



Talk to the Paw

Support Dogs, Inc. Volunteer Newsletter
Summer 2016



Madonna Walker

Special invitation
for TOUCH
volunteers

In the Olympic season, we talk about the “total package” and “the greatest athletes.” These men and women have dedicated their lives to achieve excellence in the pursuit of their chosen sport. Do you know that Support Dogs, Inc. has such a volunteer; someone who has dedicated much of her life to excellence in volunteerism? Madonna Walker has been, over the course of her multi-decade relationship with SDI, a volunteer puppy raiser (many times over), a TOUCH team member, a site team coordinator and has also helped with office projects and events. Other little known facts about Madonna include that she has taken the temperature of an elephant (rectally!) and kissed a giraffe on the lips! SDI volunteers are truly multi-dimensional!

In the days before SDI had a site that could house their own dogs, Madonna was a VPR (volunteer puppy raiser). This meant that she would take an 8-week old puppy into her home to train and care for it at her own expense and then turn in the 18-month old puppy to SDI for advanced training. At that time, SDI was breeding, raising and training golden retrievers as support dogs. Madonna remembers one such puppy she raised and turned over for advanced training, named Cedar. When Cedar, one of the Tree litter, was taken to a site in Pevely, MO for advanced training, he seemed to shut down and was deemed ineligible to continue in the support dog training program. Madonna was given right of first refusal to adopt him and jumped at the opportunity to bring Cedar back into her home and continue to work with and love him. She called him her ‘cowardly lion’ because he seemed to lack confidence during outings.



Madonna took Cedar through TOUCH training and they became a long-serving team. How she figured this out is a puzzlement, but Madonna allowed Cedar to make TOUCH visits with something in his mouth because that would help him be more confident. One of the items Cedar liked to carry was a large plastic pencil. One time, a nurse at his TOUCH facility asked what he was doing with

a pencil in his mouth. Madonna responded that he was getting ready to go back to school. When asked what Cedar would study, Madonna said he was going to become a doctor! Oh, and Cedar had the distinction of being able to carry up to 3 tennis balls at one time in his mouth! To this day, Madonna has a picture of her beloved Cedar on her desk. He lived to be a wonderful companion for 13 years.

When asked why is she so passionate, Madonna says it’s not just because a support dog can raise a person’s self-esteem and self-confidence; it is mostly because she often hears that ‘the dog is the best thing that ever happened in my life.’ What an inspiring testament to man’s (and woman’s) best friend!

Anne Klein would like to meet with all of the amazing TOUCH volunteers at Support Dogs and invites them to attend one of three meetings at the new site.

The following will be discussed:

- Changes to Monthly Visit Reports
- Adjustments to roles and responsibilities for Coordinators and Handlers
- Updates to the TOUCH Manual
- The new TOUCH Training format
- Some Q & A – we look forward to hearing your feedback “from the field.”

Please join us at one of these meetings:

- **Tuesday, September 13th**
at 9:00 a.m.
- **Thursday, September 15th**
at 6:30 p.m.
- **Saturday, September 24th**
at 10:00 a.m.

Please RSVP to Anne Klein at aklein@supportdogs.org and Cindi Blanke at cblanke@supportdogs.org with which meeting date you plan to attend.

Although we would like to accommodate your dogs, space limits us to only people at this meeting. Thank you!



TOUCH Teams - Retired

- Margaret Barrett/Maddie (Stella is still working)
- Tracy Brilllos/Rush
- Anne Heitkamp/Ruby
- Amy Hobbs/Leia
- Vicky Patrick/Aileron
- Neil Bobenhouse/Brody
- Bruce King/Bailey



Volunteer Advisory Council Members

- Jo Ann Bane (Vice Chair)
- Jan Boyle
- Sharon Dozier
- Jim Ellis
- Christine Figge (Chair)
- Barbara Harris
- Jim Hart
- Candace Metcalf
- Shelley Newman (Secretary)
- Kay Schmidt
- Bob Snyder
- Sue Weick
- Patty Zubal

Contact the Volunteer Advisory Council at the following email if you are interested in joining the team. VAC@supportdogs.org

The goal of the Volunteer Advisory Council is to grow the volunteer team, improve the volunteer experience, and support the staff to be able to provide more services to more people in a professional and safe manner.

How to increase your TOUCH ranking

If you are interested in increasing your TOUCH ranking, here are some details.

- To increase from Adult to Child ranking:
 - You need to have passed the Adult class and have a recommendation from the instructor, based on your class performance **OR** be Adult certified and have been visiting for 6 months and have 12 visits in the same adult facility.
 - You need to be current on all of your visitation reporting and shot records.
 - You will need to attend and pass the 4-week Child class.
 - Cost is \$50 for the session.
 - Sessions start in October and November.
 - Rank allows you to visit in a “well” child facility (i.e. behavioral units or Special School District schools/classrooms).
- To increase from Child to Acute ranking:
 - You need to have passed the Child class or currently have Child ranking.
 - You need to have visited in a Child facility for at least 6 months.
 - You must have completed 12 visits in the same Child ranked facility.
 - You need to be current on all of your visitation reporting and shot records.
 - You will need to attend and pass the 2-week Acute class.
 - Cost is \$40 for the session.
 - Class times to be determined. Send an email to Cindi Blanke to sign up for the class.
 - Rank allows you to visit in an acute child facility (i.e. Children’s Hospital, Shriner’s and Ranken Jordan).

For more information or to sign up for classes, contact Cindi Blanke at cblanke@supportdogs.org.

Volunteer Advisory Council Corner

Thank you for responding to the survey! We are listening and making improvements. Stay tuned for more information in a future newsletter.

Is there someone with whom you volunteer that you would like us to write about? Or, do you have a photo you would like to share? Send us an email at VAC@supportdogs.org.



SDI Whelping Program Continues

Support Dogs whelping program continues at the new site with a litter which was born on July 8th to Sugar (mom) and Calypso (dad). There were 12 pups total - 7 yellow and 5 black labs.



We have more pups born! Peaches delivered a litter of 8 puppies on September 1, 2016. The puppies are adorable and can be watched via live webcam (go to the SDI website, main page, for a link: www.supportdogs.org).



Peaches with Dr. Boillat and Vet Tech, Trish

A Few of Sugar's Babies!



June 23rd Open House



What a great response to the open house event! Visitors got to tour the new facility and see service dog demonstrations.

Send us a picture of your TOUCH team and we'll share it in a future newsletter. Pictured below are Peter Dolan with Bella, Candace Metcalf with Daisy, Flo Pankiewicz with Lollipop and Barbara Harris with Dara at Barnes-Jewish Extended Care facility.





Upcoming Events at Support Dogs

September 22, 2016 – New Volunteer Orientation at 6:00 p.m.

September 26, 2016 – Team Training begins

October 7, 2016 – Team Training Graduation at 6:30 p.m.

October 22, 2016 – New Volunteer Orientation at 9:30 a.m.

November 6, 2016 – Volunteer Recognition Brunch at the Sheraton Westport Chalet (invitation to follow)

February 18, 2017 – SAVE THE DATE – A Fetching Affair (SDI Gala) at the Chase Park Plaza Hotel

Please contact the Support Dogs office at 314-997-2325 or info@supportdogs.org for more information and to RSVP for the listed events.

New Facilities needing TOUCH Teams

TOUCH teams are in such high demand that there continue to be far more facilities that request teams than there are teams to service these facilities. The TOUCH team visit might be the only bright spot in a person's day. Please help if you can and consider volunteering at an additional facility.

This is only a partial list of locations needing teams and/or coordinators located throughout the St. Louis Metro area.

If you are willing and able to make visits at one of these locations, contact Cindi Blanke directly at 314-997-2325 - some facilities have been waiting for a long time to have visits.

St. Louis Life - located in O'Fallon, MO

Hillcrest Care Center - located in Desoto

CE Gietner Home - located in St. Louis, MO (63111)

Rosewood Care Center - Creve Coeur, MO

SPOTLIGHT ON: Georgann and Jim Voss Gala & Trivia Event Volunteers



We have volunteered with SDI since

Georgann: I began doing the Gala about 2006. Soon I was helping with other things and have been ever since.

Jim: Since 2014, when I started dating Georgann

Why we chose SDI

Georgann: When I started helping and met some of the other volunteers and Ann, I felt comfortable and wanted to help all I could.

Jim: It's gratifying to know it's for a good cause even though you may never see the end result. You know that something good will come from it.

An unusual experience we had during an event

Jim: While I was keeping an eye on some silent auction items, someone stole an imitation Cardinals ring that had been donated. It was never recovered and that still bothers me.

Georgann: I can't think of anything unusual, but at the last Gala both Jim and I were assigned to the Wine Pull. I had a great time promoting the "designer" carriers.

Most exciting event we work

Jim: Trivia Night - being a bartender, joking with the patrons

Georgann: I find all the events to be exhilarating, and truly enjoy working with the other volunteers and talking with the patrons.

Why we own Yorkies as pets

Georgann: Years ago I became interested in the breed, and was touched by their intelligence and spirit. I began rescuing dogs about 20 years ago, and then after getting my own Yorkie, I was State Director for Yorkshire Terrier National Rescue for several years.

Jim: They are playful and enjoyable.

Activities we enjoy in our free time

Jim: Spending time with my wife.

Georgann: I don't know how I ever had time to work! Spending time with Jim and the pups is wonderful!

A successful event makes us feel...

Both of us: It is always gratifying when an event is successful. Then we're ready to do another one!

Our final thoughts to all the volunteers at SDI

Both of us: We hope all the other volunteers find working with SDI to be rewarding. Working with all the wonderful people associated with SDI, you feel like they are all old friends and become more like family.