

# Animal Human Interaction: Research & Practice Newsletter

Section 13 of Division 17, Society of Counseling Psychology APA

January 2011

## Second Chances by Nancy Gee

As with any career, the route to becoming a therapy dog can be indirect. Such was the case with Duncan (aka Dunk), a ten year old Border Collie currently participating in Dr. Nancy Gee's research with preschool children.

At about a year old, in December 2000, Dunk was found wandering the streets of a small city in Illinois and taken to a local shelter. By the time a local Border Collie rescuer learned about Dunk and was able to get him placed in a temporary foster home, he was on borrowed time at the shelter, getting a reprieve from euthanasia only because of the Christmas holidays.

Several states away, Barbara Klucik was looking for a family pet and a dog that she could train in agility. Through the internet she learned about Dunk – that he

was timid but athletic, and had an innate sense of how to get along with other dogs. This was important as he would be joining a multi-dog household.

Overcoming Dunk's inhibitions was essential before he could begin agility training. Months passed as he learned to trust that he would be rewarded, not punished, for trying new things. But once he developed confidence in himself, he learned quickly, and went on to achieve agility championships in multiple venues, many times over. One issue haunted him throughout these successes, though, - an obsession with skate boards, bicycles, golf carts, or any other small wheeled vehicles. His instinctive need to herd them



Duncan

would distract him even on the agility course, sometimes with disastrous results.

Since this preoccupation extended to wheelchairs and motorized scooters, Dunk was considered a poor candidate for therapy dog work. Herding wheelchairs in a nursing home or hospital was more likely to result in panic than therapy. (continued on page 3)

## Falling in Love... with a Dog: How It Changes Our Lives by Risë VanFleet

Paul was raised in a family that kept hunting dogs tied on a chain outdoors in all weather. They were not considered pets. As long as the dogs performed well in the field, the family kept them. If they began to fail, the family disposed of them quickly. It was all about function and nothing about affection. From the age of 14, Paul was expected to work with the dogs, often us-

ing forceful methods, and to get rid of them when they outlived their usefulness. He had never felt close to his dogs. (continued on page 2).



Dogbreedinfo.com

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## Falling in Love... *cont.*

After he married, he tolerated his wife's desire to keep a pet dog in the house. He only paid attention to the dog when they went hunting together. After their first dog died from a serious illness, Paul's wife acquired two Spaniel puppies from a local rescue. They were cute, rambunctious, and inordinately attracted to Paul. They followed him everywhere, sought his attention, and crawled onto his lap when he fell asleep in his chair. Within a short period, Paul's wife noticed a significant change in Paul. He began calling the dogs to him while watching television, giving them extra treats, speaking to them in a high-pitched voice, and telling her and others about their antics, smiling the entire time. She told her friends that Paul seemed to have "fallen in love" with the Spaniels and that he had been transformed.

Paul's story probably resonates with many of us who love dogs. While not all people make such radical changes in their lives, most dog lovers can point to one special dog who changed everything for them. Although I have known and loved dogs my entire life, it was a new experience when I "fell in love" with two Beagle puppies twenty years ago, and nothing has been the same since. I have now "fallen in love" with nearly every dog in my life since that time. Something different happened in my relationship with those Beagle pups that forever changed my way of seeing and being with dogs.

When I mention "falling in love" with dogs, I am referring to a special, new quality of attachment and relationship that shifts one's attitudes and behaviors from what they were previously. Some people refer to their special dog as a "soul mate," others describe how the dog connected with them--or they connected with the dog--in a qualitatively different way than they had done previously.

For some people, this phenomenon starts when they are children; for many, it comes later. For some like Paul, it can be a life-altering experience that brings them from a harsh world to a kinder, gentler place. For others, the change is subtler but significant in some way. In all cases, that single special dog opens our hearts and minds to unique ways of being with other dogs, and sometimes, other animals and people.

There seems to be little written about this phenomenon, although most "dog people" know exactly what I mean when I mention this. Just as with human love, the process of "falling in love" with that one special dog raises many questions. Why did that particular dog connect with us differently than the others who went before? Why did it happen at this particular point



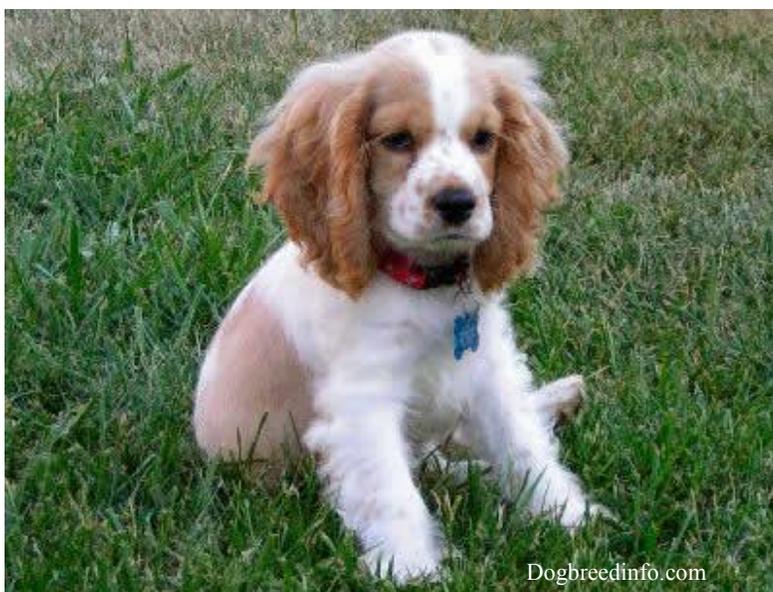
[www.ukgundogs.org](http://www.ukgundogs.org)

in our lives? Was it something about the dog, something about ourselves, or some of both? Why *this* dog? Why *now*?

### Help with a Brief Survey

It seems that these are questions worthy of some study, so I'd like to invite you to participate in a short survey to see what answers it might provide. The survey is open-ended and is included below. To keep answers confidential, I ask that you send your responses directly to my email address: [Risevanfleet@aol.com](mailto:Risevanfleet@aol.com). At no time will I reveal your identity, and when I report the results in a later issue, I will be reporting information about trends and responses from the group, not any identifying individual information. If I wish to use any of your individual responses that might reveal your identity, I will contact you directly to ask your permission to do so. You can always say "no" to that request if you so choose. Your identity will be known only to me and will never be shared or used for any other purpose than this survey.

In order to have time to review responses and compile them for a future article, I ask that you respond to this survey within two weeks of reading this. You do not need to write the question; simply put the number and your short response into an email to me. (continued on page 4)



[Dogbreedinfo.com](http://Dogbreedinfo.com)

## Second Chances, *cont.*



Although most of his therapy dog work is with the preschoolers, he performed admirably on nursing home visits, and doesn't even seem to notice passing baby strollers. He has a charming way of evaluating when he's "on" or "off duty," and often it is the case that he will find a quiet spot nearby to curl up and wait until he's needed.

Dunk is a dog that someone had thrown away. Barbara Klucik gave him a second chance and he became a wonderful family member and an accomplished agility dog. Then upon his retirement from agility he had a chance at a new career as a therapy dog. Dunk still lives with his second family, and now he also has a second career.

But when Dr. Gee lost Louie, the brilliant Miniature Poodle around whom her research with preschoolers had been centered, Dunk was considered as a potential substitute. When not herding or playing agility he was quite calm, and he had a sweet and loving nature, traits he shared with Louie.

The only real obstacle for Dunk was training him to repress his ingrained desire to herd those small wheeled moving objects. Training began immediately, and he responded as he had with all of the changes he faced in his life: with impressive adaptability. After just a month he was ready to take his therapy dog test. When the tester rolled by in a wheelchair, Dunk sat calmly, watching as if he were only mildly interested. Dunk had learned to assess the situation and he seemed to understand that if he was being asked to be calm that request extended to moving objects on wheels and herding them was no longer an option.



*Dr. Gee received her Ph.D. in the Cognitive and Neural Sciences program of the Department of Psychology at the University of South Florida. Her research examines the impact of the presence of certified therapy dogs on the execution of cognitive and motor skills in typical and developmentally delayed preschool children. For example, she has demonstrated that children adhere to instructions better, perform motor skills tasks faster and make fewer errors on a categorization task when performed in the presence of a therapy dog relative to a human or a stuffed dog.*

## The Spirit of Counseling Psychology: The People and Animal Welfare (PAW) Project in the Dominican Republic by Mary Lou Randour

I have been a psychologist for over 30 years—mostly in psychoanalytic-oriented theory and practice. However, I have been active in counseling psychology for a mere four years and it is here, in counseling psychology, that I found the part that seemed to be missing before. At heart, I am an activist. My parents told me that when I was four years old they should have bought me a soap box. A letter that I wrote to the editor of a major newspaper was published when I was twelve years old.

When I found Counseling Psychology, which was trying to establish a division for Human Animal Studies in the American Psychological Association, I felt that I was home. I was, and am, so drawn to the main principles of counseling psychology—operating from a positive developmental framework, seeking social justice, being active in the community, appreciating and welcoming diversity of backgrounds and entertaining multiple perspectives.  
(continued on page 4)

## Falling in Love...survey *cont.*

**Instructions:** Please answer the five questions below with just one or two paragraphs each. Please send answers to me directly at [Risevanfleet@aol.com](mailto:Risevanfleet@aol.com).

**A. Please provide your name, email address, full phone number, state or country where you live, and occupation** (this information will remain confidential and will be used only if I have questions about your responses).

**B. Please describe your special full in love" dog. Include what your relationship was like.**

**C. How long ago did you fall in love with this dog? How old were you?**

**D. Why do you think you had such a special relationship with this dog?**

**E. In what ways has the relationship with this special dog changed your life?**

Thank you for participating in this study! Results will be made available to respondents in the future.



Puppyprimer.com

Note: This article first appeared in the November/December 2010 issue of *The APDT Chronicle of the Dog*, and is modified and reprinted here with their permission.



Risë and Karrie

*Risë VanFleet, Ph.D., is a child/family psychologist, registered play therapist-supervisor, force-free trainer of therapy dogs, and a Certified Dog Behavior Consultant (with the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants) in Boiling Springs, PA. She is the author of many books in the play therapy field, and her book, **Play Therapy with Kids & Canines**, won the Planet Dog Foundation's Sit. Speak. Act. Award for best book on service and therapy dogs, as judged in the 2008 Dog Writers Association of America competition. Her series of articles, **Engaging Owners Fully in Dog Training**, in the 2009 issues of *The APDT Chronicle of the Dog* recently won the DWAA Award for Best Subject Related Series in a Magazine. She conducts trainings on Animal-Assisted Play Therapy and volunteers as a trainer and behaviorist at a local canine rescue. She can be reached through her websites at [www.playfulpooch.org](http://www.playfulpooch.org), [www.play-therapy.com](http://www.play-therapy.com), or at [Risevanfleet@aol.com](mailto:Risevanfleet@aol.com).*

## The Spirit *cont.*

The People and Animal Welfare Project that I am helping lead in the Dominican Republic is a good illustration of applying the knowledge and skills that counseling psychology has to improve the real lives of people and all those who live in the community, including the animals.

Although its neighbor to the west, Haiti, has received—and deservedly so—much of the world's attention, the Dominican Republic also has great areas of poverty and need. There are no animal control agencies in the Dominican Republic; as a result there are thousands of dogs and cats roaming the streets, highways, and rural villages. Some of these animals have rabies. There have been several deaths by rabies in the Dominican Republic in 2010. Those animals who do not have rabies exhibit multiple health problems, some of which are transferrable to the human population. Almost without exception, all of these homeless dogs and cats are suffering—not just from hunger, mange, and other ailments, but serious, untreated injuries. On my last visit to the D.R. we saw a dog in the middle of the street that was near death, with deep, exposed wounds on her body.

The People and Animals Welfare (PAW) Project in the Dominican Republic is the first community project of a newly formed organization, Casa de Orientacion y Desarrollo Real (CODR). The mission of CODR is to build a new generation of leadership in the Dominican Republic by overcoming the barriers to university education for people from indigent backgrounds. CODR believes that there are many undiscovered leaders in the Dominican Republic.

(continued on page 5)



Mary Lou Randour

## The Spirit *cont.*



Our goal is to identify and support this next generation of leadership by identifying them and offering a full range of services, including housing near universities, educational counseling, cultural enrichment (arts, music, philosophy, and history), language training, and perhaps most important, the development of community organizing and leadership skills. The Board of Directors of CODR live in the United States, however, all have active and strong ties with the community, business, and government leaders in the Dominican Republic.

The goal of PAW is to help people and animals; we see the connection between animal and human welfare. The people in the community will benefit from participating in a community organizing effort, learning leadership skills, and being exposed to new activities. The intense suffering of so many animals in the Dominican Republic will be reduced by starting to work on the problem of overpopulation; those animals in need will be given other necessary medical treatment. If an animal is beyond medical care and suffering, he or she will be given a peaceful death.

The first field campaign of the PAW project will be held from July 9 – 16, 2011 in a poor area of Santo Domingo. (On the left you can see the clinic where the PAW campaign will take place. The gentleman in the photograph is Dr. Frias, Head of the Veterinary School at the Universidad Autonoma.) CODR, in partnership

with the Veterinary School of the Universidad in Santo Domingo, and World Vets, an international organization that runs spay-neuter campaigns throughout the world, will set up a clinic to vaccinate, spay, and neuter up to 1,000 animals. CODR students and other volunteers will help organize the community prior to the campaign, informing them of its importance, and inviting them to participate. The goal is not only to vaccinate, spay and neuter large numbers of animals in poor communities, but also to reach the people in those communities by working with them to build a sustainable program of animal and human welfare. Volunteers will work with community leaders and members to ensure that the July campaign is understood and accepted, and that as many people and animals benefit from it as possible. Local youth will see the CODR students, also from impoverished backgrounds, working on local projects and attending university. We hope that will enable them to see that receiving a higher education might be possible for them, too.



After this intensive field campaign from July 9 – 16, CODR and the Veterinary School of the Universidad Autonoma, plan to continue to build local capacity to vaccinate, spay and neuter the overwhelming population of dogs and cats in the D.R.

We hope to have two or three intensive field campaigns a year; however, also essential to the plan is to build local capacity so there will be a continuous operation organized and run by CODR and other local Dominican groups.

For more information about the PAW Project, or CODR, contact Mary Lou Randour at [Randour@comcast.net](mailto:Randour@comcast.net)



## Furry Family Members

by Karen Waldman



Petuniversity.com

Can you imagine life without pets? For some people, the animals they love are literally their lifelines.

While in grad school 20+ years ago, I trained in a local hospital. I'll never forget my very first patient – a frail, unkempt gentleman in his 80s. He had collapsed in his front yard and was rushed to the ER after someone called 911. He was diagnosed with dehydration, malnutrition, uncontrolled diabetes, and dementia.

After being stabilized, the man was transferred to a locked Psychiatry unit due to his altered mental status and insistence that he be discharged. He tearfully explained that he had to get home to his beloved dog that was trapped inside. Unfortunately, “Mr. Bojangles” could not think of anyone to call for help. Adult Protective Services (APS) was contacted, and a worker visited Mr. B’s home. A shaggy, smelly, old mutt was found inside the filthy house that was freezing cold and in great disrepair. No neighbors could provide any helpful information,

and nobody was willing to temporarily care for the dog. The APS worker knew that no nursing home would accept this mangy-looking critter, concluding that she had no choice but to take it to the local animal shelter. Unfortunately, she was informed that the dog’s poor condition required euthanasia. Although Mr. B had dementia, he understood this sad news with every cell of his being.

“Muffin was the only family I had,” he wailed in agony. The coroner undoubtedly wrote “cardiac arrest” on the death certificate the next day, but we all knew that Mr. Bojangles died from a broken heart.

Fast-forward 20 years to another patient, Mary – a kind, middle-aged woman who never wed or had kids. She has a debilitating, terminal illness and was referred to group therapy for help with her chronic pain and depression over her inevitable loss of independence. Although she mentioned friends, her greatest joy was clearly her precious little terrier. She’d raised him from puppyhood, and they were almost inseparable after he became blind.

Mary missed two group sessions and didn’t answer her phone. She looked horrible when she finally returned, tearfully sharing that her “baby” had run into the street and been killed by a car. Mary blamed herself and vowed to never get another pet, stressing that it wouldn’t be fair to adopt an animal that would outlive her. During subsequent weeks, Mary’s health and depression notably worsened.

Fortunately, fellow group members kept reminding her how much love she had to give, pressuring her to adopt a rescue animal, and pointing out that her face “lit up” whenever she mentioned her little terrier. Mary finally agreed to “just look” – but only if her friends promised to care for any pet that outlived her. The following week, this amazing woman, beaming broadly, announced that she went to a

shelter as promised. After learning that there were no “old” dogs available, she reportedly started to leave when an energetic little mutt raced over and “chose” her. Mary described how this irresistible bundle of fur helped heal her hurting heart. Happier and healthier now, she recently announced that “Muffin” is so friendly that they plan to complete the required training to begin pet therapy in nursing homes and hospitals.

*Karen Waldman, Ph.D., has had a soft spot in her heart for animals for as long as she can remember. While growing up, she and her sisters had dogs, cats, birds, fish, lizards, guppies, and even a baby alligator. This was good practice before raising her own (furless) critters with her husband Ken. For the past 14 years, she has served as a Staff Psychologist at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston. She also holds an Assistant Professorship in the Menninger Dept. of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Baylor College of Medicine. In her work, Karen is continually touched by her patients' stories of the animals they have loved.*



Karen and Bruce

# Reading Horses, Reading People: Improving Social Skills and Awareness Through Equine Assisted Therapy

by Arieahn Matamonasa-Bennett

Highlighted in the January 2010 AHI newsletter, (“Case Studies Show Merit for Equine Assisted Therapy Research”), the urgent need for systematic, empirical research in the area of equine assisted therapy was discussed. The research in this area has been largely anecdotal, and those studies that have been done have methodological difficulties. There are many Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) practitioners like myself, who have experienced the power and potential that exists with this unique modality - particularly with clients for whom our traditional empirically validated therapies *have not been effective*. Case studies may continue to

provide valuable directions for establishing a research agenda. Highlights from a recent case may provide support and directions for future research.

Some practitioners of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP), as well as current theories, suggest that EAP may be most beneficial for clients who have been non-responsive to other more traditional treatment modalities or clients who have difficulties with talk-based therapies (e.g. Seriously Emotionally Disturbed



[SED] clients and Autism Spectrum Disorders [ASD]). I have done EAP with SED and ASD adolescents for the last two years as part of a grant-funded state respite services program. These clients receive twelve EAP sessions in addition to their other therapeutic services. If improvement is evident, the services are extended for additional sessions.

What seems to be the most powerful and beneficial aspect of this work for this population is that it is *not* traditional office-based therapy (even though an experienced licensed therapist is always present along with an Equine Specialist). The experiential nature of EAP requires and facilitates moment-to-moment awareness, constant communication, empathy, emotional regulation and problem solving throughout the session. Clients get immediate feedback from our equine partners and are often more likely to respond to this than to feedback from the human side of the treatment team.

(continued on page 8)

## Reading Horses... *cont.*

Perhaps the most dramatic results I have experienced when working with SED clients have been with reading social cues, understanding boundaries and “safety” and in dealing with anger. This article focuses on reading social cues.

Many of the clients I work with have difficulty with noticing, interpreting and responding to social cues. One such client had this as a major goal of EAP treatment. This client really loved animals but I discovered in his history he had mortally wounded a family pet by “hugging” it too tightly - clearly missing its “clues” and distress. Using a horse with extensive experience in EAP (and its survival instincts intact) along with an experienced EAP team, one goal was to teach the client about reading horse cues that might translate into his relationships with other smaller animals and eventually people.

The sessions began with observing the therapy horse both by herself and then later with her pasture-mate. Initially, we were focusing on “big clues” involving large body movements such as the head, feet and tail and proximity (use of space). When the client was able to notice and respond to these “big clues” and recognize patterns in the ways in which the horses used their bodies to communicate with each other and move each other in the arena, the work continued with “small clues,” which included more subtle cues such as ear movements, eye contact and

facial expressions.

What I found over several months and approximately twenty weekly EAP sessions is that he was able to learn and respond to both the large cues, and later, the smaller cues of the horse. The response time – between when he observed a behavior and when he was able to verbalize it – did shorten as therapy progressed, however, this was an uneven process and some sessions were better than others. He also became noticea-

bly more responsive and aware of all of the non-verbal cues that both my treatment partner and I were consciously using with the hope that the observational skills he was learning with the horse would translate to his interactions with people. (continued on page 9)



Seattletimes.nwsourc.com



Homeaway.com

## Reading Horses... *cont.*

This client was highly motivated to form a friendship with the therapy horses, and this certainly may have accounted for his success in learning their “clues.” His primary therapist and teachers noted the improvements in this client’s social interactions outside of the EAP sessions. The hope is that he will continue to learn and expand his level of awareness for both his own safety and the safety of others. In this case, working with a horse allowed him a therapeutic AAT (Animal-Assisted Therapy) experience without risking the well-being of a smaller animal.



Bobfears.com



Arieahn and Savannah

The practice of EAP has grown, yet much research is still needed, and at the present time solid research data is not yet available to support its effectiveness for specific diagnoses. In the years since I began incorporating EAP into my clinical work, I have experienced the ways in which partnering with horses in this experiential therapy can bring about powerful transformations for a number of clients who have not been successful in other

treatment settings, and this, I believe, is where research into EAP may produce the most fruitful results.

*Arieahn Matamonasa-Bennett, Ph.D. is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and an Advanced Certified EAGALA practitioner. She is an Assistant Professor at DePaul University in Chicago where her teaching includes a course entitled, The Wisdom and Power of Horses that explores the role of horses in physical and emotional healing. She is the founder of a holistic therapy practice with her husband called Equilibrium. Her plans are to advance understanding in human-horse relationships. For more information, contact Arieahn at [amatamol@depaul.edu](mailto:amatamol@depaul.edu) or [info@equilibrium.org](mailto:info@equilibrium.org). For information in EAGALA visit or <http://www.EAGALA.org>.*

## Puttin' on the Ratz by Cynthia Stuart



Funny-potato.com

What do a 1929 hit song by Irving Berlin, a celebration of rats, and Clint Eastwood have in common? The answer to this question is the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Fab Rat and Animal Friends Festival, held in South Philadelphia, PA. The Festival is an annual rat-centric event that honors the role that rats play in the lives of those of us who are fortunate enough to have brought them into our hearts and homes.

Each year, the festival has a theme, and in 2010, it was "Puttin' on the Ratz". In keeping with the popular song and 1930 motion picture of the same name, Rat Chick Rescue and Advocacy Group organizers decorated the hall and wore costumes true to the high class, jazz-age era depicted in the tune and film. As a confirmed rat addict, I hopped a couple of trains from Long Island, NY to Philly to be a part of the celebration, and to document the action for the readers of *It's a Rat's World*.

Ms. Pandolfi, the director of Rat Chick Rat Rescue and Advocacy Group (appropriately attired in top hat and tails), hosted the annual Fab Rats A-Rat-Emmy Awards, which honors those persons who

have made a distinct contribution to the welfare of rats and/or have provided rats with positive public relations through their disclosures of their lives with rats. This has been a very effective method to get positive PR for rats, because in America, celebrities are our version of royalty. Prominent cases in point are past winners/rat owners Clint and Dina Eastwood and Regis Philbin. Despite his on-screen persona, Clint is a softie when it comes to animals – including his rats!

The other major on-stage events included the South Philadelphia Older Adult Center singers, who provided a very entertaining musical interlude in which they adapted old musical standards to reflect a rattie theme (for example, "Puttin' on the Ritz" morphed into "Takin' Home a Rat"). Finally there was the rat beauty pageant, in which even the

lone kitten was allowed to enter. Winners received wonderful prizes and humans and ratties alike were very much caught up in the spirit of the activities. The beauty pageant should in no way be compared to a rat show. Ms. Pandolfi believes that competitions that follow standards, such as at dog shows, only encourage breeders to add to the population, when there are so very many healthy, beautiful and friendly homeless rats that would make wonderful family members. Other sentiments that Ms. Pandolfi shared with me included her utmost dedication not only to rescuing rats in need, but promoting them as the valued creatures we rat folks know them to be.

When I asked how the idea for an annual rat-centric event came about, Ms. Pandolfi explained that she thought it would be a good idea to have a fun, educational event bringing **all** animal groups together. It would be an opportunity to get people interested in animal rescue and to expose various rescue groups to the public as well as to help rats specifically. Not surprising, Ms. Pandolfi is strongly pro animal and human rights and Rat Chick Rescue and Advocacy Group has a strong animal rights focus. (continued on page 11)



Animalworld.com

## Puttin' on the Ratz *cont.*



Joannecasey.blogspot.com

Ms. Pandolfi and her group also work hard to dispel myths about rats. Some of these misconceptions include the idea that rats are dirty, that they bite, and are associated with evil. Her response to such perceptions is to explain that people really have to get to know rats by actually meeting them. She also asks the uninitiated specifically what they do not like about rats, which gets the educational conversation going.

Ms. Pandolfi did note that the Fab Rats and Animal Friends events do get quite a number of non-rat people visiting, and the response is usually quite positive. Exposure to rats wins these visitors over! Considering that Fab Rats and Animal Friends celebrations have drawn over 500 visitors, Rat Chick Rescue and Advocacy Group is doing an extraordinary job in spreading the word that rats can be wonderful companions. A teacher by profession, Ms. Pandolfi also uses rats to teach about prejudice. She believes that those of us who have opened our hearts and homes to these critters are open-minded, critical thinkers who base their beliefs on facts, rather

than false beliefs.

In addition to speaking with Ms. Pandolfi, I spoke extensively with a young woman with Asperger's Disorder who had brought her own beloved rat to the event and participated in the rat beauty pageant. She was quite forthcoming about how her rats have been the impetus for her social involvement in the local rat community.

As for the future of the Fab Rats and Animal Friends Festival, Ms. Pandolfi has decided on a Western theme for 2011, "Rootin'- Tootin' Ratties".

I encourage those interested in helping to check out the Rat Chick website at [www.ratchickratrescue.com](http://www.ratchickratrescue.com) for information about the organization and how you could help. Readers' donations will be put to great use providing medical care, everyday necessities for the rats, and to assist in getting homes for ratties in need.

Maria and her crew at Rat Chick Rescue and Animal Friends devote an extraordinary amount of time, energy and emotion to rat welfare, and they are most deserving of support.

In the meantime, I will be trying to find an appropriate cowgirl outfit to wear at next year's "Rootin'- Tootin' Ratties".

*Cynthia Stuart is a professor of psychology and medical law and ethics who teaches at a junior college and an online four year college in New York. Her special interests are in the areas of adaptation of psychoanalytic theory to multicultural contexts as well as application of psychoanalysis to work with the human-animal bond. She is the extremely proud mother of a fancy rat named Ratmir, two guinea pigs, Hypatia and Athena and a degu, Don Diego del Degu. Cynthia would enjoy hearing from others interested in the human-animal bond.*



Funny-potato.com



# Animals in Print

A book review column centered  
on Animal-Human relationships

by Arieahn Matamonasa Bennett, Ph.D.

## MEMOIRS:

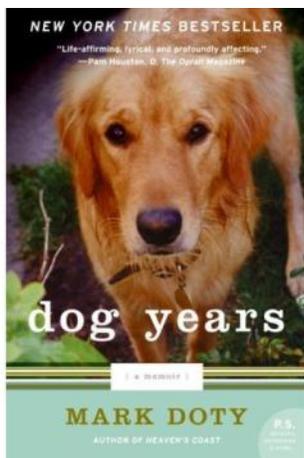
### Relationships with animals give our lives hope and meaning

#### Dog Years:

#### A Memoir

by Mark Doty

(Harper Perennial; 2008)



Author Mark Doty is best known for his books of poetry and non-fiction prose that have earned him numerous honors and distinctions. In *Dog Years*, he poetically explores his reflections and observations on his 16-year relationship with his dogs Arden and Beau and the ways in which his relationship with these dogs gave his life continuity and hope during some

of his darkest days. Even though he describes the challenges inherent with expressing our relationships with animals with *words*, when in fact animals are totally *non-verbal*, he manages to artfully describe the depth and profound sense of love that people experience in relationships with their animals and the intense grief that is felt when they die.

He likens articulating these emotions to a dreamer trying to retell a dream. The listener is unable to enter the “spell” of the dreamer and capture the “deeply interior character” of the dream. He suggests that, “the experience of loving an animal is actually *more resistant* to language, since animals cannot speak back to us, cannot characterize themselves or correct our assumptions about them. They look at us across a void made of the distance between their lives and our immersion in language.”

While this memoir deals with the pain of loss and grief- it is *not* a dark book as it has many joy-filled, life-affirming moments that animals give us as they share our lives. Contained in his beautiful narrative is a message of hope

*“He was a vessel. Himself, yes, plain, ordinary, and perfect in that sloppy-dog way- but he carried something else for me, too, which was my will to live. I had given it to him to carry for me, like some king in a fairy tale, whose power depends upon a lustrous, mysterious beast, and who, without that animal presence, will wither away into shadow. I didn’t understand till much later how I’d given that power to both of them, my two speechless friends; they were the secret heroes of my own vitality”* p. 14

Dog lovers will really enjoy this book as Doty very eloquently expresses what so many of us feel in our hearts but are unable to put into words. For those who do not share their lives with dogs, it may help them understand the depth of love and feeling that dogs bring for those who do.





# Animals in Print

A book review column centered  
on Animal-Human relationships

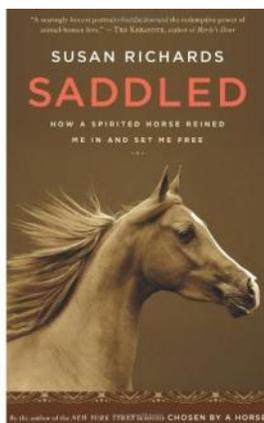
by Arieahn Matamonasa Bennett, Ph.D.

## MEMOIRS:

### Relationships with animals give our lives hope and meaning

#### Saddled: How a spirited horse reined me in and set me free

by Susan Richards (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 2010)



Another memoir, this book also explores the ways in which the author finds the will to live, heal, and the ability to experience love through her relationship with an animal (a Morgan horse named Georgia). Her previous books, *“Chosen by a Horse: How a broken horse fixed a broken heart”* and *“Chosen Forever: A memoir of a horse, a book and finding love”* explore the ways in which the author opens herself to love and relationships from what she learned from a rescue horse named Lay Me Down. In this latest book,

she takes the reader back to when she got her first horse, Georgia, and delves into deeply painful childhood experiences and alcoholism that began at age 23.

After searching for a year to find a horse, she finds a Morgan mare named Georgia for whom she feels an instant familiarity and a heart-connection. Richards describes the moment when she first realizes that she is an alcoholic and her decision to stop drinking and leave an abusive marriage and how it this process was driven by her desire to become a better person for her horse. While the power of love that she experiences with Georgia resonates throughout the book, Georgia (who is *not* always easy to love) is a strong-willed, spirited and confident horse, who also mirrors the person that Richards would like to become. Likewise, Georgia’s pasture mates, Hot Shot and Tempo, mirror the qualities of both unrealized potential and emotional numbing or disconnection that Richards also possesses as she journeys toward sobriety and a new life. These horses are not merely living metaphors for Richards’ journey - they are healers in their own right. The peace and tranquility of her farm, the solitude, and the continuity and enormous responsibility of caring for horses, all provide her with opportunities to learn a new way to be in the world.

It is clear that having been hurt and betrayed by so many people from such a

young age made loving and trusting humans for Richards incredibly difficult. It was through opening herself to the love and connection with her horse that Richards was able to heal those wounds and move forward in her life.

*Arieahn Matamonasa-Bennett, Ph.D. is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and an Advanced Certified EAGALA practitioner. She is an Assistant Professor at DePaul University in Chicago. She is the founder of a holistic therapy practice with her husband called Equilibrium. Her plans are to advance understanding in human-horse relationships. For more information, contact Arieahn at [amatamol@depaul.edu](mailto:amatamol@depaul.edu) or [info@equilibrium.org](mailto:info@equilibrium.org)*



Arieahn and Savannah

## Healing Children Through Pet Assisted Therapy

by James Feinberg



Dude

Is your child having difficulty making friends? If so, should you be worried? Given that a child's ability to make friends, grow friendships, and maintain friendships over time not only reflects his current psychological health but his future psychological adjustment and success as an adult, the answer is without a doubt, yes.

When children are not progressing socially, this is a strong cue that something serious is going on. In fact, lack of friendships is often indicative of an underlying behavioral, emotional, psychological, and/or neurological problem. A meticulous evaluation is essential to sorting out not only what is going on but what therapeutic interventions are warranted. However, often, after only a brief interview, a diagnosis is formulated and a prescription is written. This is usually where treatment stops. Although medication may alleviate some symptoms, it does not teach coping strategies or skills absolutely essential to learning about relationships.

So, how do children learn to make friends? Their brains provide an internal framework for social learning but interaction and modeling fine tune the process. Yet, some kids do not naturally learn the essentials, namely social judgment and social skills. Sadly, the harder these children try, the more their peers reject them for acting inappropriately. The more their parents and teachers try to help by pointing out what they are doing wrong or should be doing differently, the more shame these children feel. Clearly, these kids need help on a number of levels but where do they and their families turn?

Pet assisted therapy is an extremely effective modality of treatment for childhood and adolescent social- interactional problems as it is highly empowering as well as non-shaming. Because children naturally gravitate toward pets because they

want to love and be loved, the stage is easily set for social learning and emotional healing. Through guided interactions with my highly skilled therapy dogs, G and Dude both of whom are German Shepherds; children learn the nuts and bolts of relationships without even realizing it. This learning occurs gradually and in steps where the initial goal is only to observe my therapy dogs' behavior and speculate what my dogs are trying to tell them. Children then learn to observe the effects of their behavior upon my therapy dogs' facial expressions and body postures. Later, these children are encouraged to try other social behaviors to obtain the desired response from my therapy dogs. With time and repetition, these children not only learn to accurately read social cues and adjust their behavior accordingly, their emotional wounds are healed as well. Children and their parents consistently tell me that my loving four legged companions have greatly assisted them in transforming their lives. To quote one child, "G is the best teacher I ever had!"

*Dude and Dr. James Feinberg, Child Clinical Psychologist, are located at 10900 Manchester Road, Suite 201, Kirkwood, Missouri 63122. They can be reached at 314-966-0880.*



Aspireofillinois.org

## Fieldstone Farm: A Therapeutic Riding Center

### by Teresa Morris

Gaitway High School is a public high school imbedded in Fieldstone Farm, a therapeutic riding center in Chagrin Falls, OH. This collaboration is unique in the United States. Children who have been unable to surmount the barriers that typical public schools pose for children with emotional disabilities are eligible to attend Gaitway High School.

Gaitway High School was recently awarded The Asset Builder Award from the Ohio Department of Education for substance abuse prevention and intervention efforts that work to establish relationships, remove learning barriers, and develop positive character traits among Ohio youth.

Recipients of the Asset Builder Awards are selected based on their efforts to build in

youth the 40 Developmental Assets identified by the Search Institute, a nonprofit organization ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org))

One example of these assets and how they developed at Gaitway is the Horse Buddy program. Some of the most powerful learning moments can be captured in caring for horses. Gaitway students are given the opportunity to enjoy quiet time to connect with and care for their horse buddy, a **responsibility** they take very seriously and in which they find great comfort. In fact, many students specifically ask for horse buddy time to help themselves get back on track. They use it as a time to regroup, settle their thoughts and connect with their companion.

Horses have the uncanny ability to read and react to their environment. One time, Steve, a

Gaitway student, was talking with a local news reporter who was there to do a story on Gaitway. Steve was also grooming his horse buddy. There was a great deal of activity in the barn with other participants preparing for their lessons: the news reporter talking, the photographer taking pictures, and one staff member (Coach) with a booming voice calling to someone at the other end of the aisle. Steve's horse began getting noticeably agitated, shifting around and pawing the ground. Steve began explaining to the reporter that horses are a lot like people and they react to their environment, just like his horse was doing. But since horses can't think through their behavior, they need help from their people. At that, Steve set a calming hand on his horse's shoulder,

took a deep breath and said some soothing words, at which point the horse dropped his head and almost fell asleep.

Steve told the reporter that his horse taught him that he was really in control of his own emotions. He said that before he came to Gaitway High School, he was more like a horse – reacting. But now he knows that he is really in charge of his own life. And equally important, he could affect the behaviors of people around him. He was discovering **personal power**.  
(continued on page 16).



Alex with Bruce

## Fieldstone Farm, *cont.*



Tiffany and Spider

Another activity, Equine Partnerships, capitalizes on the benefits of the entire Gaitway High School / Fieldstone Farm environment. It is guided by a trained social worker with staff support and partners horses with students for the goal of social skill development. One example that demonstrates the effectiveness of this program was witnessed recently. Last academic year began as normal with most students in the local public schools doing fairly well. Yet, near the end of the first quarter, these schools were beginning to identify students who were not likely to be successful in their regular classrooms and therefore, began inquiring about options at Gaitway.

This led to several newly enrolled students at Gaitway, creating some turmoil

among the already established class. So one day in Equine Partnerships, the social worker turned out a small group of horses who settled into companionship pretty quickly while the students watched. Students identified which horse seemed to be the leader, which were followers, which acted independently, etc. Then, another horse was added to the group and students were amazed to see the transformation of the herd dynamics. The first leader became submissive. The independent horse joined the group. Students were able to then relate these observations to what they could expect to happen when new students joined their school.

Gaitway High School has demonstrated numerous benefits to the participating children. It has created meaning for stu-

dents. Every student is supported by the best teaching staff in the county, their parents and families, 30 Fieldstone Farm employees, the crew of 50 or so volunteers who work during the day and thousands of additional community supporters who cheer remotely for their success. What began in 2005 as a really good idea has yielded 100% increases in grade point averages and 15 graduates. For students whose profiles indicate that they would otherwise be likely to populate our jails, become teenage parents, or fall to substance abuse, Gaitway students have demonstrated remarkable success. Many of our graduates return to visit with stories of their college lives or their jobs. One of the first graduates is actually training to become a therapeutic riding instructor!

*Teresa Morris is the Program Director at Fieldstone Farm, a NARHA Premier Accredited Center, which serves over 800 participants a year reaching them through various equine programs. For more information on Fieldstone Farm, visit [www.fieldstonefarmtrc.com](http://www.fieldstonefarmtrc.com).*



Teresa and Benny

## WSU's Striker wins 2010 NARHA Equine of the Year Award

### by Sue Jacobson and Phyllis Erdman



Striker

Striker, a 27 year old American Quarter Horse and a highly valued member of Washington State University's Palouse Area Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) herd, was recently named the 2010 NARHA Equine of the Year. This award honors the equine participating in a NARHA Center program who best defines the heart and soul of equine assisted activities and therapies. PATH is a community service program of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University and a NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicapped Association) premier accredited center.

It seems almost as if Striker was destined to be a therapy horse. While still a successful youth show horse, his teenaged owner was in a serious car accident, which left her in a coma with multiple broken bones and a severe closed-head

injury. With his picture by her bed and because of her desire to ride him again, Striker became her incentive to recover. She gradually regained her ability to walk and was determined to walk without her walker because she didn't want to scare her horse. Four months after her accident, she showed Striker in a halter class. Despite her difficulty in walking, he performed well and they won first place.

When Striker was later diagnosed with navicular at age 17, his owner made the difficult decision to donate him to a navicular research study at Washington State University where he could contribute to helping other horses. However, because

Striker was sound enough for light riding and had such an exceptional disposition, the researchers thought that he would be a good fit for the College of Veterinary Medicine's therapeutic riding program. So he was then donated to PATH and spent the next 10 years helping people with disabilities to gain confidence while learning to ride. His patience, tolerance, and dependability were highly valued by all who worked with him.

Sam, a teenager with autism and participant in the PATH program, formed a deep bond with Striker. "They say a child needs to have just one special indi-

vidual in their life," says his mom. "If you have that one individual, your prognosis for success goes way up, especially if you are a child who is isolated and different. Striker was the special horse who was just that individual for my son. Since the day when their eyes first met, Sam has been devoted to this beautiful, patient horse. Working with Striker has inspired him to focus on another's feelings rather than his own."

More recently, Striker also participated in PATH to Success, an equine assisted growth and learning program that was started in 2008 at Washington State University. This program was developed by Sue Jacobson and Phyllis Erdman to provide an opportunity for elementary age children to enhance their social competence. "It was amazing to see how the children in this program were automatically drawn to Striker. I believe it was his compassionate soul and his gentle accepting nature that attracted kids naturally to him, and provided them with a safe holding environment" said Phyllis Erdman. Although the children in this program were not physically disabled, they still needed to partner with a horse that instilled trust and enabled them to build their confidence, and Striker provided just that. (cont. on pg. 18).



Striker

## WSU's Striker..., *cont.*



Striker



Striker

Although Striker is still in great health, he was retired from PATH this summer because of some concerns about his physical stability during riding. He is now back in his new quarters at the College of Veterinary Medicine helping future veterinarians learn about equine anatomy. He spends the good weather in a pasture with other horses and for several weeks

during the school year he is brought in to the anatomy lab where he patiently stands in the stocks while students palpate him to learn the external aspects of equine anatomy. So although he is no longer helping kids in the PATH programs, he is still serving others in his own special way.

Striker touched and enriched many, many lives before he came to PATH, during his years at PATH, and continues to do so in his retirement.

For a video of our program, go to <http://education.wsu.edu/> (*Hope, Healing, and Horses*)

*Phyllis Erdman, Ph.D. in Family Therapy, is the Interim Dean for the College of Education at Washington State University. Phyllis is a Clinical Member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and has done clinical work and research on attachment theory and its impact on family/child relationships and couples. She has always had an interest in the animal/human bond and worked with elementary children and therapy dogs during her doctoral internship.*



Striker



Phyllis and Beau

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**ANIMAL/HUMAN INTERACTION: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE SECTION**

**Society of Counseling Psychology, Division 17**

**American Psychological Association**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2010 p. 2**

Are you interested in participating in the activities (e.g., governance, committees, other activities) of this Section? Y\_\_\_\_N\_\_\_\_

**Please check any areas indicating your research and practice interests by using "R," "P," or "R/P" for both research and practice on the following list:**

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*\*\*The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the policies of the APA, the Society/Division of Counseling Psychology, or its Sections.*

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