



California Hospice Foundation



# CHOICES

*Empowering People*

Summer 2011

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## Furry Friends Can Make a Difference

Bella is about to get the 15-minute massage of her life. She's been visiting this patient for several months, following him from his home, to a long-term care facility and back to his home. After the long-anticipated rub down she and her patient take a nap, snoring in unison, while Bella's owner, Lanell Lenzkes, visits with the caregiver. It's all in a day's work for a hospice pet therapy dog.

Lanell and Bella are volunteers with the Pawsitive Pals program at the San Diego Hospice. Bella and 26 other certified therapy dogs, plus one cat, visit patients in the hospice, long-term care facilities and patient homes. "When our team senses a patient's anxiety, isolation or depression, or if we know they have a love of animals, we recommend pet therapy," says Kim Heinrichs, Executive Director of Volunteer Resources at the hospice.

Lanell and Bella have been Pawsitive Pals for a year and a half. Their patient visits typically last one hour, depending on the patient's condition. If the patient isn't that active, Bella sits next to them, perhaps with a warm paw on the patient's knee. Lanell says, "She knows her job at that moment is to simply be there. She becomes a different dog when she goes to the hospice. She knows something; she wasn't taught it, I don't know how she knows it."

Family and friends are sometimes hesitant to visit a hospice patient, not knowing what to say or how to behave. Patients are often self-conscious about their appearance or condition. However, no matter how a patient feels or looks, animals are completely

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*If you or anyone you know has a need for Hospice Information and Referral services please call the California Hospice Foundation's toll free number: 888-252-1010*

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## Furry Friends *continued from cover page*

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accepting. “Their presence and love are unconditional,” Lanell says. “Immediately they’re companions. There’s no small talk with dogs. There’s nowhere else they’d rather be.”

Kim says, “It’s a powerful therapy. Dogs reach a place humans sometimes can’t reach. In February, one of our patients was extremely agitated, swearing and striking out at staff. When Coco, our toy poodle arrived, the patient had a complete transformation, visibly calming and, according to the volunteer, turning into a different person.”

Caregivers benefit as well. When a therapy pet arrives, the mood in the room noticeably lightens. Tension and stress are temporarily alleviated as the focus shifts to the animal and stories about family pets.

Pet therapy provides “benefits on both ends of the leash,” says Kim. Dogs like having a purpose, and handlers get to share their time and pet with those in need. Lanell says, “I walk away moved every single time. It’s a joy I can’t explain.”

Dogs aren’t the only four-legged hospice volunteers. Moorea, a calico cat, and her owner, Nancy Denen, make therapy visits for The Elizabeth Hospice.

Moorea, an inductee into the California Animal Hall of Fame, began her “career” when Nancy took her to visit her father in a long-term care facility. When other patients asked if Moorea could visit them too, Nancy had her certified as a therapy cat by Love on a Leash.

When Moorea’s harness and leash come out, she knows she’s going to work. She looks out the window as they drive to the hospice. When they’re within two blocks, she meows in excitement. Once there, she climbs into the patient’s lap or settles in next to them in bed. Nancy chats with the patient, if the patient is up to it, while Moorea snuggles.

One patient who loved cats, but whose wife didn’t, had a dying wish to pet a cat. “We visited him for a year. I read the paper while he petted and talked quietly to Moorea. He and I didn’t carry on much of a conversation. This was between Moorea and him.”

During one visit to the hospice a social worker asked Nancy if they would visit an unresponsive woman in a nearby room. Moorea nestled in next to the woman. “The patient opened her eyes and tried to verbalize and sit up. I thought the social worker would faint.”

*Author Deirdre Reid is a writer, blogger and association consultant at Reid All About It in North Carolina.*

## Donate Your Vehicle

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Are you thinking of selling or trading in that unwanted car, truck, boat or RV? Why not donate it to the California Hospice Foundation and receive a tax deduction? Your donation will be used to support the programs and services of the California Hospice Foundation. The vehicle donation program accepts most vehicles, running or not (exceptions include older vehicles when the value will not offset the cost of towing.)

Donating is easy! Just find your title/pink slip and write down your VIN #. Then, call the California Hospice Foundation office at 1-916-925-3770 or toll free at 1-888-252-1010. We fill out the forms and make arrangements with the Car Program to conveniently pick up your car donation at no cost to you. Within 4 days one of their service representatives will contact you by phone and arrange the best time to pick up the vehicle. The Car Program will handle the title transfer requirements and provide you with a tax deductible donation receipt at the time of pickup.

## Does Your Company Offer a Matching Gift Program?

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Ask your Human Resources Department if they match employee gifts to charitable organizations. Fill out your employer’s matching gift paperwork and send it to us with your donation. Many companies will match your gift up to 100%. The following lists a sampling of companies that offer a matching gift program.

AETNA Foundation

Amgen

Applied Materials

Bank of America

Blue Shield of California

Business Wire

Chubb & Son, Inc.

Colgate-Palmolive Company

eBay

Emerson Electric Company

Exxon Mobile

Genentech, Inc.

Guident

Intuit

Newsweek

Nokia

Sacramento Bee

Sierra Health Foundation

Transamerica Systems

Waters Corporation



# Pet Piece of Mind

Pets provide companionship and comfort. But what if a hospice patient has a pet they can no longer care for? The **Pet Peace of Mind** (PPOM) program, supported by Banfield Charitable Trust, provides in-home pet care with trained volunteers who deliver food, litter and medications, help with trips to the groomer or vet, and assist with finding new homes for pets when the patient dies.

The San Diego Hospice launched their Pet Peace of Mind program in November and has already helped 12 patients and 16 pets. Kim says, "A pet is a family member, and sometimes all the patient has left. It would be a tragic loss at an already difficult time if they had to relinquish their pet because they couldn't take care of it."

When staff determines a patient has a need for the PPOM program, volunteers contact the patient or family to arrange volunteer visits. "You can hear the relief in their voice," says Linda Waterski, a Pet Peace of Mind volunteer. "They're so grateful the hospice recognizes pets as family members and helps families stay together."

As a "dog mom" Linda knew she wanted to be part of the Pet Peace of Mind program: "I know people love their pets. I wake up looking forward to doing this work, to give them this peace of mind."

One of the first programs in the country to be funded is the Hospice of Humbolt. Since launching in March of 2010, they have served 62 patients and over 149 pets. Kathleen Kistler, the hospice's PPOM Coordinator, said that caring for the patients' pets has helped staff build rapport and trust with their patients and families. She also said that while most staff embraced the program immediately, she had one co-worker who was concerned about spending money on pet care when there were so many unmet needs. This skeptic has been converted through the program's success.

Kathleen recommends that PPOM Coordinators educate staff about the program and share successes with them frequently. She sends "Story of the Month" emails to staff to let them know how the Pet Peace of Mind Program has served patients.

She shared a couple of her "stories" with CHF:

It was a busy Friday in February. That morning, the caregiver for a patient who was scheduled to go to the hospital for in-patient respite suddenly took ill and had to be hospitalized himself. While he was in the hospital and the patient was being prepared for transport, their Pet Peace of Mind volunteer returned to the home from walking the family dog. Yikes! This much loved and protected family member was about to be left alone in the house without food or potty breaks for who knew how long! The PPOM program manager and volunteer conferred and agreed that the best thing for the dog was to go home with the volunteer until the caregiver returned. Later that day the caregiver was



Patient Care Volunteer, Susan Keele, with hospice patient Lloyd Norman and his dog Tucker. Mr. Norman passed away in 2010. Through the **Pet Peace of Mind** program, he was able to keep Tucker at his side. (Photo by Sabrina DeLassmutter of Hospice of Humbolt)

released from the hospital -- but he was shaken and asked the volunteer to keep the dog at her home for the weekend. Our wonderful volunteer did exactly that -- sparing the patient, caregiver and dog considerable distress. Everyone concerned emerged from this situation with a greater awareness of how important it is to consider the needs of ALL family members in these situations.

Later that same Friday, we were reminded that sometimes the best medicine wears fur. Our patient -- hospitalized and in the dying process -- desperately wanted to have his beloved "son" with him in the hospital. His son happened to be the cat who had been his closest companion for more than 20 years. It is a sign of our times that his wish was taken seriously. The patient's physician wrote an "order," the hospice social worker and PPOM manager made arrangements with the hospital and the patient's caregiver, and hospital staff made accommodations so that this patient and his "son" could be together in his hospital room. When it all came together and the caregiver was notified that he could take the cat to the hospital, he said, "I'm so relieved I could just cry." It is deeply gratifying to know that when this patient died soon thereafter, in peace, his greatest wish was fulfilled.

Of course, often a hospice patient's greatest concern is what will happen to their pet when they are gone. Many patients fear that their pet will be euthanized or placed in a shelter when they become homeless after the patient's death. Participating hospices network with community humane groups and pet care businesses to find homes for pets when needed, giving the patient peace of mind about their pet's future care.

***Pet Peace of Mind** has been meeting the needs of hospice patients and their pets through the programming and support of **Banfield Charitable Trust** since 2009. To start a program at your local hospice, contact Banfield Charitable Trust at (503) 922-5683 or visit their website at <http://www.banfieldcharitabletrust.org/programs/pet-peace-of-mind/>.*



## What is An Advance Health Care Directive?

An advance health care directive is a written expression of what a person does and doesn't want if he or she becomes ill and can't communicate or make decisions. The directive contains instructions concerning future medical care and names a legally recognized health care decision maker to act on your behalf if you are not able to act for yourself. This is usually a process, not a single event. You and your family, your legally recognized healthcare decision maker (also known as your proxy, agent or surrogate) and your health care provider should periodically talk about your wishes. For example, if your health status should change or if you are diagnosed with a particular disease, ask your physician what to expect, ask about treatment options. Discuss the benefits and the possible problems with treatment. Review your advance health care directive and change it accordingly. Your advance health care directive form can be updated at any time. Have you completed an advance health care directive form? Do you need a form? More information? Visit our website at <http://cahospicefoundation.com/> or call us at (888) 252-1010 for the Advanced Health Care Directive form, a "Frequently Asked Questions" handout and a brochure about getting started.

