

Bringing comfort  
to those who  
need it most



# Bright Spot Therapy Dogs News 2012

## Bright Spots Visit Wherever Therapy Dogs Can be of Help

by Cynthia Hinckley

**O**ver the past two decades a lot has happened in the field of animal assisted therapy. Formal studies have been conducted in the areas of healthcare and education that point to the positive effects that result when dogs are used to assist

in therapeutic and remedial settings. The overwhelming evidence in favor of animal assisted therapy in promoting positive outcomes is not to be denied. This has resulted in a vast number of facilities and programs opening their doors to therapy dog visitors. Our volunteers have the privilege of witnessing, firsthand, these healing effects every time they visit with their therapy dogs.

The Bright Spot mission states that our special therapy dog teams serve in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, nursing homes, hospice, schools, libraries, and other facilities where therapy dogs are needed. A quick glance at our *Volunteer List of Visiting Opportunities* makes this statement very clear. In our local area of western Massachusetts, we have over

60 facilities requesting our services. In the past 7 years, our reach has expanded to the eastern part of Massachusetts, north to Maine, and south to Connecticut. Populations visited include children ages 6-18 years, young and middle-aged adults, and the elderly.

Occasionally, an individual is visited by a Bright Spot therapy dog team right in his own home. This occurs most frequently in our therapy dog hospice programs—and always under the auspices of

*(continued on page 4)*



Gus is a huge hit at the nursing home



Gus and Winston visit at the Soldiers Home in Holyoke, MA

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Tristan is the first Bright Spot to earn the AKC Therapy Dog title

## Bright Spot Therapy Dogs Eligible to Earn AKC Therapy Dog Title

The American Kennel Club now offers the distinguished AKC Therapy Dog title to registered certified therapy dogs that have completed a minimum of 50 documented visits to a facility. Only dogs that are certified through an AKC approved organization are eligible to earn this title. In October, Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, Inc. received approval as an AKC recognized therapy dog organization. Currently, there are 89 therapy dog organizations throughout the United States that have received this recognition.

## Community Outreach

Each year, Bright Spot reaches out to community organizations interested in learning more about the meaningful work performed by therapy dogs. In 2011, Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, Inc. participated in *The Dementia Care Initiative Health Fair* held at Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton, Massachusetts, and gave informative talks to the Board of Directors of the *Highland Valley Elder Services* based in Northampton and the monthly community series at the *Westhampton Public Library*, in Westhampton, Massachusetts. In each case, a slideshow of our Bright Spots in action was presented and volunteers with their therapy dogs were on hand to speak about their firsthand experiences.



Cynthia Hinckley, founder and president of Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, Inc., with her Bright Spot *James*, gave a talk at the Westhampton Public Library. Accompanying her (left) are Board members Diane Gould, Kevin Russell with Kevin's Bright Spots *Niles* and *Caber*, and an attendee.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

By Cynthia Hinckley

### Meet the Therapy Dog Team of Kevin Russell and *The Boys, Niles and Caber*



**K**evin Russell certified both *Niles* and *Caber* through Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, Inc. in 2009 and soon after, he was appointed to our Board of Directors as Vice President, Marketing. From that point on, Kevin has donated his marketing expertise to create Bright Spot databases for our growing number of volunteers, visiting facilities, and donors. In addition, he has made sweeping changes to our website to better inform people seeking to certify their dogs and has spearheaded our campaign to increase our volunteer force to meet the therapy dog requests from facilities and programs.

*The Boys, Niles* and *Caber*, a pair of incredibly docile Golden Retrievers, join Kevin bringing comfort and caring to folks in need. As a volunteer, Kevin jumped right into visiting hospice patients when we were asked to start a Therapy Dog Hospice Program at Spectrum Home Health and Hospice Care in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, back in 2009. Soon after the hospice visits started, we received a request from Lathrop Communities in Easthampton, Massachusetts, hoping to replace the volunteer they had lost. Once again, Kevin answered the call to visit there with *The Boys*.

I met up with Kevin and *The Boys* as they were arriving at Charlotte's home. We were greeted warmly at the door by Charlotte's daughter, Christina, who led us through the house to her mother's room. On this particular day, Charlotte was lying comfortably in bed. *The Boys* quietly made their way right over to Charlotte. With paws gently lifting themselves up, both *Niles* and *Caber* leaned their heads toward Charlotte enabling her to give each of them a hug.

"I love these dogs," she told me. "I love everything about them. It's wonderful having them visit." Then, looking over at

## Become a Bright Spot Volunteer

*Learn How*

Check out our Web site [www.bright-spot.org](http://www.bright-spot.org)



Sydney Flum-Stockwell and *Oscar* in the Reading to Dogs Program at Meekins Library in Williamsburg, Massachusetts

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On Thursdays, the threesome entertains folks over at Lathrop Communities. Residents there generally assemble in the Community Area to meet with *Niles* and *Caber*. One woman named Louise (right) loves giving *The Boys* lots—and lots—of treats. Staff enjoy taking a break to interact with the pair, as well, often getting down on the floor and playing with them. Many folks share stories about the dogs they had. Much conversation and laughter ensue. Residents who are unable to make it to the Community Area during visiting time receive a personal visit from *The Boys* in their apartments.



*The Boys* visiting with Louise

On Wednesdays, this incredible threesome is currently visiting Charlotte (right), a 96 year-old patient in the Spectrum Home Health and Hospice Care program who is living in her home, and being lovingly cared for by her daughter Christina.



L to R: *Niles*, Kevin, *Caber*, Christina, and Charlotte

**Volunteer Spotlight** (continued from page 2)

Kevin, she laughed, “I like Kevin, too. He’s so funny. I like his jokes. They all make themselves at home here—and I love it.”

“Once he played a slideshow for us,” commented Christina. “It was a slideshow of the trip he and his wife, Fiona, took to France. It was wonderful.”

Sometimes *The Boys* lie cuddled with Charlotte on her bed. If she’s up and sitting in a chair, they lie on the floor by her feet completely relaxed, or sit by her side with their heads in her lap so she can pet their soft fur. Kevin’s visits with Charlotte can last as long as 2 hours.

As we were getting ready to depart, Charlotte told me, “We all have a great time together—all of us,” she motioned to *Niles* and *Caber*, Kevin and Christina. “We love it when Kevin comes with the dogs.”

From Charlotte’s house, the Team heads over to the Jewish Geriatric Facility in Longmeadow, where Kevin and *The Boys* visit with other folks in the Spectrum Home Health and Hospice Care program.

Kevin, *Niles* and *Caber*, truly are bright spots in the lives of many. 🐾

## Bright Spot Therapy Dogs holds Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event

Bright Spot held its first Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event on May 15, 2011 at the Florence Civic Center in Florence, Massachusetts. It was a huge success with many of our volunteers in attendance. Dr. Steven M. Ellis, owner of the Sunderland Animal Hospital in Sunderland, Massachusetts, delivered a stimulating presentation on First Aid for Dogs, leaving everyone with important information that could save a dog’s life. In addition, our dedicated volunteers who have given 5+ years of service to Bright Spot were honored with a certificate of appreciation. Dog themed door prizes were given out and refreshments were served. Plans are underway for this year’s event to be held on April 1, 2012.



**MISSION STATEMENT:** Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to placing well-trained certified therapy dog teams in meaningful programs that provide comfort and caring through the human-canine bond. Our special volunteers serve in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, nursing homes, hospice, schools, libraries and other facilities where therapy dogs are needed.

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## Bright Spot Therapy Dogs

282 North Road  
Westhampton, MA 01027

### Honoring Those Who Have Served



*A Red Rose  
for those who have passed*



*A Pink Rose  
for those who have retired*

This year, with the loss of six Bright Spots, we decided that these dogs should be honored for their service with a permanent spot on *Meet Our Bright Spots*. Those who have passed are honored with a red rose. Those who have retired are honored with a pink rose. It seems a fitting symbol for the meaningful work these comforting dogs have carried out during their years of service with Bright Spot.



*Sirius*



*Angel*

Meet Sirius and Angel, and all our  
Bright Spots at [www.bright-spot.org](http://www.bright-spot.org)

## Therapy Dog Training TIPS

by Susan M. Miller, CVT, CPDT, CDBC



Susan Miller with **Sallie**  
and **Zack**. **Sallie** is training  
to be a therapy dog.

**T**herapy dogs play many roles in visiting diverse populations. They need to be outgoing and social but sometimes serious and reserved. They need to be able to approach all types of people and to relax so you can carry on a proper conversation. Clear and concise communication between the therapy dog and handler can make a dog's visit more reliable and, therefore, more enjoyable for everyone.

**"Wait":** Two of my favorite therapy skills "Wait" and "Stay" are sometimes confused, so try to remember the phrase, "'Wait' a bit, but 'Stay' a while." The "Wait" command is asking your dog to pause for a moment or two. It can be used to have your dog wait at the door or while you tie your shoe when out walking. In a therapy situation, I used the "Wait" command when my dog Zack wanted to enter the elevator before everyone had exited. When I told him to "Wait," he knew exactly what I wanted without having to sit or change his position.

**"Stay"** is a command that requires your dog to hold a specific position, usually either in a "Stand," "Sit," or "Down." The dog must remain in that position until you release him. A common release word, "Okay" means that your dog can move and do something else. These commands clearly require more focus and concentration from you and your dog and must be very consistently trained to expect excellent results.

In teaching the word "Stay," avoid correcting your dog. Start slowly and build up with distance, duration, and distractions as your dog grasps the concept. This command can be used before feeding your dog by telling him to "Sit" and "Stay" before you put the food down. If he gets up, just pick up the bowl. When he is staying nicely, release him with your "Okay" command. In therapy work, a "Stay" command can be used while a person is petting your dog. Give the "Stay" command either verbally or by a hand signal and don't forget to release him when it's time to go.

Please remember to train your dog with love, patience, and praise, and to set your dog up to succeed in all aspects of life. 🐾

*Susan M. Miller volunteers with her Border Collie, Zack, at the Lathrop Retirement Community in Easthampton. As a dog trainer, Susan offers in home consultations to dogs and their families.*

# Thank You to Our Donors

We like to take this opportunity to extend our deep appreciation to the donors who make it possible to continue the meaningful work provided by **Bright Spot** Therapy Dogs, Inc.

Grants and gifts from individual donors enable **Bright Spot** to increase its presence throughout Massachusetts and New England by means of enhanced media coverage and an expanded volunteer force. We strive to serve the growing number of facilities and programs that recognize the benefits of using certified therapy dogs to comfort people of all ages in a myriad of settings.

From all of us at **Bright Spot**, *Thank you!* Your gift has reached so many.

## Friends of Bright Spot

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## In Honor of Special People

Cheri Cross

In honor of Patti Tibbetts  
and her dog *Velvet*

Jeanne R. Hinckley

In honor of Cynthia Hinckley and  
her therapy dogs past and present

James G. Walton

In honor of Jim Manferdini and his  
dog *Rocco*

## In Honor of Special Pets

Alice and James Doppman

In honor of *Misty*

Lori Dunn

In honor of *Lindsey, Annie, Wags,*  
and *Jake Dunn*

Marian Geller

In honor of *Flo*

## In Memory of Special People

Tom and Isabel Dumais

In memory of Jean Smith

Nancy and Garson Fields

In memory of James Molloy, Jr.

Cynthia Hinckley

In memory of Jean Smith

Betty Karakula, Jane Karakula, Ray  
Karakula, Nancy and Garson Fields

In memory of Jeffrey Marks

Phil and Pris Kerr

In memory of Jean Smith

Elisha Raczkowski

In memory of Jean Smith

John & Paula Raczkowski

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Lucille Searleman

In memory of Jean Smith

## In Memory of Special Pets

Marilyn Gourinski

In memory of *Sundance*

Al & Cynthia Hinckley

In memory of *Tizzie Jubinville*

Al & Cynthia Hinckley

In memory of *Cedar Tarr*

Al & Cynthia Hinckley

In memory of *Trudi*

Susan and Cary Jubinville

In memory of *Seaplume's Tis Only  
Money, aka Tiz.*

Susan Jubinville

In memory of *Trudi*

## Grants

Elizabeth & Frank Odell Family Fund  
of the Community Foundation of  
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*Donations reported here run from January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011. All donations received after December 31, 2011, will be reported in the winter 2013 issue of the **Bright Spot** Newsletter.*

# Become a Bright Spot Donor

YES – I would like to make a donation to support the programs provided by **Bright Spot** Therapy Dogs, Inc.



Enclosed is my check for:

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 \$1,000+    Other

Please make checks payable to **Bright Spot** Therapy Dogs, Inc. and mail to:

**Bright Spot**, c/o Cynthia Hinckley  
282 North Road  
Westhampton, MA 01027

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## **Bright Spot Visits** (continued from front)

a facility or program that has applied to Bright Spot and is on our *Volunteer List of Visiting Opportunities*. Bright Spot does not make visiting arrangements directly with individuals.

The growth of our aging population has promoted the development of retirement communities, assisted living facilities, and long-term care facilities in every community throughout the United States. Many of the folks who are residents of these facilities have limited access to the outside world. Many, too, have had to leave their beloved pet behind. They crave interaction with the certified therapy dogs during their visits. Therapy Dog Programs for the elderly make up 60% of the facilities on our *Volunteer List of Visiting Opportunities*.

Visiting in an elder care facility brings special rewards for both the residents and the volunteer therapy dog team. As a team visits week after week, it gets to know the same people. Unlike visiting patients in a hospital setting where the interaction occurs once—perhaps twice, these folks live here. They look forward to seeing “their dog” visiting each week. They know exactly when the therapy dog will walk through the door and often will be waiting in the lobby for his arrival. The broad smiles that light up the faces of the awaiting residents are clear affirmation that therapy dogs help to combat loneliness and promote a feeling of comfort and companionship—which is a wonderful reward for *all* involved. 🐾