Bright Spot C TANS

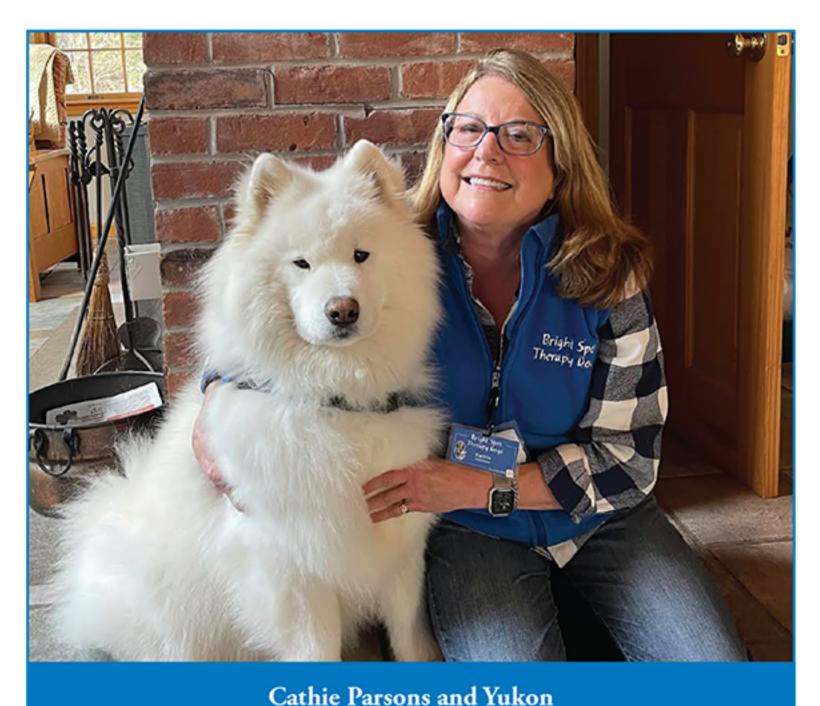
2022

Proud to be an
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The Annual Publication of Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, Inc.

Special Dogs and Special People: Answering the Call

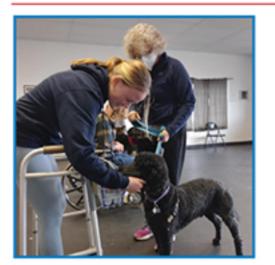


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y six year-old Samoyed, Yukon Cornelius, and I have been a Bright Spot Therapy Dog Team for the past four years. Yukon frequently visits the VA Medical Center in Leeds, the Holyoke Soldiers' Home, and Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton. We have also been to a few of the local college midterm/final stress relief visits, and we represented Bright Spot at the Barks & Brews fundraiser for Dakin Animal Shelter that was held at Fort Hill Brewery in September. Yukon is my third Samoyed, but he is the first one that I felt would be good as a therapy dog. He is very mellow and well-behaved. His thick, soft coat is inviting to people to touch, and he responds well to the attention.

During the pandemic, we were forced to stay home, along with the rest of the world. I think Yukon missed his work with the patients. I work at the VA as a dental hygienist and as soon as the weather got nicer, and I saw that the patients were being brought outside,

- Continued on page 2



Meet Our New Trainer and New Evaluator



Community Outreach Highlights



That's My Emma Pickle

MISSION STATEMENT

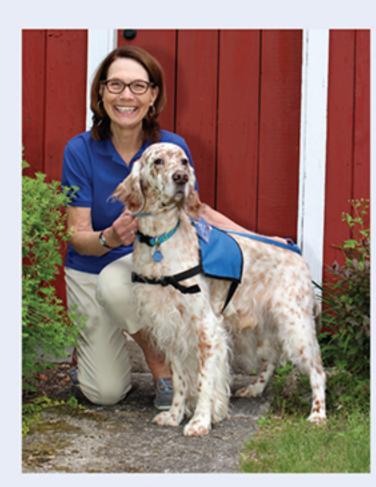
Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, Inc. is a registered 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to placing well-trained certified therapy dog teams in meaningful programs that provide comfort and caring through the human-canine bond. Our special volunteers serve in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, nursing homes, hospice, schools, libraries and other facilities where therapy dogs are needed.

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Bright Spot News is published annually.

Editor-in-Chief - Michelle Karb Graphic Design - Nancy Fields Production - Dan Berger



Dear Friends,

As I reflect on another year where COVID remained at the fore-front of our lives, I continue to be inspired and honored to work with the amazing volunteers who dedicate their time and efforts to carry out the Bright Spot mission. The toll and restrictions of the pandemic continue to impact the mental health of many, which has increased the demand for our

therapy dogs to help those in need of the comfort and caring only the human-canine bond can offer. Ever mindful of changing CDC guidelines, our volunteers have answered the call. They are out visiting residents in nursing homes and patients in mental health facilities. Our teams are working with young children learning to read and bringing stress relief to students on college campuses. While we continue to weather one of the most difficult periods of the modern day, it brings me peace, joy, and hope to see Bright Spot teams in demand and in action.

Thanks to the support of our loyal donors, we have moved forward with adding an additional trainer and evaluator. These additions enable us to hold a full schedule of therapy dog team training classes for 2022. To date, our classes are running at full capacity with a waitlist. While our community outreach calendar is booked through the end of the year with speaking engagements and group events, we continue to find ways to meet the demand. It is heartwarming to see that so many people want to become involved with therapy dog work, and equally impressive to note the increase in the number of organizations eager to welcome our trained and certified therapy dog teams.

It is with delight that I recognize Michelle Karb, Assistant Director of Bright Spot, and the new Editor of Bright Spot News, for publishing a collection of articles in this year's issue offering our readers a window into the meaningful work our volunteers do throughout the year. I hope you enjoy reading their stories and feel, as we do, how powerful the human-canine bond can be.

Warmest regards,

Cynthia J. Hinckley

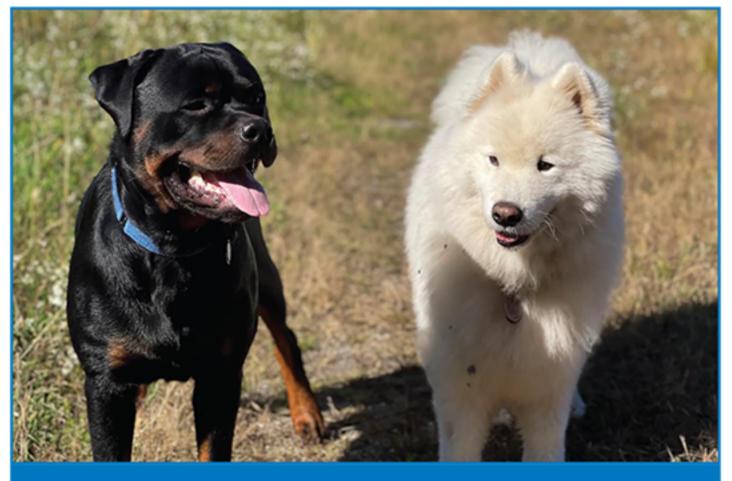
Founder and Executive Director

- Continued from page 1

I advocated to the volunteer director to allow Yukon and me to resume visits during those times. It was well received and the veterans were happy to spend time with him once again. The staff was very happy to see him as well.

We live in Chesterfield, MA and Yukon spends his free time playing with his Rottweiler little brother, Baloo, running around the five acres of woods we have, and going on hikes with the family. They are both usually found on Friday nights at Fort Hill Brewery where they are well-known.

Now that I am only working part time, I hope to be able to visit even more with Yukon and put smiles on people's faces which we need now more than ever.



Yukon and brother Baloo



Yukon providing comfort

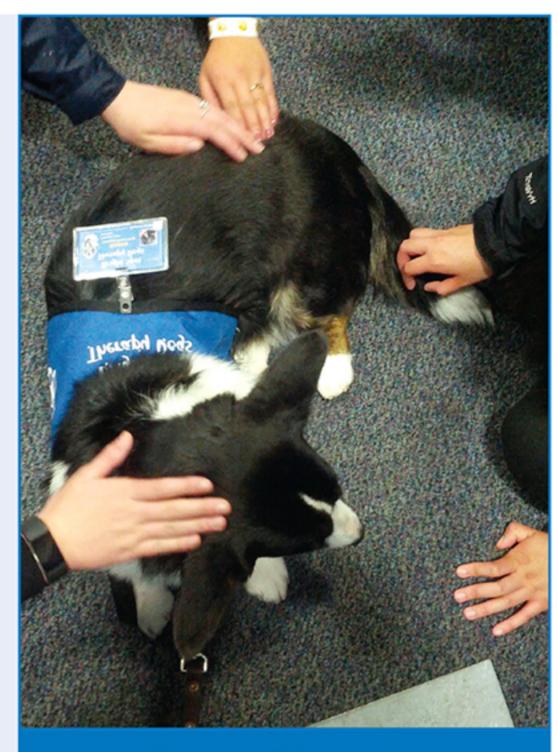
Special Dogs and Special People: Answering the Call



Patricia Lalli and Keeva

eeva is a seven year-old Cardigan Welsh Corgi and the second dog I have had as a partner with Bright Spot Therapy Dogs. As a young puppy I knew Keeva had what it took to be a successful therapy dog. She was friendly, intuitive, and eager to please.

We began training with Bright Spot when she reached her first birthday and she has proudly worn her blue vest ever since! Keeva and I have participated in several college events, as well as library, preschool, and elementary school visits. I have witnessed her bring laughter to stressed college students during finals with her enthusiasm, and reassurance to anxious,



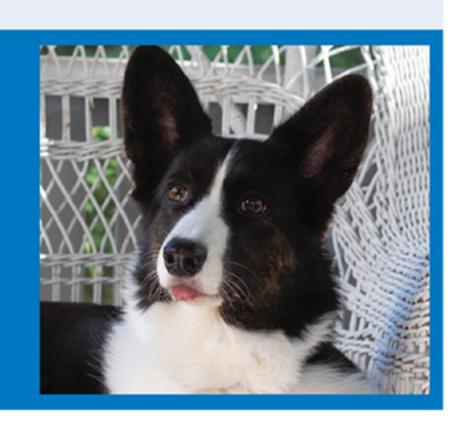
Keeva providing comfort

grieving elementary school students after a tragic loss, with her gentle kindness. Her ability to adjust to every situation never fails to amaze and humble me.

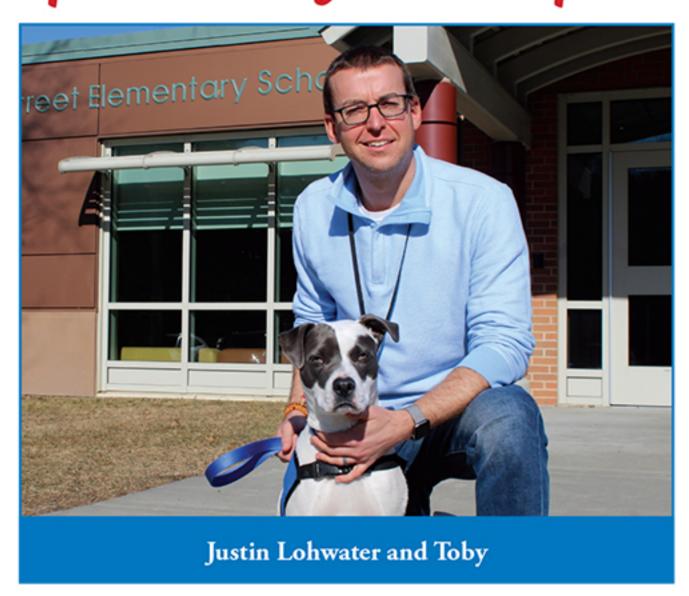
We recently began regular visits with the young patrons of the Ware, MA public library. Keeva excels as a Reading Buddy and enjoys meeting every child. She curls up next to the reader, listens to each story, and studies the illustrations with interest to the delight of everyone.

In her spare time, Keeva enjoys several dog sports, hiking, car rides, snuggling on the couch, basking in the sun, and food.

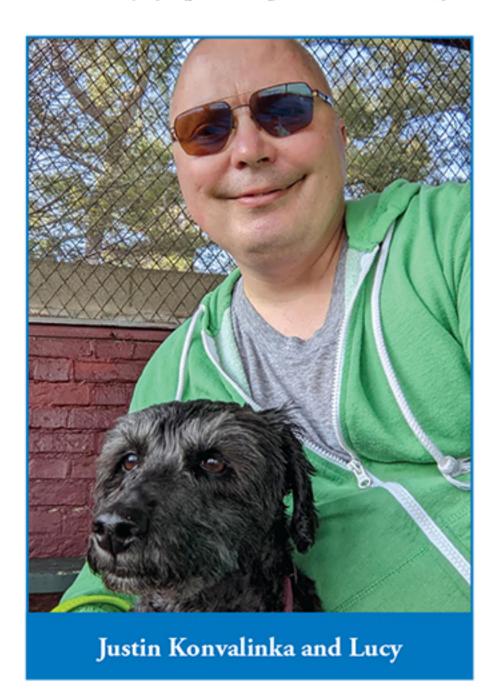
"Her ability to adjust to every situation never fails to amaze and humble me."



Special Dogs and Special People: Answering the Call



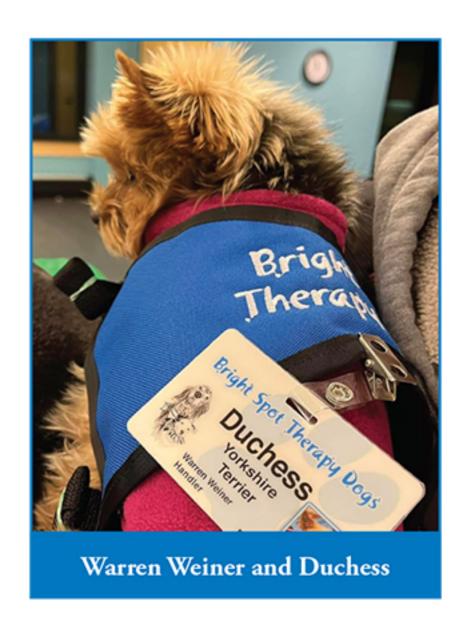
Toby accompanies me to work one or two days a week at Lincoln Street School in Northborough, MA where I am a clinician. Toby supports students in our therapeutic program, although he has been a big hit with almost all of the school's students, who enjoy petting and playing with him. Staff enjoy spending time with Toby as well.



Lucy and I visit two DCF (Department of Children and Families) Key Program group homes in Springfield, MA which assist children and their families in developing positive life skills so they may pursue productive and rewarding lives. We are also Bradley Buddies and visit Bradley International Airport in CT. When we're not visiting, we enjoy spending time at Forest Park in Springfield, MA.

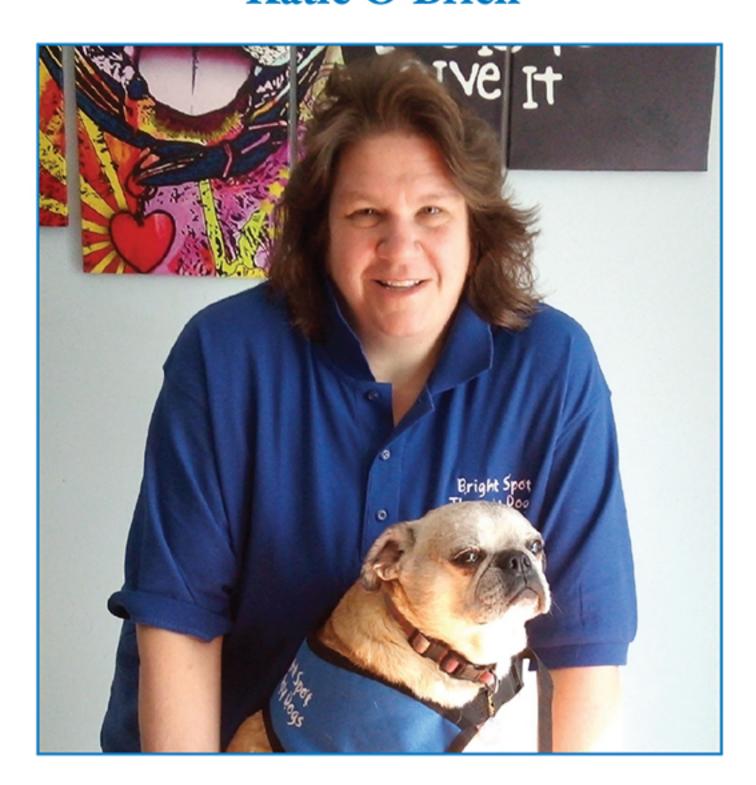


Sunny has been working as a Bright Spot Reading Buddy for the last five years at schools and libraries, but she'd hardly call it work! On Wednesday afternoons, she waits in Northampton at the Forbes Library Children's Room for her kids to arrive. The minute she hears a child's voice, she starts smiling and wagging. Each reader takes a turn reading to Sunny while she listens, sometimes rests, but always enjoys ear scratches and treats at the end of each story. Her favorite books are about animals, even cats.



Duchess and I were certified by Bright Spot in November 2021, and we participated in the Bright Spot Therapy Dogs Stress Relief Event at Bay Path University in December. We began the new year by initiating a monthly Reading Buddy Program at the South Hadley Public Library, and in February we started weekly visits to The Arbors Assisted Living Facility in Chicopee. My seven-year-old little puppy is a big hit with everyone!

Meet Our New Trainer: Katie O'Brien



I am excited to begin working as a Bright Spot Therapy Dog Team trainer. I found out about Bright Spot about three years ago and immediately knew I wanted to volunteer. At the time I had three dogs, but since I usually adopt older and hospice dogs, I didn't think any of them would enjoy work as a therapy dog. I went to Second Chance Animal Shelter in East Brookfield and I found my partner: a ten year-old pug named Jessie. I knew right away when she ran to the front of the cage, wagging her tail, that she would be a great therapy dog.

After a year of bonding and knowing how much love Jessie had to share, we signed up for classes, became certified, and started work as a therapy team. We visit Palmer Healthcare Center Nursing Home every Friday morning. Jessie brings joy to the residents, nurses, CNAs, and staff. She has grown very close to the residents, and they look forward to her weekly visits. Because of Jessie's age (she is thirteen years-old now), the nursing home is perfect for her — very low key and relaxed, and we will keep at it until she decides to retire.

When I heard Bright Spot was looking for new trainers, I knew this would be a great opportunity for me to combine two things that I thoroughly enjoy — teaching (I have been a junior/senior high school math teacher for over fifteen years) and working with dogs. I look forward to training new therapy dog teams to help them get ready for their evaluations and prepare them for what I think is one of the most rewarding and fun ways to volunteer. You bring joy to others while spending time with your best friend!

Meet Our New Evaluator: Gail Moran



Murphy and I became a Bright Spot Therapy Dog Team hoping to brighten people's lives and bring smiles to their faces. After Murphy passed his CGC, I decided to take the Bright Spot class and become a Therapy Dog Team.

We visit assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and we participate in college stress relief events. After being away for almost a year due to Covid, the residents and staff were thrilled to have us back. The staff actually told me they thought they needed us more than the residents.

Murphy and I also compete in agility where he holds numerous titles. He also has two trick dog titles.

I recently became a Bright Spot evaluator. I enjoy watching the teams work together and the smile on the owners' faces when they pass the evaluation and become Bright Spot Therapy Dog Teams.

Community Outreach Highlights

Tails to Tales Event at the Hampden Public Library by Megan Marshall



Teams in attendance from left to right: Tibby Chase and Arlo, Jennifer Kuzeja and Lucy, Megan Marshall and Cadence, Wayne Desroches and Gwen, and Paula Goodreau and Ellie

On Saturday, June 26, 2021, Bright Spot was invited to the Hampden Public Library to help kick off their summer reading program. The theme was Tails to Tales. Wayne Desroches and his Greyhound Gwen, Jennifer Kuzeja and her Cobberdog Lucy, Tibby Chase and her Corgi Arlo, Paula Goodreau and her Bichon mix Ellie, and Megan Marshall and her Cobberdog Cadence, all attended the event representing Bright Spot Therapy Dogs.

Many children of all ages and their parents came to hear about our program. Because of the beautiful weather, we set up on the library lawn under a shady tree. We gave a brief presentation about what Bright Spot is and what qualities make a good therapy dog. We reviewed the training and evaluation process that dogs and their owners go through to become certified therapy teams. We also discussed the differences between service dogs, emotional support dogs, and therapy dogs. Each volunteer took a few minutes to talk about their own dog and what type of facilities they visit together.

After the presentation was over, the best part of the event began. All the children and their families had the opportunity to interact and engage with all of the dogs and their handlers. For over 45 minutes, there was nothing but pets, kisses, belly rubs, and smiles. (And maybe a few cookies.) From the dogs' perspectives, I would have to say that, along with interacting with the children, their other two favorite parts of the day were when a library patron riding her horse stopped by and when a frisky orange kitty ran right through the middle of the group!

At the end of the event the librarian, Ellen Moriarty, presented the volunteers with a very generous donation for Bright Spot, which was a combination of proceeds from a jewelry and craft sale they held on our behalf and donations they collected. The volunteers and their dogs had a wonderful afternoon and were pleased to be part of the summer reading program at the Hampden Public Library.

Barks and Brews at Fort Hill Brewery in Easthampton by Nancy Ronan

On a beautiful Saturday in September, Bright Spot Yukon along with his handler, Cathie Parsons, and I shared the mission of Bright Spot Therapy Dogs with attendees of Barks & Brews. This event was the 6th annual dog party at Fort Hill Brewery in Easthampton, MA in support of Dakin Humane Society. Humans and canines enjoyed vendors, beer, food trucks, treats, and canine activities.





Nancy Ronan, Cathie Parsons, and Yukon oversee our information booth

Bright Spot Teach Works his Magic at the Meekins Library in Williamsburg by Cynthia Hinckley



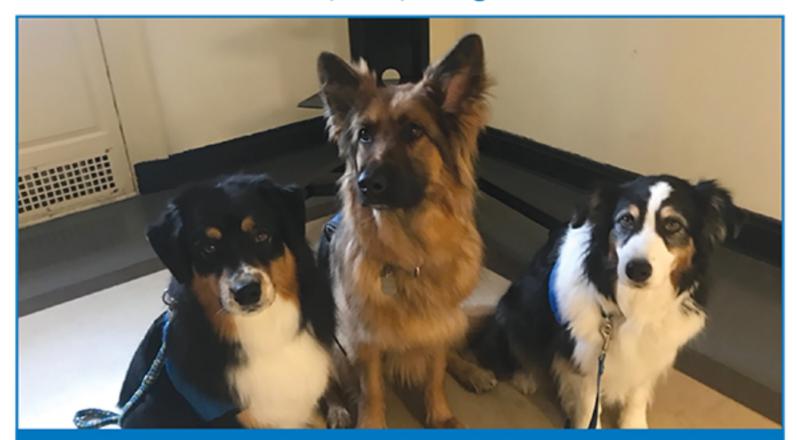
Teach waits patiently in front of the Bright Spot display

Teach was beyond excited on July 7 when I put his blue Bright Spot

Teach was beyond excited on July 7 when I put his blue Bright Spot Therapy Dogs vest on him and we hopped in the car. We were headed to the Meekins Library in Williamsburg, MA to give a presentation about Bright Spot Therapy Dogs. Teach loves his therapy dog visits, and it was very clear to those in attendance as he spent time interacting with each person.

What I have to say during presentations is important, but it's the dogs themselves that sell our mission of bringing comfort and caring to those who need it most. As usual, Teach worked his magic being his sweet, gentle, friendly self, and people were happy to spend time with him. Teach and I were also happy, grateful to be presenting in person again. Everyone left the presentation feeling happy, calm, and rejuvenated.

Bright Spots Share the Love at the Simsbury Senior Center by Sally King



Bright Spots from left to right: Willie, Rambler, and Deja

On February 3, three Bright Spot ambassadors and their handlers described the life of a Bright Spot therapy dog to town residents at the senior center in Simsbury, CT. Invited by the senior center manager, handlers Paula Johnson, Karyn Cordner, and I, accompanied by our canine partners, discussed three topics: 1. Who therapy dogs are; 2. How the dogs and their handlers are trained for this important role; 3. The difference Bright Spot dogs make in the lives of people they visit.

It was a lively discussion with an engaging PowerPoint presentation which helped the audience appreciate the positive impact therapy dogs make everywhere they go. And of course, there was a "meet and greet" at the end of the presentation during which the pups did what they do best: bring smiles, joy, and comfort!

Bright Spot Frigo Visits the Girl Scouts at Wolf Swamp School in Longmeadow by Cathy Bussolari



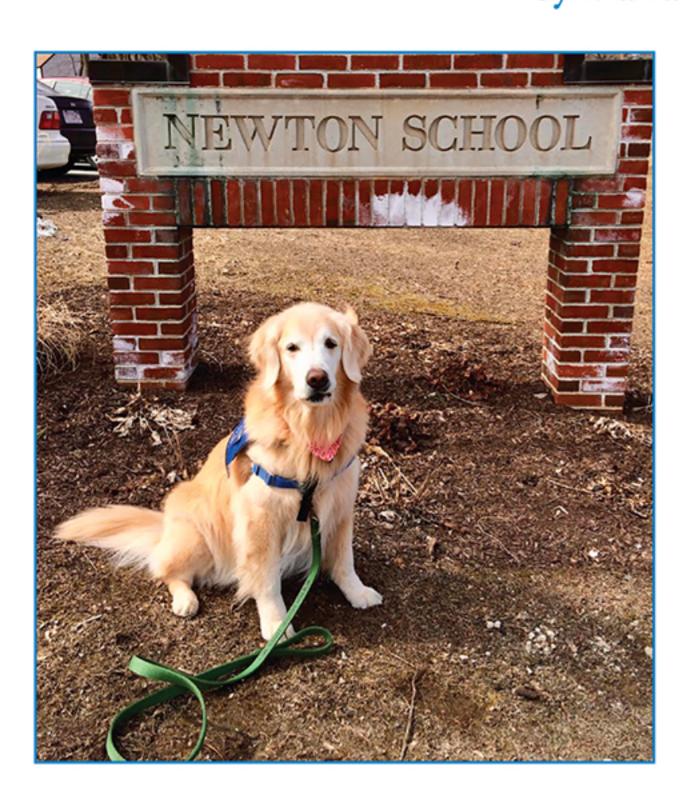
Volunteer Cathy Bussolari and Frigo with Girls Scouts

The Girl Scouts at Wolf Swamp School in Longmeadow, MA eagerly waited for Frigo to come and to learn all about therapy dogs. There were twelve girls in attendance, each with questions ready for Frigo and me. They wanted to learn where therapy dogs visit and how they are trained. Most of them already knew the differences between service dogs and therapy dogs.

The girls enjoyed many of Frigo's tricks, and lots of fun was had by all, especially Frigo.

Their Girl Scout project for the night was to make dog toys. All toys were to be donated. It was a great evening of giggles and smiles, and Frigo even received a new toy.

That's My Emma Pickle by Marianne MacCaffrey





We lost our Emma Pickle in October, 2021. She was always full of fun and loved saying hello to everyone we met, especially when we were on vacation. Our golden time with Bright Spot Therapy Dogs brought out the best in both of us. Emma Pickle's Bright Spot duties included visiting an assisted living facility, UMASS, and Newton School in Greenfield. Emma loved listening to all the third grade readers. She always had a special hello for the principal and all the students she passed in the halls. She even added visiting the nurse's office to her weekly visits. She would politely stop at the door and wait to be invited in to visit.

Visiting UMASS was always a treat. One summer I even met a UMASS student at a hospital in New York. I told him that I visited UMASS with my dog. He turned to the nurse he was with, and explained that,

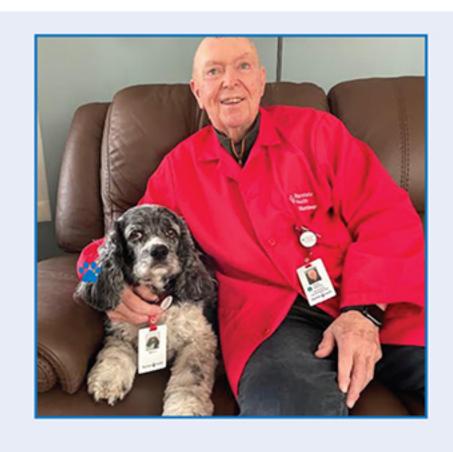
"These wonderful people bring their beautiful dogs for us to hug and enjoy. I have pictures of these dogs on my phone!" He asked me for the name of my dog, and I told him it was Emma Pickle. He lit up and said, "I have a picture of this woman's dog on my phone! I know her dog!"

Emma stopped visiting during the pandemic, but she didn't stop working. About a month before she passed, we walked by a man and a woman on our morning walk. She immediately turned around and led me back to the couple. As we got closer I could see that the woman was crying. Emma went right to the woman and went to work trying to comfort this stranger who was now sobbing. The woman asked me, "How does she know that I need her today?" My reply was, "That's my Emma Pickle."

Why We Give by Kevin Lawson

My wife, Sue, and I are dog lovers! We also volunteer at Baystate Medical Center, where we would often see therapy dogs visiting with patients and staff. We knew our Molly was the right size and disposition for this work and, as a newly retired senior, I had the time to help.

Bright Spot's training gave Molly and me the confidence needed to have a most rewarding experience and to share the love that Molly has for us with others.



Thank You to Our Donors

2021 Annual Report of Giving

We extend our deepest appreciation to our donors, foundations, and sponsors. With your help, we look forward to continued growth as we build on our legacy of providing wellness to people of all ages through visits from our highly trained therapy dog teams. From all of us at Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, Thank you! Your gift has made a difference in the lives of many.



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