



Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati





## *A Letter from our President*



Hello PPGC Members!

I hope everyone is having a great start to the new year! As we often think about new year's resolutions, my thoughts drifted to how can I be a better handler and how can I communicate some of these key learnings to others in our training.

### **What does make a successful pet therapy team?**

- ◆ The cornerstone of any team is to develop a strong bond with your pet by creating an environment of trust and communication without intimidation.
- ◆ Interact with your pet in a positive and supportive manner using positive reinforcement. Remember the acronym P.E.T.S. (Presence, Eye Contact, Touch, Speech).
- ◆ It is critical to be able to read your pet's body language, and recognize their approaching and avoidant behaviors. What are the environments, activities, people they embrace and what do they shy away from? How do I support them when they display avoidant behavior?
- ◆ "Your Are Your Animal's Best Advocate" for their safety and well-being at all times. Review best ways to advocate for your pet in the Handler's Guide.
- ◆ Be a Proactive Handler by anticipating your pet's response in different situations. By anticipating your animal's response, you can set them up for success through direction, encouragement and support.
- ◆ Interact with those you visit, while simultaneously tending to your pet: truly a challenge and a balancing act that takes a lot of practice.
- ◆ Be proactive by guiding interactions between your animal and your client in a polite and professional manner.
- ◆ Take time to read some of the articles on the Pet Partners website and PPGC's website.
- ◆ Sign up for a dog training class that exposes your pet to new challenges to help build your bond and confidence as a team.

### **What to look forward to in 2025 as a Community Partner?**

The board is continuing to focus on growing the organization both in number of visits and increasing our number of pet therapy teams to meet the needs of our community. As part of our sustainability, we are also focused on restructuring operations of our organization, specifically our board. We hope to present these changes to be voted on by our next luncheon.

**A summary of some of our efforts** to meet the needs of the community while maintaining our high standards.

Numbers are slightly lower after the post-Covid boom, however our total membership has continued to grow past our target of 10% per year.

<b>Evaluation Events:</b>	<b>2022 - 26 Events</b>	<b>2023 - 29 Events</b>	<b>2024 - 25 Events</b>
<b>Evaluations:</b>		<b>2023 - 123 Evals</b>	<b>2024 - 113 Evals</b>
<b>Workshops:</b>	<b>2022 - 6 WKSP</b>	<b>2023 - 5 WKSP</b>	<b>2024 - 5 WKSP</b>
<b>New Handlers:</b>	<b>2022 - 62 new</b>	<b>2023 - 53 new</b>	<b>2024 - 42 new</b>

Thanks to all of you! I look forward to a great 2025.

**Marilyn Edwards**  
President, PPGC





## Susan's Musings



I'd like to use this edition's newsletter to discuss the need for tracking our visits. We don't currently ask our members to provide us with any tracking information (visits, locations, hours); I believe we may need to consider implementing a tracking system.

### VISIT REQUESTS

Let me begin by sharing with you the latest statistics on Visit Requests. As you may know, we have a link on our website that allows potential clients to make a request for a visit. These requests may be for single events or may be a request for a member to commit to on-going visits. These requests are typically handled and tracked by our Visit Coordinator, Heather Hauser.

In 2024, we received 309 requests for visits, about a 20% increase over 2023.

These requests are broken down as follows for 2024 (2023):

Nursing homes	42 (31)
Schools	104 (104)
Colleges	41 (55)
Hospitals	16
Businesses	51 (32)
Health Fairs	6
Other	12
Disability programs	37

Not included in these numbers are visits performed by our First Responder Teams nor ongoing visits performed by many of our members on a regular basis. These numbers do not indicate requests that we had to cancel for lack of teams.

### WHY TRACKING IS IMPORTANT

There are a number of reasons why I would like us to revisit the question of tracking our visits:

#### 1. Measure of success:

Tracking provides us with at least some measure of the need for therapy teams in our community. Increased visit requests are one indication of the success of our program and the impact on our community. Numbers can also really help in our marketing efforts.

*(continued on next page)*





## *Susan's Musings*

*(continued)*

### **2. Grant Funding:**

As you may know, we have received some significant grants over the last several years, beginning with our participation in the Magnified Giving Program in 2020 and from the Good Shepherd Foundation in the last 2 years.

Our focus with the Magnified Giving Program is on recruiting – when I meet with students, they always ask me “what will you do with \$1000?”. My answer is that \$1000 covers the cost (in-person workshops and evaluations) of 10 new members.

The Good Shepherd Foundation is looking for us to demonstrate an expanded reach to people with developmental disabilities. Our most recent grant has enabled us to offer in-person Handler Workshops and ALL evaluations free of charge for a year. More importantly, we have the opportunity to upgrade our website and further leverage technology in managing our membership.

Our ability to demonstrate an impact is critical in securing future grants.

### **3. Indication of growth opportunities and needs gaps:**

As many of you know, we have strong partnerships with several local hospital systems and, at some locations, strong team support. But there are gaps in meeting the needs at our partners as they expand or open new facilities.

Our college visits were down this year in part due to several cancellations as members have found parking at many locations to be an issue. We are working with these facilities to remedy this situation.

We also have had trouble recruiting teams to visit facilities that are beyond our regular visit radius.

### **NEXT STEPS**

I would like to get input from our members on this topic of “Tracking Visit Requests”.

In the coming weeks, look for a survey in your email asking for your thoughts on places you currently visit and your openness to providing that information on a going basis.

**Susan Steinhardt, Executive Director**

[susan.steinhardt@tpgcpets.org](mailto:susan.steinhardt@tpgcpets.org)





Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati



Pet Partners

 Pet Partners  
**PET** OF THE  
**YEAR**  
March 3 - April 14



## About Pet Partners Pet of the Year 2025

Does your dog stand out from the rest of the pack? Is your feline friend known for their amazing cat-itude? Perhaps your horse is ready to gallop into a new role? We have more than 100 pets competing in a six-week fundraising competition for the title of the 2025 Pet Partners Pet of the Year!

[Nominate Your Pet](#)

OR

[Nominate Someone Else's Pet](#)

This exciting fundraising competition is a perfect way to celebrate your best friend while supporting a great cause! Funds raised by pet candidates (with help from their favorite humans) will support the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program. This amazing program brings unconditional love, happiness, and healing to millions of seniors, patients, veterans, and children in need all around the world each year.

The national title of **Pet Partners Pet of the Year** is awarded to the pet whose fundraising team raises the **most funds during the six-week competition**. The winner will be crowned at the close of the competition and awarded thousands of dollars in prizes for their efforts.

For more info go to <https://petpartners.org/events-fundraisers/poty/>

**Pet Partners**

# National Therapy Animal Day

National Therapy Animal Day was created by Pet Partners to recognize all of the exceptional therapy dogs and other therapy animals who partner with their human companions to bring comfort, joy, and healing to those in need.

## April 30 is National Therapy Animal Day!

National Therapy Animal Day was created by Pet Partners to:

- Recognize and honor therapy dogs and other therapy animals who partner with their human companions (handlers) to bring comfort and healing to those in need.
- Raise awareness and educate the public about the role therapy animals play in enhancing the health and well-being of humans.
- Honor the thousands of dedicated handlers who volunteer their time and compassion during visits in a variety of settings including hospitals, pediatric care units, schools, and assisted living facilities.
- Encourage pet owners to [become therapy animal teams](#), creating happier, healthier communities through greater access to safe and meaningful interactions with therapy dogs and other therapy animals.

For more info go to <https://petpartners.org/events-fundraisers/ntad/>





Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati



Let me introduce Howard, our 10 year old house cat. About a year ago, my family decided to adopt a cat and we hoped to find one that would be snuggly. So we searched the local rescues for one that was described as "affectionate" and WOW did we hit the jackpot! Howard is the sweetest, most affectionate kitty ever. He has been part of our family now for about a year. Because of his calm and affectionate demeanor, it made me think he might do well as a therapy cat. I was right, pet therapy seems to really be working out.

I am a retired Clinical Mental Health Counselor, so I really enjoy this type of volunteering as it is a great way to continue helping people, but Howard's really the one working. Honestly though, he enjoys all the petting and attention from the people he encounters—so it's a win-win.

We're so glad we found out about Pet Partners and we plan to be a therapy team for many years to come.



~ Jill Smith

\*\*\*\*\*

Sue Bone has been a member of Delta Pet Partners since 2009. That was with a black lab Benny. She now has 2 boys: Artie is a 12 year old English cream golden with a soft touch and great heart and Doc is a 7 year old Yellow Lab, a Momma's boy and a lover.



They are volunteering at Hospice of Cincinnati, such a great place. Doc and Artie have been busy competing in agility and they both have done very well over the years. The dogs have also been tail waggin' tutors in the New Richmond school district. They are happy to be back with Pet Partners and look forward to meeting more of the pack.



~ Sue Bone

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Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati



Hi, my name is Rose Hauser and I passed my evaluation with my rabbit Alice in October 2024. My mom is Heather Hauser and has the famous George! I am 12 years old and I go to Turkey Foot Middle School. I have been wanting to become a pet therapy handler since my mom started and was so excited when we were able to get Alice. Alice was a therapy rabbit with Julie Johnson before we got her and she is the sweetest little bunny. We mostly visit St Elizabeth Hospital with my mom and George. People love to see George and Alice together! I am the youngest volunteer they have ever let into St. Elizabeth Hospital.

I have always loved animals and all of our pets. I go to farm camp every summer and this year I will be a counselor in training. I love the baby goats at the farm.



~ Rose Hauser





## 8 Ways to Keep Your Dog Warm

From AKC.org

### *Our Annual Publication of Winter Pet Safety*

Snow, sleet, ice, and wind... there's a lot to prepare for when it comes to winter weather. Just like we're affected by the cold, our dogs are, too. Here are a few simple measures you can take to make sure your dog stays warm, happy, and healthy throughout the winter.

#### 1. Limit Dog's Time Outside

Dogs can suffer from frostbite, especially on delicate earflaps and tail tips. In extreme cold, it's a good idea to keep dogs inside, with the exception of the heavy-coated northern breeds that thrive in low temperatures. If it's not possible to keep the dogs indoors, be aware of the major signs of frostbite, which include skin that appears white or blue.

#### 2. Stay Indoors When Possible

Even a big fuzzy dog that lives indoors will need some time to acclimate to freezing temperatures. Short romps outside will help your dog's body get used to the change in the weather. Keep indoor activities fun with new indoor games. There are also dozens of indoor interactive dog games to give your dog a fun way to get both mental and physical exercise.

#### 3. Bundle Your Dog Up

Sure, most dogs have their own coat, but you wouldn't want to go out in a blizzard in a light spring jacket. Make sure small, delicate, and short-haired dogs, even large ones like Greyhounds, have an appropriate winter wardrobe, including a sturdy winter coat and a fitted sweater.



#### 4. Consider Your Dog's Age

Where climate is concerned, age is more than a number. Like humans, very young and very old dogs have a hard time regulating body temperature, so they have more extreme reactions to changes in weather. Romps in the snow may be too much for their more delicate constitutions. Keep the older dogs and the puppies indoors as much as possible.

#### 5. Protect Your Dog's Paws

Look at the Iditarod sled-dog teams, and you'll notice that their paws are covered by booties. Musher's know that the race may be lost because of injuries and abrasions from running on ice. Even if your dog isn't dashing through 1,000 miles of frozen Alaskan wilderness, winter conditions can still do damage. Different retailers offer dog boots or paw protectors that work well to keep your pup's feet safe.

#### 6. Invest in a Heated Dog Bed

Yes, heated dog beds are safe! A heated dog bed can be a great option for dogs that tend to get chilly, including senior dogs. Look for one made specifically for dogs that also has an auto-shutoff.

#### 7. Trim Foot Fuzz

Hair on the feet of long-haired dogs can form ice balls between pads and toes. Keep them well-trimmed, cutting the hair so that it is even with the surface of the foot.

#### 8. Clean Your Dog's Feet

City streets are coated with deicing substances, such as sodium chloride (rock salt) and calcium chloride, which make sidewalks safe for pedestrians, but can damage paw pads. Make sure you wash off your dog's feet. Some people keep a bucket next to the door to rinse their dog's feet as soon as they come in from the cold. Use warm water and make sure to reach spots between the toes and pads. Some dogs will also need a paw balm or moisturizer for dry skin.



## When Is It Too Cold For Your Pet To Be Outside?

Once the thermometer dips below 45 degrees Fahrenheit, it's time to start thinking about your pet's comfort level. As the temperature goes down, the risk goes up. And if the mercury plummets into the 20s, then pets can be at serious risk of frostbite and hypothermia if they're outside for any length of time.

People who live in areas experiencing cold weather and winter storms need to take extra precautions to keep their animals safe. Pets left to fend for themselves in cold weather are susceptible to injury and death. Here are some simple tips from American Humane:

### Be Prepared

Plan ahead and pay attention to cold-weather warnings.

Unless significant power outages are experienced, most cold-weather episodes and winter storms are "shelter in place" events, so pet care needs should be planned for in the home. Keep your pet preparedness kit well-stocked and ready — in a winter storm, you may not be able to leave your home for several days.

Leave your pets' coats a little longer in the winter to provide more warmth. That summer "short cut" from your groomer should be avoided during cold weather. If you have short-haired breeds, consider getting them a coat or sweater that covers them from neck to tail and around the abdomen.

### Winter Pet Care

When you bathe your dogs in cold weather, make sure they are completely dry before taking them outside for a romp or walk.

When walking your dogs during bad weather, keep them on leash. It's easier for a dog to become lost in winter storm conditions — more dogs are lost during the winter than during any other season. (And don't forget to microchip and put ID tags on your dogs and cats!)

Leash your pets if you have frozen ponds, lakes or rivers nearby, as loose pets can break through ice and quickly succumb to hypothermia before trained ice-rescue personnel can arrive. Never try an ice rescue of a pet yourself — leave that to trained professionals.

When you are working on housebreaking your new puppy, remember that puppies are more susceptible to cold than are adult dogs. In cold conditions or bad weather, you may need to opt for paper training your new pet rather than taking the pup outside.

Keep your pets inside, both during the day and night. Just because they have fur doesn't mean they can withstand cold temperatures.

If dogs are left outside, they should have a draft-free shelter large enough to stand and turn around in, yet small enough to retain body heat. Use a layer of straw or other bedding material to help insulate them against the cold. Make sure the entrance to the shelter faces away from the direction of incoming wind and snow.

Keep your cats indoors. Cats can freeze in cold weather without shelter. Sometimes cats left outdoors in cold weather seek shelter and heat under the hoods of automobiles and are injured or killed when the ignition is turned on. Banging loudly on the hood of your car a few times before starting the engine will help avoid a tragic situation. (This is true for wild animals in cold weather as well).

When taking your pets out for a bathroom break, stay with them. If it's too cold for you to stand outside, it is probably also too cold for your pets.



Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati



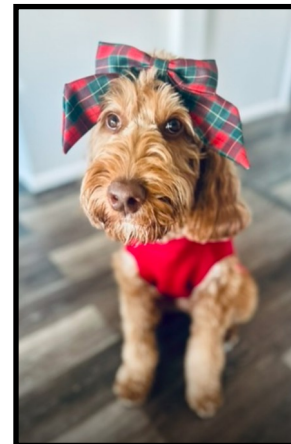
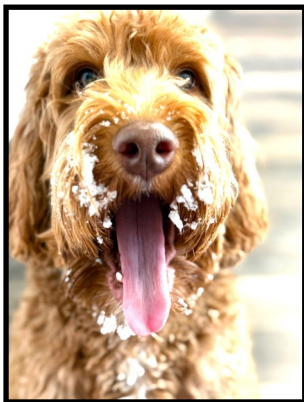
## Happiness At Home

Our column featuring our handlers, their family, friends, and pets when not “at work”



### Madi's Christmas

In December, Madi met Santa and convinced him she was on the nice list, worked the Shops Off Harrison with her pal Wenlii, & got festive. She's currently enjoying eating all the snow.





**2024 Another Banner Year!**

**2024 Year in Review**

- 42 Nursing home visits
- 104 school visits
- 41 college visits
- 51 business visits
- 37 facilities/schools/day programs  
for people with disabilities

☆ ~ **Heather Hauser**  
 ☆ Vice President  
 ☆ Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati  
 ☆ Licensed Evaluator  
 ☆ Mentor Coordinator/Visit Coordinator





**West Chester Township 911 Dispatch Center**

**Eli**



**Ronald McDonald House**

**Carl & Aspen**





### Southwest Local Schools

### Early Childhood Learning Center

### Erin Donovan & Madi

Madi and I visit the school every month. She's on her second year there. The Buddy Bench is on their new playground, which in a roundabout way I helped them get. They were seeking funding for the playground and my niece helped me find a grant that they were able to apply for and receive. The buddy bench was paid for through donations to honor my late stepson, Justin, who attended elementary school in that building (when it was whitewater elementary). It's very full circle for me, having volunteered there when he was a student. We lost him in April 2023, and I was asked to bring Madi for visits that following August.





## FIRST RESPONDER PET THERAPY TEAM

### *A Word from Kenny Schroeder*

Thank you so much for an incredible year! Through scheduled stress relief visits and critical incident responses, we've had the privilege of supporting so many incredible first responders, administrators and communities.

Thank you to you all and your pets! I'm grateful for your love, compassion and dedication. I look forward to continuing this mission and making an even greater impact in 2025!

#### **A quick snapshot of the year in review:**

49 total visits for the year.

42 Visits for Stress Relief

7 Visits for Critical Incidents

We responded to 13 Fire Departments, 7 Combined Police/Fire/Dispatch, 6 Dispatch Centers, 3 Police Departments, The Hamilton County Coroner's Office, Hamilton County Juvenile and Family Services Office and 7 Special Events! We were busy!!

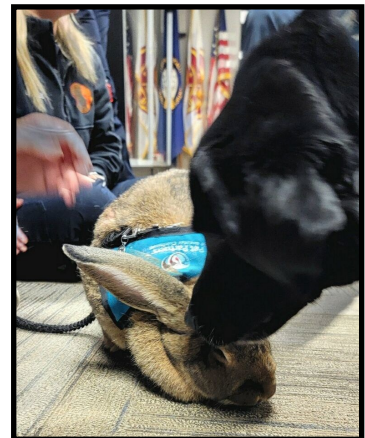
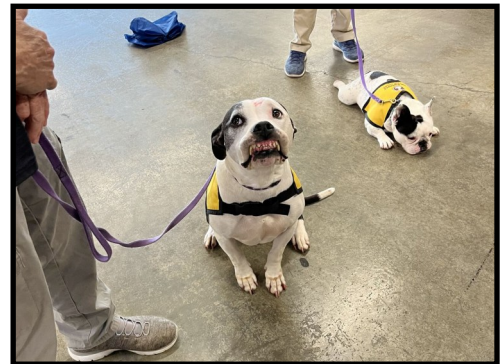
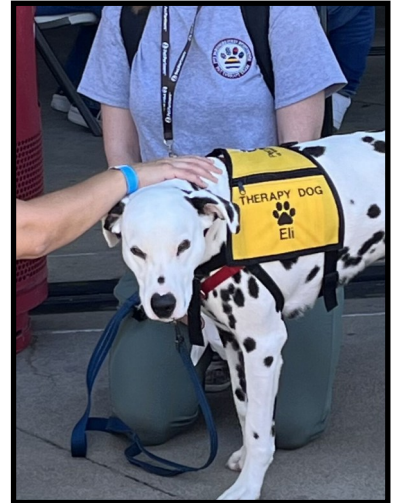
Thank you all again for your energy, your commitment and the hope & love you share. You are making a difference daily and I am grateful that I have the opportunity to work with you and know you.







### FIRST RESPONDER PET THERAPY TEAM

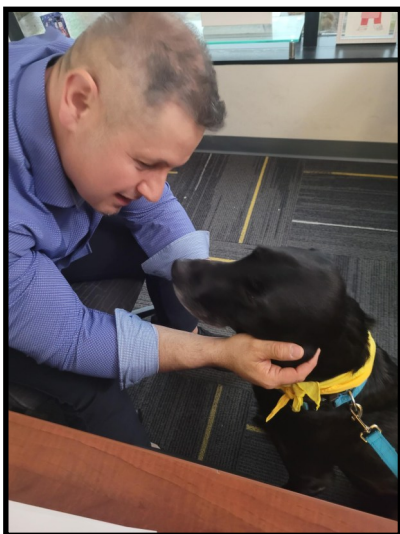
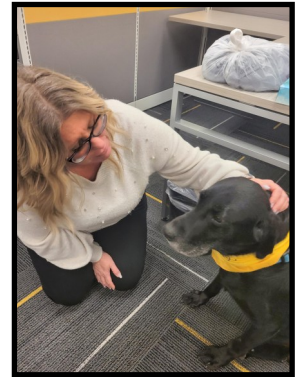




### Queen City Hospice

Jake recently visited the staff at Queen City Hospice. He has been visiting them for two years and now feels that he is part of the staff.

~ Dinah Winters





Hamilton County Dept. of Job & Family Services

Ava and Madigan





*Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge.*

*When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.*

*All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor. Those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by. The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing; they each miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind.*

*They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent. His eager body quivers. Suddenly he begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.*

*You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.*

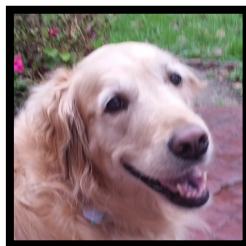
*Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together...*

*Author unknown.*



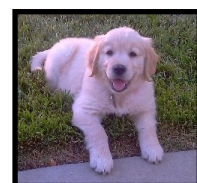
Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati

## ROXIE



Roxie and I found each other on June 4, 2011 when I selected her from a litter of ten at five weeks of age. At eight weeks I took her home and our journey began. We developed a bond I had never known before and together we shared many wonderful adventures. And she was just so darn cute!

Roxie loved all people and animals, and was perplexed when she encountered an angry or aggressive dog. It was as if she was thinking "Why is that dog being so mean? I just don't get it!" She was especially gentle with children and babies.



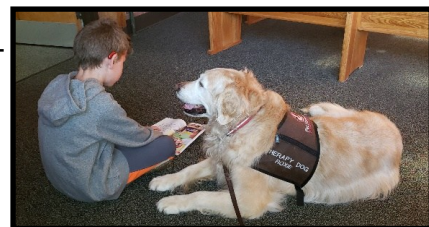
When she turned one year old, we qualified to become a registered therapy dog team. With her innate gentleness and ease, Roxie was a "natural". We became regular visitors to several assisted living facilities in the Los Angeles area where we lived, and she loved every minute of it.

Then in 2015 we embarked on our big journey from Los Angeles to Cincinnati. Along with her one-year old brother Truman, an English Cream Golden Retriever, we drove across the country for five days to our new home. Roxie was a dream in the car and never complained.



Once we were settled in Cincinnati, Roxie and I joined the ranks of registered therapy animal teams with Pet Partners in 2015. In her 12.5-year career, Roxie touched the lives of residents of assisted living facilities, having the greatest impact on those in the memory units. One day a gentleman was seated on a couch, showing no awareness or movement. As Roxie approached him, I said "This is Roxie, would you like to meet her?" He slowly raised his head and looked at her. He then reached out to pet her, and a smile slowly appeared on his face. He was awakened out of a fog by Roxie's loving kindness.

Her favorite visits were to the schools and recreation centers for reading programs for children. She became a sort of celebrity at St. Veronica Catholic School in Mt. Carmel, Ohio where for three years we visited second and third grade classrooms. As we walked through the halls we always passed children who excitedly called out "Roxie!" and ran to say hello to her. She also enjoyed the same experiences at the Mason Community Center and the Whiz Kids After School Reading program in Goshen. With Roxie at his side, one little boy overcame his fear and shyness about reading and read out loud for the first time.



In 2022 Roxie and I were honored to become a registered Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR) team. As part of the First Responder Pet Therapy Team we took part in countless "Stress Relief" visits to fire stations, police stations, and emergency response centers. When tragedy struck, Roxie provided comfort to fire fighters, police officers, dispatch workers, sheriffs, and support staff in her capacity as an AACR therapy dog.

In her 300 hours of volunteering, the impact Roxie made took many forms and was always palpable. I am so proud to have been a facilitator of Roxie's giving and healing to so many. My sorrow over losing her is so deep and beyond measure. The special connection and love we had was extraordinary and will endure forever.

~Sharon Newman



## Colby



I lost Colby the therapy cat suddenly due to a previously unknown heart condition. He was the most laid-back cat and a good therapy cat, friends with many but especially Dax and George, often riding in the same stroller with George or cuddling with him on the floor. As the only cat in our chapter at the time he was often requested by certain places / groups. I got him as a stray found in my neighborhood and no one claimed him, and I cannot imagine why; he was so sweet. The vet even said he purred through having fluid tapped off his lungs, an echocardiogram, and more. He is so missed.

*~Terry Cahill*





Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati

Board President	Marilyn Edwards
Board Vice President	Heather Hauser
Board Secretary	Debbie Bauer
Board Treasurer	Louise Nathanson
Trustees	Deborah Newstrand
	Trish Smith
	Lora Wynn
Executive Director	Susan Steinhardt

## Editor's Note

As we ease into the new year and visit requests increase, I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone a bit and visit new sites. Children truly love reading to therapy dogs; people at hospitals, assisted living, and rehab centers cherish visits with therapy animals; people working in high stress jobs welcome a brief respite with a soft, kind therapy animal. Visit for ten minutes or an hour...it will be tremendously received.



Although my beloved Roxie is gone, I will remain active with PPGC as Newsletter Editor and AACR Visit Coordinator.

Enjoy the rest of Winter, and keep yourself and your pet partner warm and safe.

~Sharon Newman