

# PETS FOR LIFE NEWSLETTER

July, 2025



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PRESIDENT, COLLEEN KENNEDY

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THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## MESSAGE FROM THE PETS FOR LIFE PRESIDENT – COLLEEN KENNEDY

Happy Summer to the Great PFL Community!

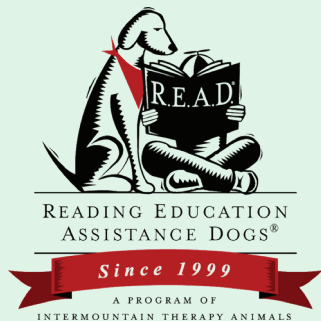
It has been a very busy 3 months since the March newsletter, and I am excited by the progress the committees are making to expand Pets for Life and the volunteer experience. They are a dedicated group of people, and I am so thankful for their participation. Additionally, Mary Gorman, PFL Admin, and Kim Southard, Executive Director, are working equally hard keeping up with all the ideas and changes coming from the committees and the Board!



With the hot weather and the heat index rising, please be safe when visiting with your pet. Even though we have air-conditioned cars, some days may be just too hot for you to visit with your pet. If you feel it is best to stay home, please call the

volunteer coordinator at the facility and let them know you will not be visiting that day. If you do visit, bring plenty of water for you and your pet. This chart, published by a weather station, shows how hot it can get on various surfaces. You are your pet's best advocate (and for yourself as well), so, use your best judgement on those exceedingly hot days.

## R.E.A.D. PROGRAM



The Summer R.E.A.D. Programs at the Johnson County Libraries have been quite busy. If you have been curious about the R.E.A.D. Program, you would still be able observe the program at one of the four remaining library sessions:

- one session at Lenexa City Center on July 31st --- 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
- one session at Central Resource on July 12th --- 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.
- one session at Blue Valley on July 17th --- 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.
- one session at Merriam Plaza on July 21st --- 3:30 - 5: p.m.

Enjoy the Many of our older canine companions enjoy the easy work associated with R.E.A.D. Please contact Fran Lancaster at [fransdogs@kc.rr.com](mailto:fransdogs@kc.rr.com).

## IMPORTANT NEWS

The four committees (Operations, Publicity, Education/ Programs and Funding) have been hard at work since the last newsletter. Here are a few of the projects in the works and you will be notified via email with more details. Below is a summary of a few of the new events, programs and policies.

**Social Gatherings** – Ideas are in the works for casual, fun gatherings of PFL volunteers with and without dogs. With the hot weather, indoor/non-pet gatherings are being planned until the weather cools off.

**Workshops** – Topics for various workshops have been defined. These workshops will be presented by a certified dog trainer and be available at various times/ days throughout the year. Although they are not required, it is encouraged for all volunteers to attend the workshops for continued knowledge of our therapy work.

**Mentor Program** – A mentor program for new volunteers will be initiated by 4th quarter. Any volunteer with 2 years or more experience with PFL will be eligible for the program. This is a great opportunity for those volunteers who no longer have a pet in the program to continue to be a part of PFL and to help new volunteers succeed in their therapy visits.

**Membership Fees** – Starting by the 4th quarter 2025, all new volunteers will be asked to pay a membership fee at the completion of the evaluation test. This fee will be applied to staffing, insurance costs, operational expenses, evaluation costs, and PFL shirts/cards, etc. Existing/current volunteers will not be charged a fee and considered “grandfathered” into the organization.

**Changes to PFL Certifications** – As mentioned in an email sent last week, for all new volunteers, the pretest is now mandatory for all new volunteers and CGC Certification is not accepted in lieu of the evaluation/temperament test.

The requirement for existing CGC certified PFL teams to be evaluated after the 2 year period has not changed. All teams, regardless of how they joined PFL, are required to be tested after 2 years of volunteering for PFL.

## WELCOME TO PETS FOR LIFE'S NEWEST VOLUNTEER TEAMS

**Marissa Vidler and Jellybean**

**Andrew Vidler and Jellybean**

**Carrie Cronan and Millie**

**Chelsea Albert and Arlo**

**Hannah Crews and Patti**

**Kristi Mellon and Benjamin**

**Phyllis Dexter and Lady**

**Julia Baucum and Scoobie**

**Meghan Bartek and Knox**

**Amy Hunter and Rosie**

**Lara Laschen and Cotton**

**Lauren Horn and Aero**

**Julie Strickland and Rudy**

**Sydney Gennuso and Chico**

**Kim Swift and Big Bertha**

**Larry Larson and Abbey**

## BUDDING BROADWAY STARS

Two Pets for Life dogs expanded their resume to include acting in “Annie” and “Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill”. We are proud of their debuts and showcasing PFL to the Kansas City community. Brava to Abbie and JoJo!



Abbie McMillin portrayed the part of Sandy in the Blue Springs City Theater production of “Annie” on March 20-23, 2025. The theater group partnered with The Penguin Project where the actors were children with disabilities and who partnered with peer mentors. Congratulations to Abbie on the start of your acting career!



JoJo Krogh portrayed the part of Pepe in the KC Repertory Theater Copaken Stage production of “Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grille” during the month of October, 2024. Pepe was the constant companion of Billie Holiday, the famous American jazz and swing music singer known as Lady Day. JoJo’s owner, Julie, read about the opportunity from a Facebook post on the Greater Kansas City Dog Training Club’s page. Congratulations to JoJo for a great performance.



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



This quarter's volunteer spotlight goes to Fran Lancaster and Rich Herz! They have been volunteering for PFL for over 20 years with a variety of fur companions over the years. Thank you, Fran and Rich, for all your time and dedication to PFL.



*Twenty years ago, if anyone had suggested that my life would be centered around dogs involved in animal-assisted therapy work, I would have questioned their sanity. My thoughts were in a very different direction as I was contemplating volunteering in the area of art.*

*Our lives changed when we rescued a charming Beagle from New Mexico Beagle Rescue. In spite of never having done formal training with previous dogs, we decided this Beagle would need some help! The help was guided by Mary Sellar, a superb canine advocate. At the end of six weeks, Mary suggested that our Llewelyn Joseph may be a good candidate as a R.E.A.D. Dog. Mary further suggested I call Pets For Life to find out about the R.E.A.D. Program. That telephone call speaks to my 20 years with PFL.*

*On May 26, 2005, "Llew," our Beagle, became a Pets For Life Volunteer dog with me. Not long after, Rich caught my enthusiasm for PFL. In March, 2006, Rich was evaluated with our Llew and became another PFL Volunteer with Llew.*

*Since that time twenty years ago, we have had the assistance of six canine Pets For Life Volunteers. I would not have thought I would be sharing thoughts about the*

*'privileges' that entered our lives with animal-assisted therapy work. Although Rich has primarily volunteered with the Juvenile Detention Center in Olathe and the R.E.A.D. Program, my scope has been in the broader reaches of Pets For Life and with more involvement with the R.E.A.D. Program, the DOC Program, and the Juvenile Detention Center.*

*We are testaments to the sheer joy of having our canine companions bringing peace, consolation, solace and hope in times of turmoil, loss, grief and great anxiety. As the dogs approach the individuals in need of a boost with a "soft fur visit", what a privilege it is to have our intuitive canine companions at the end of a leash knowing how to orchestrate and bring smiles and energy to the welcome visits.*

*Remembering our former Pets For Life companions: Zoe Z. LaRiviere, a white Standard Poodle; Llewelyn Joseph, a tricolored Beagle and Simon Basil, a tricolored Beagle. Ask me sometime about why all our canines have a first and second name.*

*Mary Sellar is still helping us with the newest crew: Bolivar Bede and Sylvie Sutherland are silver Standard Poodles. This crew may well be my undoing!*

*Fran Lancaster*

## FACILITIES REQUESTING VOLUNTEERS

**Rock Creek of Ottawa** - This is a skilled nursing facility. There are no elevators on campus. The Facility anticipates visiting with residents once a month in a living room type situation. 15 to 20 residents are interested in having dog visits. This facility is located in Ottawa, KS.

**Honey Bee Community Services** - This is a day center for developmentally disabled adults. They request visits Monday through Friday anytime during the day. They average about 20 clients during the day. They have a common room that they would use for the visits and would bring in clients on a rotational basis. It is located in Olathe, KS

If interested in volunteering at Rock Creek of Ottawa or Honey Bee Community Services, please contact the PFL office.

## THEY WILL BE MISSED



**Alfie who visited  
with Trish Moore**

Alfie was a sweet cuddly puppy who came into my life at 10 weeks old, born October 20, 2000. I came to know him as an old soul whose temperament was one who reached out to people in pain to comfort them.

I learned of Pets for Life and knew we had found his calling. When he was a little over 1 year old, I enrolled him in the PFL program. We started with visiting nursing homes and then KU Med. One time while at KU Med, we met a woman in the elevator who was taken by Alfie and mentioned she had a Westie, and that it would mean the world to her husband to meet him. It was policy to not visit independent rooms, but after the woman told me her husband was in the hospital for over 6 weeks waiting for a liver and was close to dying, I made a special request to visit this patient. When we entered his room, he was in a wheelchair. He reached for Alfie and immediately began hugging him. People visiting cheered, it then got quiet, and then tears were shed. They were there to say goodbye to the patient. The next week, I asked about the patient. The nurse hung her head, and my heart sank but she began to smile and said he was in recovery post his liver transplant surgery! Alfie was my amazing roommate for almost 14 years and the stories I have of him mending many hearts could fill a book. RIP beloved friend.





# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

**The Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation**

**Donna Amato**

**Capital Federal Foundation**

**VCA Fairway Animal Hospital**

**The Junior League of Kansas City, MO**

**Kendra Scott LLC**

**Lon Lowenstein**

# THEY WILL BE MISSED



**Buddy who visited with Dana Hoeper**

Buddy loved his job as a therapy dog! As a little pup, Buddy would never leave your side, hence his name “Buddy”. He was trained as a field trial competitor who was very successful; however, in his prime

he had a partial Achilles tear which ended his career but not his drive to be doing something. I had heard about Pets For Life from my vet’s office and thought we would go through the testing and see what happened. He passed and in his therapy career he visited Hospice House, ReNew Health and Research Psych Center. Buddy loved the residents, and they loved him! He would show up and make his rounds then show off his dancing skills and a few retrieves. The more they clapped the more he danced with joy. Watching their interactions with him and how much joy he brought to them was priceless! In one situation, a young boy just cried while Buddy laid with his head in his lap. Truly the definition of Therapy! He was so smart and loved his friends so much that he knew when I pulled into the parking lots, he would start barking for me to get him out! I miss our visits a lot! We had to say good-bye to Buddy way too soon and I miss him every day. I am so thankful for the time we had with Pets For Life. It was an amazing experience!



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