pet need a feeding tube?
0 -10	HYDRATION - Is the pet dehydrated? For patients not drinking enough, use subcutaneous fluids daily to supplement fluid intake.
0 -10	HYGIENE - The pet should be brushed and cleaned, particularly after eliminations. Avoid pressure sores with soft bedding and keep all wounds clean.
0 -10	HAPPINESS - Does the pet express joy and interest? Is the pet responsive to family, toys, etc.? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored or afraid? Can the pet's bed be moved to be close to family activities?
0 -10	MOBILITY - Can the pet get up without assistance? Does the pet need human or mechanical help (e.g., a cart)? Does the pet feel like going for a walk? Is the pet having seizures or stumbling? (Some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to amputation, but an animal with limited mobility yet still alert and responsive can have a good quality of life as long as caregivers are committed to helping the pet.)
0 -10	MORE GOOD DAYS THAN BAD - When bad days outnumber good days, quality of life might be too compromised. When a healthy human-animal bond is no longer possible, the caregiver must be made aware that the end is near. The decision for euthanasia needs to be made if the pet is suffering. If death comes peacefully and painlessly, that is okay.
*TOTAL	*A total over 35 points represents acceptable life quality to continue with pet hospice (Pawspice).

Original concept, Oncology Outlook, by Dr. Alice Villalobos, Quality of Life Scale Helps Make Final Call, VPN, 09/2004; scale format created for author's book, Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human-Animal Bond, Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Adapted for the International Veterinary Association of Pain Management, 2011 Hospice Guidelines. Reprinted for the Latham Newsletter with permission from Dr. Villalobos & Wiley-Blackwell.

Reprinted from The Latham Letter Winter 2019



JAPAN'S Famous Faithful Dog Hachikō (忠犬ハチ公)

Hachikō was a Japanese Akita dog and faithful companion to his human Hidesaburō Ueno, a Tokyo Imperial professor in the mid 1920's. Every day Hachikō would meet Ueno at the Shibuya Station after his commute home.



Hachikō was an example of loyalty in Japanese culture. He is still remembered worldwide as a faithful companion with statues, movies, books, and appearances in various media. Hachikō is known in Japanese as chūken Hachikō (忠犬ハチ公) "faithful dog Hachikō." 🐕

Even though Ueno died at work on May 21, 1925, Hachikō continued to wait for him every day at the station for over nine years, until his own death on March 8, 1935.

Hachikō was buried next to Ueno for their final resting place together.



Discover a few hidden gems on our website like our International Poster Contest Winners from 1920:

latham.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/InternationalPosterContest.pdf

THE FRIEND

A NOVEL BY SIGRID NUNEZ

Reviewed by Tula Asselanis

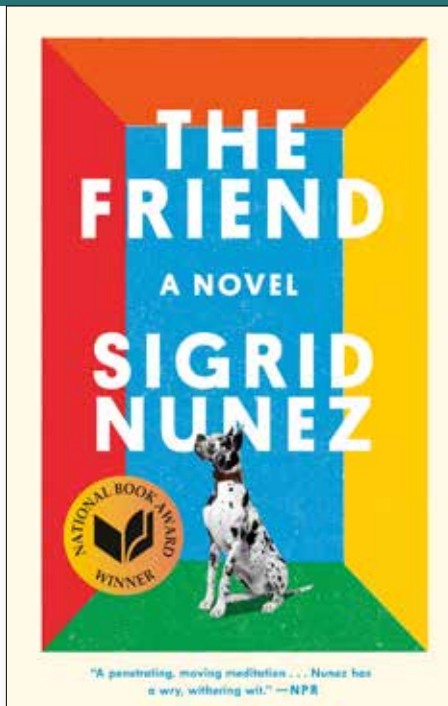
Emotional Support Humans

Having seen lots of ads for the movie ‘The Friend,’ and various talk show appearances with the stars and the stunningly charming Bing, I asked myself ‘Can a book describe with words how delightful a gigantic but elegant Great Dane can be? How funny and intelligent and needy and quirky they are?’ So I just had to get the book with the Great Dane on the cover.

Reading through the first few pages, I got just a taste of familiar Dane behavior and looks, but then someone dies of suicide. Not really a ‘how cute are those enormous dogs’ at all. The darker theme began to get clearer. Spoiler alert: It is a love story on how humans and animals grieve, separately and eventually together.

Four years ago in the middle of Covid, we got grim news from the doctor that my husband’s cancer was back, and this time the prognosis was fatal. Knowing what was coming ahead of time doesn’t make grief any easier. In the novel “The Friend,” the main character Iris’s grief comes from the sudden death of her very good friend and mentor, Walter, who without notice committed suicide taking his loved ones by surprise. One of those loved ones was his harlequin Great Dane named Apollo. One might surmise that for beloved pets the sudden disappearance of their beloved guardian is a surprise no matter the cause - whether from a known deadly sickness or an unexpected accident or suicide.

As Iris gets lost in her complex mourning, she is asked to adopt Walter’s giant Great Dane Apollo into her tiny New York apartment. Problems ensue such as getting evicted, Apollo’s separation anxiety (furniture chewing), and learning to be a responsible pet guardian. I took this book very personally, as a couple of themes had happened to my family. Being Great Dane aficionados was one of them. Facing



extreme grief for both me and my dog was another. The author Sigrid Nunez wrote a very subtle but accurate portrayal of the uniqueness and ‘charm’ of the breed, so I couldn’t help falling for Apollo and feeling his grief for his beloved guardian’s sudden disappearance.

I am convinced my own Great Dane Midge knew something was up with my husband as he started to deteriorate from cancer. When he finally went on disability from work, he would lay out on the chaise lounge in the backyard

to get some sun. He said that every once in a while, Midge would get up off her bed, come over and bark at him, and then go back to lay down. It happened several times and he just didn’t understand it because she had never done that before.

As my husband started to make what we would call ‘bad decisions,’ we chalked it up to chemo brain, but hindsight is 2020. When other things started to go wrong, he finally had a noticeable stroke. A brain scan showed that he previously had thousands of mini strokes. That is when we started to think – perhaps that is why she’s been barking at him. She had also started to distance herself from him, as if she was already grieving his changed spirit.

As the therapist, he had no reservations about putting in writing that it was suffering from depression and anxiety, aggravated by bereavement, that the dog was providing essential emotional support the loss of which was likely to cause harm to my mental health and might even be life-threatening. Wife number one thinks it's funny: because the truth is, in this case it's the animal who can't deal, and you're his emotional support human.

(From page 152 of The Friend.)

Apollo's depression is also seemingly inconsolable until Iris finds a way to break through.

Just as Iris and Apollo made their grief journey together, Midge, my son and I found our own ways to grieve and move forward together without him. Three months later, my son and I noticed that Midge was not getting out of bed - couldn't or wouldn't. Almost like she wanted to hang on for me and the remembrance of her precious dad, she passed away in her sleep the day after our wedding



Midge & her Dad

anniversary. She was 13, which is quite old for a Great Dane.

We have no idea how each of our pets deal with grief, but we know that they do feel grief. This is an excellent book on loss, describing not only a human's grief, but also what a dog might be going through in the loss of their beloved caregiver.

At this point, I cannot bear to think about seeing the movie. I do not think I could stop the tears to see the giant grief of a Dane again. 🐕

Interview with Sigrid Nunez



The End - a short film starring Midge



"...When this happens, great mourning comes upon the Egyptians. And in whatever houses a cat has died by a natural death, all those who dwell in this house shave their eyebrows only, but those in whose houses a dog has died shave their whole body and also their head."

-Herodotus II, c. 450 BC



THE RESTRICTED ADVENTURES OF RAJA

AN EMPATHY EBOOK

This fun to read graphic novel takes place in the future - 2050. The hero is a former warrior from another world who has transformed into a domestic scaredy-cat named Raja and his human friend TJ.

The format of these stories reminds me a lot of our own Brother Buzz who was created by the Latham Foundation over 100 years ago to teach children empathy!

Brother Buzz along with Miss Busy Bee flew around the world visiting different locations and discovering facts about the animals there. Brother Buzz encouraged children to learn of other creatures, enriching most children's natural curiosity about animals - particularly those they are not familiar with. And of course to build empathy for the animals as well as each other.

I remember watching Brother Buzz's Adventures when I was in grade school and they made a life-long impression on me. These graphic novels have a bit more action and can be more appealing to an older pre-teen audience.

The books were written by Nicole Forsyth, RedRover's former President and CEO, and developed in partnership with Sticky Brain

Studios, Inc.

I highly recommend it! For more details and to download your free copy, visit RedRover.org/empathybook.

Here's what others have to say about it:

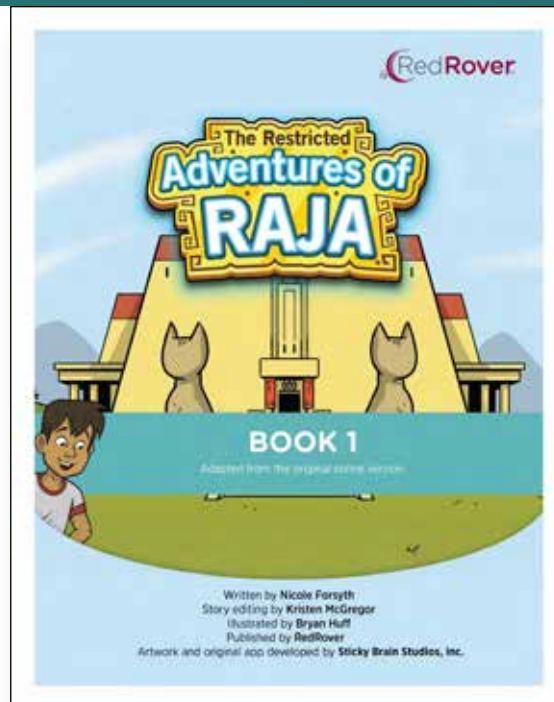
"The Restricted Adventures of Raja: Book 1 follows Raja, a mystical cat from another world, who learns important lessons about empathy, emotions, and kindness while navigating Earth. Through storytelling in graphic novel form, kids build social-emotional skills in a fun and engaging way. The story encourages kids to see the world from different perspectives, understand emotions, and think critically about kindness and compassion. These skills are essential

for building strong relationships and emotional intelligence."

"Empathy is arguably the best way to prevent violence in society and the most important skill children need to succeed in the 21st century, yet studies show empathy is on the decline, and few schools or parents focus on it. A failure of empathy is linked to a variety of unwanted social behaviors, such as bullying and the abuse and neglect of both people and animals. A failure of empathy may also make it difficult to lead others well, solve complex social problems or have positive, meaningful relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and pets."

"I can't tell you how much my middle school students are enjoying the digital book! I've never seen them so engaged."

Nikki, Speech-Language Pathologist





THE LATHAM STEPS

We would love to know your thoughts on this issue's articles. If you would like to share your own anecdote, story, photo, or artwork relating to one of the Latham Steps to Humane Education, we would love to see it (and possibly publish it in *The Latham Letter*!) Editor@latham.org



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