IN MEMORIAM

As much as we love them, care for them, and for as much joy as they bring to our lives, a sad reality faces all beloved pets and owners. There comes a time when we must part with our dear companions and trust that we will meet them on the "Rainbow Bridge to Heaven". We offer our sincere and heartfelt condolences tothree volunteer teams who recently lost their dear companions and trusted friends: Buddy, a Newfoundland Mix, belonging to Mark Dmytryk; Buster, 10 years old, owned by Sara Schultz; and 13 year old Dakota, owned by Bridget Schell. Buster visited Lakeview Village and Marillac, and was also a READ dog. Dakota visited The Court, and this past October won the "oldest dog" prize at the annual Pet Party.

T T O U C H

Pets for Life volunteers will be learning a new method for communicating with their favorite canine!

During March, Pat Hennessey of N2Paws will be offering two TTouch seminars for Pets for Life teams. Volunteers will bring their dogs and learn TTouch skills. This method "uses gentle touches based on circular movements, slides, and lifts to increase awareness through neurological stimulation, to reduce stress and relax tension in the body." According to Pat, TTouch can address many issues animals may be having, and can increase and improve our communication with our pets.

There are several other training opportunities coming up this spring and summer.

Intensive Team Training for current PFL teams will be held May 3, 1-2:30pm.

Red Cross First Aid for Pets (cats and dogs) will be held June 7, and repeated on June 14, 10-3pm.

Check the volunteer login section of the Pets for Life website for more details, and then email the office to register!

A Cat's Motto: No matter what you've done wrong, always try to make it look like the dog did it. = Unknown =

Pets For Life, Inc., Executive Committee:
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John McGee, Treasurer; Judy Thomasson
Pets For Life Staff:
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Pets for Life

PETS FOR LIFE, INC.
Pets helping people

7240 Wornall Road
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www.kcpetsforlife.com

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Pets for Life – *Who we are!*

Founded in 1984, the husband and wife team of William D. and Harriett M. Snyder were inspired by a "60 Minutes" telecast about the benefits of animals for the elderly. Thinking that Kansas City could benefit from such a program the Snyders provided the necessary funding to start Pets for Life, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to comforting, encouraging and improving the mental, emotional, and physical well being of others. Pets for Life volunteer teams serve a wide variety of facilities and individuals with numerous care requirements including but not limited to: hospitals, nursing homes, shelters for domestic violence, mental health facilities, treatment centers, (youth) correction facilities and more.

After adding approximately 25 new facilities in 2008, over 173 Pets for Life volunteer teams now serve in a total of 75 facilities in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area, including facilities in Cameron, Raymore and Smithville. Our volunteer teams cover Clay, Cass, and Jackson counties in Missouri and Johnson, Miami and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. Pets for Life is now affiliated with the R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dogs) Program, which connects volunteer teams with local schools and libraries to help children improve their reading skills. R.E.A.D. Teams also participate in the E.L.L. (English Language Learners) Program which helps children whose native language is not English.

On October 24, 2009, Pets for Life will celebrate 25 years of Pets Helping People and will surpass the 400,00 mark in the number of visits completed by volunteer teams. We look forward to a year of successes for the organization itself, but more than that, we know there will be many stories about improvements in the mental, emotional and physical states of those we visit, We look forward to the cherished friendships and emotional connections we forge between those who need the silent and unconditional comfort of our therapy animals.

Pets Helping People...

Ever wonder where the many Pets For Life volunteers come from? Pets For Life volunteers attend many recruiting functions and events throughout the year, allowing us to educate people about Pets For Life, our mission, our magic and our passion for helping people. Without the gift of volunteer time and dedication to "pets helping people", we would be unable to meet the growing demand for our therapy teams. Our next recruiting event will take place:

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 8, 2009
TAILS R' WAGGIN
6976 W. 152nd Terrace
Overland Park, KS 66223

This is an open house, drop-in event for anyone interested in knowing more about Pets for Life. (Please leave your pet at home for this event!) Experienced Pets for Life volunteers will be on hand with their therapy dogs to share their experiences and demonstrate the skills needed for the temperament test. Information will also be available for anyone interested in the R.E.A.D. program. We hope to see potential volunteers on March 8!

Donate to Pets For Life

Pets For Life is a United Way eligible organization. To designate PFL as a recipient of all or part of your gift, complete a Donor Choice Form in addition to your regular Pledge Form. On the Donor Choice Form, simply indicate the amount beside Box # 4 and complete with: Pets For Life, Inc., 7240 Wornall Road, Kansas City, MO 64114, **816-363-3665.**

GRYPHON KEEPS THE PACE

Therapy Work is Close to his Heart

By Amy Čada, PhD

IT was like any other night before Gryphon and I headed out to a therapy session at one of our various destinations. Gryphon just finished his bath and since it was July, I barely toweled him off before sending him on his way. He was "wallering" on the cabinets when I heard a THUD. I looked over the kitchen island to see him passed out cold on the floor. I immediately checked for breathing and heartbeat and found both were very slow, and immediately called the vet. Within 10 minutes he was wide awake and raring to go. A full checkup with neurological exam found nothing obvious, so we assumed he had slipped on the tile floor with his wet feet and hit his head.

A week later it happened again – AGAIN after his bath. We were referred to a cardiac specialist who found no evidence of heart damage, failure, or malfunction of any kind. The specialist told me what to look for if Gryphon had another episode. Less than a week later – after a bath – it happened again. This time I was ready with my stethoscope and pen/paper. I found what I feared the most, NO HEARTBEAT!! Slowly, it started up, with a somewhat erratic rate of only 40-50 beats per minute. When it got above 100 (his normal rate is 120), he opened his eyes and looked at me as if to say "it happened again?" Based on this episode, an Atropine Test was ordered where an electrocardiogram (EKG) is conducted, tracing of the electrical activity of the heart. His EKG tracing demonstrated irregularities indicative of Sick Sinus Syndrome (SSS).

SSS is basically is a malfunction of the heart's electrical system. Think of it as a frayed wiring – the signal isn't always getting from the top to the bottom of the heart. The heart sends a coordinated, repetitive, electrical signal through its muscle cells, which stimulates the muscle to contract and pump blood through the body. When the signal is disrupted, the most frequent outcome is a slow heart rate, usually episodically, but it can eventually occur most of the time. During Gryphon's episodes, the heart's "emergency life-support system," the ventricles, functioned as a backup and "rescued" his heart function by pumping on their own rhythm, which unfortunately, is less than half of normal, and can't continue indefinitely. I was given three options -- no treatment, drug treatment, or a pacemaker. With a drug treatment, or a pacemaker. With a pacemaker, I wouldn't have to worry if or when his heart would stop but he could still have minor episodes.

A pacemaker is basically a battery and a small computer, about the size of several stacked silver dollars. It is attached to a pacing lead, which is threaded into the heart itself. Pacemakers used in pets are almost always obtained from the manufacturer of human units after the shelf life of the power source has decreased below the acceptable limits for human use. As a rule, animals needing pacemakers are often older and a decreased battery life is usually acceptable. Gryphon's implant has an estimated battery life of 6-7 years. He is 12 ½, if he lives to be 18, I will GLADLY replace it.

I made the decision to go forward with the pacemaker .

Surgery started at 10:00 a.m. The pacemaker lead wire was placed into a vein in his neck and down to the heart using a moving x-ray machine called a fluoroscope. This procedure took less than one hour and he was recovering by 11:00 a.m. When I saw him at 1:30 p.m., he climbed on my lap, ate the small meal I offered him, and barked at me to "come back" as I left. At 3:30 p.m., the vet called and said "no reason he can't go home today; he ate the rest of his food, he's not vomiting, is alert, and wants OUT!" Needless to say, he was home and sleeping in his own bed by 5:00! Gryphon was back at therapy work two weeks later. He's had a few adjustments, which are done with a "wand" placed on his neck, and had a couple of episodes that have all but disappeared now that the "minimum" heart rate was increased twice to a current level of 100 bpm. The only change is that Gryphon cannot wear a collar any longer, as it would put pressure where the pacemaker is located. Instead, he wears a harness when going to his therapy sessions.

Some questioned the wisdom of my spending most of my "emergency vet fund" for a dog with an aging liver. Without the pacemaker, he might not be here today. The last time we went in for a checkup and adjustment, one of the techs said "my Grandmother told me that a Scottie with a pacemaker came to visit her at her nursing home last weekend. I told her, I know who that is. It's Gryphon!"

As of this writing, Gryphon is almost 6 months post-implant. He could be gone tomorrow, but tonight he's happy, healthy, and as we speak, dancing, as I'm late with supper.

PETS HELPING PEOPLE ...

The Pets For Life mission, could not happen without your care, concern and generosity. Gifts from individuals, foundations, and businesses make it possible for us to continue our mission. We are grateful for the contributions we have recently received:

R.A. Long Foundation	$5,000
Master Craftsmen Foundation	$3,000
Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation	$3,000
P&G Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation	$3,000
The Massman Foundation	$2,500
Brady Foundation, Ira & Florita	$1,000

HELP WANTED!

WE have recently been contacted by three hospice organizations seeking therapy teams who are willing to visit hospice patients. Compassionate Care Hospice, a relatively new Hospice organization, has hospice patients located in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and sometimes in private homes, all around the metro area. (Every effort will be made to choose locations to minimize your travel time). Compassionate Care requires a 6-hour training course, asks for a one-year commitment, and your hospice visits would probably average one per week. Good Shepherd Hospice and Northcare are also looking for therapy teams. Each requires a different amount of training and a specific level of commitment. If you are interested and/or available or if you know of someone who would be a likely, prospective volunteer, please contact the Pets For Life Office for more information: **816-363-3665 or www.kcpetsforlife.com.**

The **R.E.A.D.** Program, headquartered in Salt Lake City, UT, is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. They recently welcomed their 2,000th volunteer to this international program which promotes reading and literacy. We would be delighted to speak with you concerning Pets For Life's involvement in this wonderful program. If you would like more information, please contact: Fran Lancaster(fransdogs@kc.rr.com) or Janet Dubrava(mokiaz@kc.rr.com).

READING EDUCATION ASSISTANCE DOGS™
A PROGRAM OF INTERMOUNTAIN THERAPY ANIMALS

WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEER TEAMS!

Judith Boasberg and Hannah
Kim Clevenger and Snoopy (bunny)
Janet Dubrava and Robbie
Karen Hayse and Victor
Jacki Hendricks and Stanton
Debbie Jenkins and Scout
Kimberly Justice and Luna
Tim McHenry and Dixie
Kim Nitz and Francine
Kati Reed and Poofy
Cris Sigler and Sashi
Ronda Hays-Tims and Angel
Becky Waitkoss and Rufus

FEATURED FACILITY

Kansas University Medical Center

For 13 years now, Volunteer teams: Sue Shinkle & Buccleigh, Tom Klingner & Sunny, Alexis Martin & Molly along with Joe Sanches & Peaches, have been visiting various departments at the Kansas University Medical Center in Kansas City, Kansas. Every Tuesday, these four volunteer teams meet to visit the Pediatric, Rehab, Child and Adult Psychiatric departments to spread their own special version(s) of love and care for those who are in need of physical, mental and/or emotional care. While their visits have brightened the days of many, the community outreach for these teams continues to grow. On January 26, 2009, at the request of the K.U. Police Department, all four KU volunteer teams visited the Edison Elementary School in Kansas City, KS for an awards ceremony. As partners in the community, the Kansas City Kansas Police Department annually recognizes children in the city for their scholastic achievement, community involvement and participation. The Pets for Life volunteer teams presented the program for this year's award ceremony. There were approximately 60 children, along with their families who participated in this years ceremony.