



Troupe Talk

Vol. 11, No. 4, Late Fall 2002

The Newsletter of Chenny Troupe, Inc.

Graduation Marks the End of Successful Eight-Week Somerset Program

Beginning of "New Life" for Residents

Ten anxious people sitting in a row, some wearing their finest clothes, checking their notes, whispering their speeches to themselves. Six dogs on a "Sit, Stay" command waiting patiently to begin. Six Chenny Troupe volunteers and the program leader watching their dogs as the crowd of guests took their seats. A brightly painted red and yellow sign surrounded by balloons congratulates the participants. Graduation night at Somerset Place is about to begin.

Somerset Place is a 450 bed intermediate care facility for adults with mental illness. The residents are battling severe depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, among other conditions. Their illness is often complicated by substance abuse. Characteristic of the residents is a lack of self-esteem, a sense of isolation, mistrust of others, and an inability to complete goal-directed activities. They often lack the confidence to develop friendships with other residents. The Chenny Troupe program creates a comfortable environment where the residents, volunteers and the dogs enjoy themselves while working on overcoming fear of failure and improving self-confidence.

Twelve residents were selected by the staff of Somerset Place to participate in Chenny Troupe's eight-week program, and ten were able to complete the program. On the first night, they met the dogs, and worked with each of them to learn basic commands such as "heel" and "sit" while walking around the room in a large circle. When the dogs responded to their new handlers, the residents were amazed. In fact, reported Shelly Gasper, the program leader, one young man was so surprised that the dog actually followed his instructions, he would take two steps and order the dog to sit! He was "in the driver's seat", making decisions and getting a positive response, something that did not happen often in his life.

Each participant was allowed to choose the dog he or she would work with throughout the program. They would have to work in pairs. Sharing the time and attention of the dog and volunteer in itself was a challenge for some of the participants, but it worked! Throughout the remainder of the program, the participants learned to direct the dogs over hurdles, through a tunnel, around an obstacle course, and each learned a special trick to demonstrate at graduation. Most importantly, they experienced a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that is rarely a part of their every day lives.

Not all were willing participants. Bob (not his real name) sat on the perimeter, reluctant to get involved at the start. He hesitantly chose to work with Sampson, a gentle yellow lab. Within a couple of weeks, Bob was the first to arrive at the program, and greeted each dog by name as they arrived. He began smiling and talking in the group sessions, and spent lots of time petting and praising Sampson. Bob invited his brother to the graduation ceremony to meet his new friends and to see what he and Sampson could do.

The graduation began with each participant introducing himself and his dog, and demonstrating basic handling skills. Then each resident showed a special trick he or she had worked on with the dog. Cody, Terry Tauber's Collie, gently took a treat from a resident's mouth. Chiro, Jason Skiersch's Shepard-rott mix, sat up on a chair and hugged his handler. Nancy and Mike Golden's yellow lab Sampson caught a fly ball and performed a "bring" com-



The successful graduates!



A Somerset Place graduate and Chiro.

mand. Simba, his brother, walked on a circle of padded chairs, and then laid down on command, and brought down the house! Murphy, Peggy Brennan's chocolate lab, did "high fives" and Jordan, Shelly Gasper's golden retriever handled by volunteer Ann Dudley, rolled over!

Bob's brother watched with a huge smile as Bob and Sampson proudly demonstrated their routine and special trick. Applause, pictures, gifts, and congratulations for Bob and all the graduates completed the ceremony. The evening, and the entire eight weeks at Somerset Place, was a success, in so many ways, for everyone.

A Letter from Our President

Dear Chenny Troupers,

At this time of hope and reflection, I am enormously proud of the volunteers who have worked so diligently, tirelessly, and creatively to bring metropolitan Chicago Chenny's wonderful programs. Perhaps in the near future more of the country will know of our unique concepts. The ideas were hatched twelve years ago with a few dog lovers who knew that humans gained so much by human animal interaction. Tens of thousands of Chicagoans have tried a little harder to reach their therapy goals by working with our wonderful dogs. The smiles of pleasure and gratification last in our memory for years.

Some of our original volunteers remember working at Abraham Lincoln Center, our first program, and seeing the progress made each week. One young man started to conquer his serious tactile defense issues by learning to touch a dog. He progressed so far as to learn his name and reach out of his withdrawn shell to pet a Maltese mix, Jake Pink. A young girl went from being confined in a wheel chair to being able to use crutches. There was so much advancement made in this first program that it gave all of us the inspiration to continue on for these eleven years. Each program and every year has hundreds of successes some remarkable and others small, but so important to the individual client.

To honor Cathy Lawler's first dog, Chenny we named the organization. Kathy Olshein and Cathy Lawler were our animal-assisted therapy experts those long years ago when the whole field was very new. Rainbow Therapy Dog Club had organized and was doing visitation and entertainment for Shriner's Hospital. When the thought to start our own group began we felt that an interactive approach matching dogs, volunteer handlers and clients that was based and guided by specific goals that might bring a more comprehensive approach. My experience was twenty years of managing and developing business and not-for-profit boards and creating model programs. The Junior League of Chicago offered many volunteers and the financial support to do our first video. In a nutshell, we were on our way.

Eleven years, tens of thousands of canine and human volunteer hours, many growing pains and heartwarming success sto-

ries later, we are poised to be one of the leaders in this whole movement nationally. We have presented our models in Korea, Boston, and St. Louis. Every day we receive phone and e-mail inquiries regarding our knowledge and programs. We have excellent presentation tools and are starting a speaker's bureau so that we can more effectively tell our story.

Many of you reading this have been instrumental in our success. Thank you. Thank you. I want to be sure you also feel this pride. I hope that our first volunteers are reading this knowing that without your hard work and perseverance we would not be where we are. To this year's volunteers, a special thank you. To each and every other year's volunteers, thank you. We can never say it often enough. When we needed you, you were there. Each of you who helped with training and testing, and those who went every week to programs, and those who were in our office, and those who serve on our Board, and those of you who tackle each and every task, all of you together make us the best animal-assisted therapy program in the country.

Please know that in this season of reflection and joy that each of you has helped give a very special gift to those whom needed our help. My personal deepest appreciation is expressed to all of you. Let us all hope that the next eleven years brings as much hope and joy to those who need Chenny Troupe's special kind of magic.

Best wishes for health and happiness in the coming year,



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Executive Director
Janet Rosen Eaton

Associate Director
Caryl Horn

Editor: Sharon Van Den Hende
Layout: Barbara Gordon

We welcome your thoughts, contributions and articles. Pertinent addresses and numbers follow.

TroupeTalk, c/o Chenny Troupe
1504 North Wells Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610-1354
Phone: 312-280-0266
Fax: 312-280-0173

E-mail: chennytroupe@att.net
Website: www.chennytroupe.org

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Have you checked out the new website yet? You can still find us at www.chennytroupe.org, but it's a whole new world out there! You can find the latest Chenny Troupe happenings, download the latest newsletter, find links to animal shelters and dog-friendly shops and restaurants, even make secure donations! Please send digital pictures of your Chenny Troupers or Chenny Troupe events to the Webmaster to add to the scrapbook we are building!

Is This an Emergency?

In the past few issues of Troupe Talk, we featured various articles by veterinarians. In this issue we would like to inform you of conditions that would require immediate attention. This list of pet health emergencies was compiled by the Emergency Veterinary Clinic of Cincinnati. If the animal has any of the following symptoms, call your local emergency care facility and tell the receptionist that you are bringing in a dog or cat that has:

Difficulty breathing,

noisy respiration,
blue tongue,
gasping for breath.

Bleeding that does not stop from any part of the body; apply pressure with a clean cloth and go!

Bloated or distended abdomen or swollen or painful abdomen with or without vomiting.

Inability to urinate or move bowels but continues to try or has bloody stool or urine or painful defecation or urination.

Heatstroke

heavy panting, extreme weakness
body temperature about 104° F

Inability to deliver puppies or kittens, labor contraction for longer than one hour or more than 15 minutes of contractions with the fetus or membrane showing

Loss of balance or consciousness or seizure, including

tremors, coma, staggering,
convulsions, sudden blindness,
tilting of the head,
biting at imaginary objects,

sudden changes in disposition such as unusual withdrawal or out-of-character aggressiveness.

Pain, severe or continuous

Major trauma, injury, or shock from falls, vehicle accidents, wounds, cuts, broken bones.

Shows signs of:

weakness, collapse,
shallow breathing,
rapid heartbeat,
bewildered appearance,
dilated pupils.

Ingested poison; bring the container or the commercial or the chemical name of the product or a list of ingredients if you have it.

Penetrating wounds anyplace, but especially in the chest or abdomen.

Vomiting or diarrhea with blood or violent episodes.

Lameness and cannot bear any weight on the leg.

Any other signs that look serious, such as: eye problems,
severe itching with self-mutilation
severe hives

Some Local Emergency Clinics:

Animal 911

Skokie, 847-673-9110

Animal Emergency and Critical Care
Northbrook, 847-564-5775

Chicago Veterinary Emergency Services
773-281-7110

Emergency Veterinary Center
Rolling Meadows, 708-577-9044

Emergency Veterinary Services
Lisle, 630-960-2900



Donations

Donations in memory of, or in honor of a special pet or person are always welcome and help us continue to provide our programs free of charge. We even have edible birthday cards for your canine friend's special day!

Dr. John Kasmersky and Broadway Animal Hospital have made contributions to Chenny Troupe in memory of the following pets:

- 🐾 Buck
- 🐾 Koli
- 🐾 Willie

Donations were made to Chenny Troupe:

In memory of Niki Voelker:
Mary Ann Alexander

In memory of Jake Pink:
Wendy Mancini

In memory of Lancie:
Helen Fasano

In memory of Southport:
Bruce and Linda Gershenzon

In memory of Howard Agins:
Bonnie Morgan

In memory of Buck Brown:
The Collins Family



KD Hannigan proudly models the new Chenny Troupe ID cape designed to identify our dogs during program sessions and at Chenny Troupe events.

Kibbles and Bits

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of Magic, a wonderful 8 year old Doberman Pinscher who was the cherished companion of Mary Dellorto. Magic became a Chenny Trouper in February, 1997 and worked at Grant Hospital until her recent retirement due to health problems. Mary's other dogs, Erin and Rosie also worked at Grant, and Kali, a Doberman, carries on her sisters' tradition by working at Grant Hospital. Our condolences to Mary and all of Magic's friends.

Anyone interested in working with Chenny Troupe is encouraged to contact our office. If you would like to join with your dog, our next practice and testing session is January 25, 2003 and the test will be administered on February 1, 2003. RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED. Sessions are limited to fifteen dogs, so please reserve your spot early to avoid disappointment. 312-280-0266.

We had five dogs pass our test in October. We extend a warm welcome to Noelle Gaffney and Tootsie, Ginny Beck and Dylan, Judy Deogracias and Zorro, Gayle Washlow-Kaufman and Allie, and Patty Oakley and Carly. Chenny Troupe also welcomed the following new volunteers at an orientation session in October: John and Eulalia Castilla, Andrea Blood, John Strickler, Elise Vital, Debra Wells, Steven Serrano, Mariann Pushker, Heather Fruen,

Lindsay Rae Adams, and Ari Barron. Our volunteers make Chenny Troupe great and assure that we continue to provide innovative animal-assisted therapy in Chicagoland

Two hundred fun loving, music loving AND dog loving patrons joined Chenny Troupers at the first annual **Let's Play Ruff** at Chicago's famous Double Door in Wicker Park. The event was developed to promote Chenny Troupe's exciting volunteer opportunities among city dwellers. Guests were greeted at the door by our bouncer, Dante, a Rhodesian Ridgeback and Grant Hospital volunteer. Once they passed Dante's careful inspection, guests enjoyed the acoustic sounds of Radio Flyer and met Max, Dean and Kate, La Rabida volunteers, Prada, Turner and Jersey from the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and Chessie from Grant Hospital. Nikki, from Q101 Radio emceed the evening and shared the spotlight with Vicki, who works with **Let's Play Ruff** chair Jose Cruz at Grant Hospital. Steepwater took the stage without their lead guitar player, who became ill that day, but did a great job of entertaining the guests while they learned more about Chenny Troupe's unique brand of animal-assisted therapy.



New volunteers, Patty and Carly, Gayle and Allie, Noelle and Tootsie, Judy and Zorro, and Ginny and Dylan.

Everyone agreed it was a terrific way to meet new people and spread the word about Chenny Troupe. Special thanks to Jose Cruz and his terrific committee: Beth Golub, Sue White, Lee Seftenberg, Steve Dale, Tom Williams, Amy Elefante, Ann Dudley, Judy Deogracias, and Andrew May. We also thank Andrea Varol, Jeanine Graefen, Lisa Rovner, Michelle Schwartz, Vic Smith, Sharon Van Den Hende, John Himmel, Lisa Wiersma and John Vranicar who helped to tell our story (with and without their dogs). Don't miss next year's party! Contact the office if you are interested in working on Let's Play Ruff 2003.

Chenny Troupe wishes to gratefully acknowledge the **Merial Company** for generously providing a year's supply of Heartgard for our active therapy dogs.



CHENNY TROUPE, INC.
1504 N. Wells Street
Chicago, IL 60610-1354

www.chennytroupe.org

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