

# Pets for Life



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## *A word from Sharon Woodrum, our Program Director.....*

Another year comes to an end. Thanks to you, our dedicated volunteers, it has been a very successful year. Our volunteer base continues to grow, thanks to you, too. Yes, it is true, most of the new volunteers report that they learned about our organization from a current volunteer or by seeing a volunteer team in action. You have also volunteered for the monthly Volunteer Team Evaluations and shadow visits – allowing new volunteers to quickly move through the certification process.

You have taken advantage of our new **R.E.A.D.** certification process and we have seen more **R.E.A.D.** certifications in the last two months than we had in the 1st six months of the year. (but we still need more!!)

You have also volunteered for numerous special events; allowing us to extend the pet therapy experience beyond the normal facility visits.

Although there is always work to be done, now is the time for us to simply thank you. Thanks for your time, dedication and support. If not for you, there would not be a Pets for Life.

Enjoy your holiday season. Have fun with friends and family and be sure to find some time to simply reflect on the positive impact you have made over the year with your pet therapy visits.

**Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and see you in 2020.**

Thanks,  
Sharon Woodrum, Program Director

## "Pets Helping People"

By  
*Ann Westermann*



Our last visit to Pleasant Hill Rehab was fairly typical with calls of, "Emma!" as the residents saw her. Outside the therapy room was a frail woman in a wheelchair. Her chin was down on her chest. I said to her, "Would you like to pet Emma?" She looked up, smiled briefly, and began to pet Emma. She had been petting Emma and murmuring to her for no more than a couple of minutes when a nurse came by and said, "That's the longest I've seen Mrs. (name omitted) alert." The resident soon dropped her

head to her chest again and did not raise it back up the rest of our visit.

*The power of love and of memories of loved pets from years long past is a miracle."*



# R.E.A.D.

## Reading Education Assistance Dogs

By Fran Lancaster

Many people struggle with what to do during retirement. When retirement time arrived for me, I realized there was an absence of “a plan of action.” Little did I know that a your Beagle rescued from New Mexico Beagle Rescue on March 19, 2004, was to play a very important part in my future. Llewelyn Joseph “Llew”, a tricolored handsome little guy, was the catalyst. With the support of dog training through Mary Sellaro, my future work was defined. One night Mary mentioned that she thought Llew would be a good candidate for a **R.E.A.D.** dog. She guided me to investigate Pets for Life, Inc. where many opportunities for animal-assisted therapy work and friendship have unfolded.

Over almost 15 years with Pets for Life, I have found much for which I am grateful in animal-assisted therapy work: visiting hospitals, care facilities, aftercare programs, juvenile detention center, schools, libraries, St. Luke’s Hospice, and many other programs such as **R.E.A.D.** (Reading Education Assistance Dogs)

My elementary teaching career brought into focus the continued need to promote reading wherever possible. The **R.E.A.D.** Program strengthened that interest. In 2006, Llew and I joined the **R.E.A.D.** Program and it has remained a focal point of the therapy work I continue to do. Along the way, I became a national **R.E.A.D.** Instructor in 2008. Whenever Pets for Life volunteers choose to become **R.E.A.D.** volunteers, they will complete several steps in the **R.E.A.D.** process before joining me for a four hour **R.E.A.D.** Workshop where aspects of the program are presented. Workshops are present on the third Saturday of most months depending on need. It is a truly magical experience to watch the children interact with our therapy dogs while reading to them. And, it is not unusual for the young reader to turn the book so that Otto can enjoy the story picture!



Fran Lancaster and Otto during their **READ** session at Central Resource Library in Overland Park.

## “Pets Helping People” By Linda Haney



Elphie and I were part of the team that volunteered at KU Medical Center for their nurses study on stress in the nursing team and the effect a therapy dog might have.

As we were walking the hallways at KU Medical Center, waiting to be taken to the next study group, we met many people. Some worked there and some were with very ill family members. The immediate relief I noticed when we stopped to visit with each person was amazing. At one point a woman who worked in the hospital as a nutritionist stopped to say hello and pet Elphie. She told me a bit about her job, her dog, and how happy it made her to see therapy dogs at the hospital. Then she said, “Thank you for this minute.” Just one minute out of her day to de-stress and have happiness in a hallway made a world of difference to her. The power of our dogs doesn’t have to be a long visit—just a minute—will do it.

# Hazel the

## Therapy Cat is Giving Back

Julie Yoder, who has done pet therapy with her dogs for 15 years, recognized that Hazel wasn't just your average people-friendly cat. There was something extra special about her gentle nature and the way she connected with people. Julie had always wanted a therapy cat, but none of her other cats had seemed like a good match for that kind of work. Hazel, on the other hand, seemed perfect. The only question was if Hazel would enjoy therapy work. To find out, Julie began taking her to friends' houses for mock visits. Hazel had such a great time that she took her pet therapy test this past April and passed with flying colors. With her new therapy cat certification, Hazel launched a remarkable new career.

"We have done one visit to a hospice house, and she was amazing," Julie explains. She curled right up in the arm of a patient and sat quietly while he petted her and talked about his own cats and animals. For that one brief period, he was comforted and felt some peace. That's something I could not have offered him without Hazel. I have a feeling this is the start of many special moments in Hazel's future.

Now, a cat who once needed help is giving back in the best way possible—by giving love, peace and solace to those who need it most.

This is only a short excerpt from the original article written by Christelle L. Del Prete, July 16, 2019, about Julie Yoder, long time Pets for Life volunteer. To read the rest of this amazing story about Julie and Hazel follow the link below to the complete article as printed in Best Friends Animal Society, 2019 Save Them All.

[https://bestfriends.org/stories-blog-videos/latest-news/stray-cat-becomes-therapy-cat?utm\\_source=luminare&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=enews](https://bestfriends.org/stories-blog-videos/latest-news/stray-cat-becomes-therapy-cat?utm_source=luminare&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=enews)



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# STRESS LESS DURING FINALS AT ST. THOMAS ACQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL

Note to Pets for Life Volunteers....

I estimate we had at least 500 students come through. The dogs are so popular!! It was good to see them again. We all loved, loved, loved having them!! Please tell all the volunteers, "Thank you very much!" The students are still talking about their visit.

Have a wonderful holiday season.

Thank you,  
Laura Cline  
Counselor  
St. Thomas Aquinas High  
School



from  
*Pets for Life*

Don't forget to like our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/pages/Pets-for-Life-Inc](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pets-for-Life-Inc). We post lots of fun PFL updates and trivia, and occasionally we have giveaways! Stay in the loop, join us on Facebook!



<https://www.instagram.com/petsforlifekc/>



Remember our New email address is:  
[petsforlife@kcpetsforlife.com](mailto:petsforlife@kcpetsforlife.com)

<http://www.kcpetsforlife.com>

Pets For Life, Inc., Executive Committee: Donna Amato, President; Joni Roeseler, Vice President Marty Letourneau, Secretary; John McGee, Treasurer; Jack Sladkey. Pets For Life Staff: Sharon Woodrum, Program Director; Mary Gorman Volunteer Coordinator.

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