



# HABIT



## *Human-Animal Bond in Tennessee*

*"A program of the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine"*

**FALL 2008**

### **HABIT Volunteers Remember our Veterans**

At the UT College of Veterinary Medicine, the War Dog Memorial stands out front to remind us of the special connection between people and dogs. HABIT volunteers have been using that bond to brighten the lives of veterans and other residents at the Ben Atchley State Veteran's Home since it opened in early 2007. The Ben Atchley State Veterans Home is a 140 bed facility in the Hardin Valley Road area that opened in January 2007. Their administrators applied to be a HABIT facility before they had residents, as they believed that HABIT visits would be an asset to their activities program. Our monitor at Ben Atchley SVH is Tony DiValentin, a veteran of the US Army.

As a new HABIT program coordinator, I joined Gary Greenwald, an Air Force veteran, and his HABIT dog Lilly back in June to visit the Ben Atchley State Veterans Home as part of my orientation process. Gary, who began visiting in July 2007, particularly requested the SVH because he has a special interest in veterans. Walking the halls with Gary and Lilly, a chocolate Lab, I heard residents' stories and saw their smiles as Lilly worked her quiet magic. At each stop we made, Gary would tell me the resident's career accomplishments in respectful tones while Lilly made her visit. Gary instructed Lilly to "visit," and she would place her muzzle on the knee or bedside of the resident, making herself available to hands made frail by age and illness.

One of the first gentlemen we met was Dick. He played for the University of Tennessee in the early sixties, going on to play with the Chicago Bears (on the same team as Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo), the Detroit Lions, and LA Rams. He is still a big man, but he no longer speaks or moves freely. However, he does smile with recognition and make some gestures when Lilly enters his room. I saw that Lilly drew a smile, not only from Dick, but from his visitor; it was so obvious that she was going to bless everyone she met in the facility with her gentleness and affection.



HABIT Volunteers Gary Greenwald and "Lilly" with Bill.

As we entered the day room on the Alzheimer's unit, several gentlemen turned their heads to watch Lilly, and some were able to call out to Gary and Lilly to visit them. Gary chatted with each man in turn while Lilly nuzzled hands and smiled into their faces. I was able to see how interaction with Gary and Lilly brought each man to the present and caused a brightening of mood and affect. Lilly visited throughout the room, and even shared some of her joy with the staff. Clearly, it wasn't just the residents who looked forward to HABIT visits: several staff persons knelt to get their "furry fix" and a moment of stress relief, too.

But Lilly has some lady friends at the Ben Atchley SVH, too. We made a point to stop by Miss Retha's room because she really loves to see Lilly. Miss Retha is a tiny little lady whose face broke into a huge smile when Lilly came to her bedside. Miss Retha may generally be a happy lady, but her face nearly split in two when Lilly came into view. There was no doubt that this visit was a good thing.



HABIT Volunteers Gary Greenwald and "Lilly" with Gracie.

Photo taken by their daughter Elizabeth Harms

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Another one of Lilly's special stops is to see Loula. When Lilly comes to see Loula, a small miracle occurs. Since Loula is blind and deaf, she spends her day curled up in her bed, with very limited movement and interaction with others. So, when Loula realized that Lilly was under her hand, I was very surprised to see her become animated, to hear her speak, and to pet Lilly. For Loula, the tactile stimulation of petting Lilly opened up a world of pleasure and recognition that seemed to bring her to life. Gary says that Loula always thanks him for bringing Lilly, and it's easy to see why.

While we were walking through the halls, a visitor asked us to be sure to visit her parents. We walked down the hall to meet her parents who are both residents at Ben Atchley SVH. Bill and Gracie share a room and are always happy to see Lilly. In this little picture of shared domesticity, all that was missing for them was a dog. So when HABIT volunteers visit their room, they are picture perfect and all smiles. A sense of normalcy is another one of the gifts a HABIT dog can bring to a residential facility that seems more hospital, sometimes, than home.

After we finished making the rounds, Gary shared with me that Lilly has a special friend who waits in his motorized chair at the front door. Though James doesn't go out anymore, he has a friend bring him treats to share with Lilly on her visits. This isn't lost on Lilly, as she now knows James by sight in his cap and chair, waiting at the front entrance. Though HABIT dogs don't eat on their visits, Gary takes the treat and gives it to Lilly; this small gift between friends, at the end of her visit, is enjoyed by all parties.

So, just as dogs have worked side by side with our veterans, they continue to work in the Ben Atchley State Veteran's Home to share that special bond between people and animals. Wherever HABIT animals go, they bring smiles, happier memories, and an opportunity to share stories and a moment's normalcy, so much needed in our veterans' homes and other care giving facilities. Veterans' Day usually brings to mind sacrifice and service, and I'm happy to report that our HABIT volunteers are doing what they can to say "thank you" at the Ben Atchley home and facilities like it throughout East Tennessee.

By Ruth Sapp.

From the Chair

Hope everyone had a good summer. It seems the warm days just fly by. I always feel that after July 4th the summer is practically over especially now that the school year starts so early.

As Fall begins I often think of the many HABIT volunteers that used to take the month of August off. This was due to the flea problem, which was worse during that month. How things have changed with the introduction of flea prevention products we have today! This has enabled us to make even more visits since we can go year around.

HABIT has so many exciting things happening. The Veterinary College has a new Dean, and I look forward to working with him concerning the HABIT program. He evidently has a positive attitude toward HABIT and realizes the benefits of animal-assisted therapy. Having our Ruff Read outreach program get underway is another plus for us. Also, our programs are continuing to grow in Knoxville and the surrounding counties.

As always, thank you for all you do,  
Joan Cohn

By: Vicki McKernan

On June 1st, H.A.B.I.T. volunteers joined other animal lovers at Pearson Springs Park in Maryville for the second annual Smoky Mountain Critter Fest. Mimi Bristow, Janet Hathaway, and Vicki McKernan, along with dogs Evee, Buc, and Keric, shared smiles and information about H.A.B.I.T. with visitors at their booth. Besides H.A.B.I.T., many other animal organizations were represented, including various dog rescue groups, an exotic birds exhibit, and the Elephant Sanctuary. The annual Critter Fest event benefits the Blount County Humane Society's No Kill Animal Shelter effort and provides activities for all members of the family including entertainment, food, crafts, and homemade goodies.



Janet Hathaway with "Keric" McKernan and Mimi Bristow with " Evee"



## “Cherokee”

Cherokee, born on 12/10/2001, was bred to be a Leader Dog for the Blind. We picked him up on a freezing Michigan morning at the school in Rochester MI, and he spent the next year undergoing extensive socialization and obedience training. He spent the year going everywhere with us and working locally with the Sevierville Lions Club, promoting Leader Dog’s services throughout the U.S. Because of his exceptional gait and abilities, he was earmarked at nine months old for a high-profile blind lady in Pennsylvania. However, one elbow did not pass the strict medical evaluation that Leader Dog required; so he made a career change and returned to us looking for a job. That’s when HABIT was discovered.

As a HABIT dog, Cherokee began visiting at Wellington Place and then added Sevier County Health Care Center. HABIT volunteers that did not have a dog borrowed Cherokee. He has made at least two and sometimes as many as four nursing home visits a week since he began four years ago. He needed more work, so we added the school program. Even with all his HABIT work, going to work with us every day, and continuing Lions Club Activities, Cherokee still seemed bored and wanted more to do.

At community events we attended for Leader Dog & HABIT, we met a member of Tennessee Special Response Team A, a K-9 handler Search and Rescue team. Cherokee was evaluated by the head trainer and was found to have the abilities and drive needed for a SAR dog. Even though at three years old he was starting a little late in life, it was anticipated that with a lot of work he could certify and be operational in a year. This rounded out Cherokee’s life, and he became “all that he could be”.

Cherokee certified in area search through National Association of Search & Rescue in eight months. Then he went on to certify through NASAR in Human Remains Detection, Land and Water. He was the first dog on the team to be HR certified and the first to be dual certified. From an operational standpoint, he developed an exceptional reputation with the area Rescue Squads and Law enforcement community. He was social and amiable, yet did his job quietly, methodically, and consistently. Cherokee successfully located an evading teenager in less than two hours after 80 volunteers had searched the area for over 24 hours. He located a body under a dock after two dive teams insisted he was wrong because they had already searched under the dock – yet an underwater camera the next day confirmed the victim was exactly where Cherokee had alerted the night before. His deepest water find was in 72 feet of water at Norris Lake, putting very grateful divers within a few feet of the body, thus saving a lot of time and resources. In addition to his field work, he was the PR dog for the Search and Rescue team for many events at schools, churches and civic organizations, doing demonstration and spreading his gentle nature around.



“Cherokee” reading with a Student at Seymour Elementary School. Photo taken by Greg Hirshoren of the UTCVM Photo Lab.

Our head SAR trainer said this about Cherokee: “Cherokee in his own way made our human world a little better, and his presence had a calming effect on those who needed it. His work as a Search and Rescue Canine helped many, many others, some of whom never even met him. He was only six and a half, but he did more in that time than most do in 12. He went way too early, but he went in his way -- he worked hard, played hard, was with friends all the time; and when it was time to sleep, he did it with dignity and no pain.... Celebrate who he was, how he lived, and all the good he brought to you and countless others.”

By Suzie Ferguson

### How did you find your pet?

There are many ways that H.A.B.I.T. volunteers have acquired their pets; some found them at a breeder, others got them from a rescue group, and others were adopted by their animal. In a future newsletter, we would like to tell some of the stories about how our animal friends became part of our families. Please contact the H.A.B.I.T. office and let us know the story behind your pet. Feel free to email us baby pictures of your furry loved ones, and you may see them in the newsletter. The email address for the office is [HABIT@utk.edu](mailto:HABIT@utk.edu). Thank you.

### Pet Loss Support Group

Veterinary Social Work offers a Pet Loss Support Group for those coping with the death of a pet. The free meetings are held the first and third Tuesdays, September through December, on the agricultural campus. The next meeting will be Tue., Dec. 2, 6:15 p.m.-7:45 p.m. Forest Products Center, 2506 Jacobs Drive, UT agricultural campus.

For more information call 865-755-8839 or visit the website  
[vetsocialwork@mail.ag.utk.edu](mailto:vetsocialwork@mail.ag.utk.edu)  
[www.vet.utk.edu/socialwork/pdf/PLSG%20%20schedule.pdf](http://www.vet.utk.edu/socialwork/pdf/PLSG%20%20schedule.pdf)



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# Paw Prints in the Heart

By Karen Armsey

In my job as the HABIT Program Administrator, I find myself in a conversation almost every day about the Human-Animal Bond and about the great work that HABIT volunteers and their animals do. It was only recently, however, that I was reminded that sometimes the best work that a HABIT animal does is with its first client: its owner.

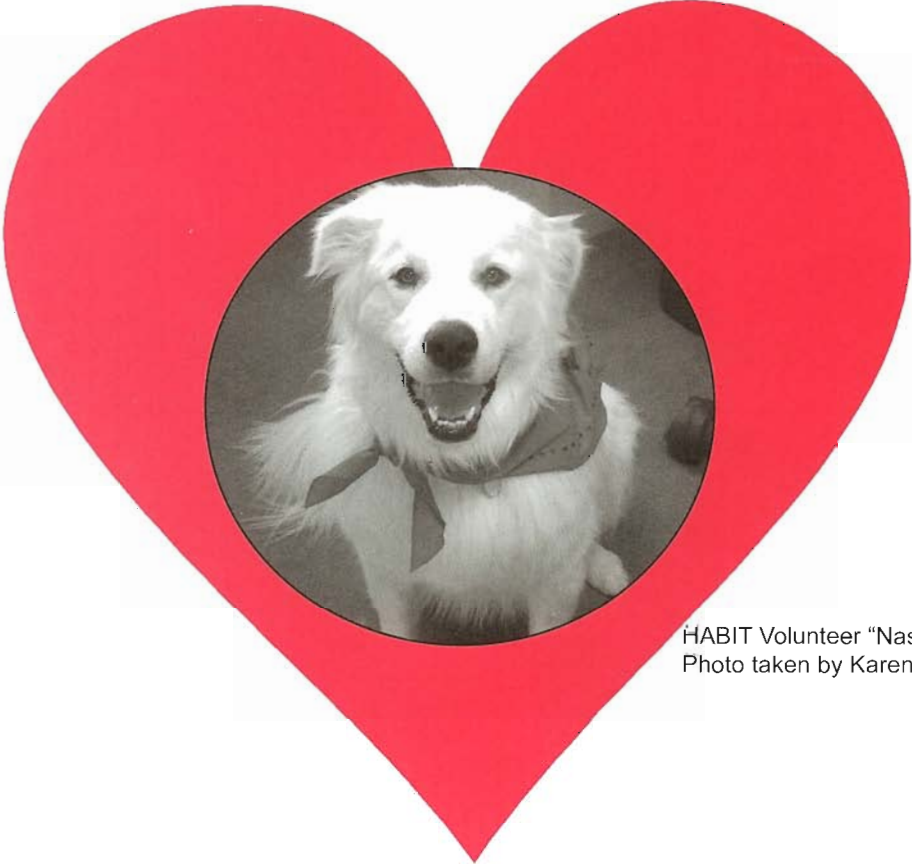
In late August, I had to put my dog, Buford, to sleep. Buford was only eight years old, and after his recent 30 pound weight loss, I was sure that I would have him for four or five more years. However, Buford had a chronic liver disease that was undiagnosed until it was too late. My husband and I found ourselves saying goodbye to our dog, that just a few days before, had been happy and full of life. I have lost other dogs; but they were old, and I had time to accept that they would soon be gone. I did not have that time to prepare with Buford, and I think because of that, his death hit me harder and kept me down in a blue funk longer than the other losses.

One week to the day that Buford had started showing how sick he was, my dog Nash started showing the same symptoms that Buford had. Being the “calm rational person” that I am, I took Nash to work with me the next day and checked him into the College of Veterinary Medicine small animal clinic as an emergency patient. After a day of tests and x-rays, they had no clear diagnosis but did have a strategy to find one. They did assure me that his liver was in no way diseased or impaired, and, that more than likely, it was just the stress of losing his pack leader. He was sent home with medication, a few days worth of special food, and a follow-up appointment in two weeks.

I spent those two weeks trying to get back into the joy of life. My day to day world was just colorless. I had a hard time getting out of bed. By the time the weekend came, all I wanted to do was take a nap. I had a bad case of the blue funk.

The morning of Nash’s follow-up, I took him to the clinic and handed him over to a Vet Tech that I have come to know and trust. She told me that the clinic was very busy, and it would be awhile before he could be seen. Since I work just down the hall, I told her they could call me if they had any questions, and to let me know when to come and get him. A few hours later, it occurred to me to go and check on him, just to see what was going on with him. At that same time, I saw a Tech walking him outside my office window, which overlooks the clinic “bathroom” area. I quickly walked down the hall and out the door so I could catch him before he went back inside. By this time, however, he and the Tech were at the other end of the area, about to walk inside the building. I did what every pet owner does and yelled out his name. He heard me call him and turned to where I was. He gave me one of those smiles, which is so full of love and happiness, that for the first time in two weeks, I could not only see the sun was still shining, but I could also feel its warmth.

I am not saying that I don't still grieve the loss of Buford; he was my first boy, and I will always miss him. What I am saying is that I was reminded once again that a visit from a HABIT dog can change a person’s point of view, not only for that day, but sometimes for much longer.



HABIT Volunteer “Nash” Armsey.  
Photo taken by Karen Armsey.



## **DAR Great Smokies Chapter Presents Award to Suzie Ferguson**

*Canine Search Specialist receives recognition for job well done*

SEVIERVILLE, TN—"My Life has gone to the dogs, but in a good way," said Suzie Ferguson at a special dinner meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Great Smokies Chapter, held May 9, 2008. During the past ten years Suzie and her husband, Roy, have raised and trained eight puppies for use in the Leader Dogs for the Blind organization ([www.leaderdog.org](http://www.leaderdog.org)), through the Sevierville Lions Club. They kept two of the puppies they raised, Schatzie and Cherokee. Suzie and Roy then became involved with the H.A.B.I.T. program, founded twenty-one years ago by the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine. The Human-Animal Bond In Tennessee (H.A.B.I.T.) program ([www.vet.utk.edu/habit](http://www.vet.utk.edu/habit)) is a community group of volunteers working together to explore the circumstances and consequences of the human-animal bond and to promote this valuable bond between people and animals. Shortly after Suzie and Roy became involved with the HABIT program, they became handlers for the Tennessee Special Response Team-A (TN SRT-A), Inc., a charitable, non-profit search and rescue organization.

In recognition of her outstanding community service, Suzie was second place winner of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR), Southeast Division, Community Service Award. There are only two awards presented by an NSDAR chapter each year. Community Services Award recipients are recognized for contributions to the community in an outstanding manner for voluntary heroic, civic, or benevolent service.

In addition to training and being available for search and rescue "call-outs," Suzie participates in community education about the TN SRT-A, Leader Dogs for the Blind, and the HABIT programs. She has presented many programs highlighting the organizations' activities and service events.

"The most valuable thing I can give is my time," Suzie said during the talk she gave at the DAR dinner held in the Pigeon Forge Community Center. She explained that her involvement with these programs has enriched her life and the dogs she has trained have taught her many life lessons.

As a Canine Search Specialist, Suzie, Roy, and their dogs are an efficient team trained to work in conjunction with other organizations in charge of a rescue or to command a search. Tennessee SRT-A handlers are instructed and trained in evidence preservation by Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certified instructors. They are trained to assist in water and building rescue. The dogs are proficient in tracking/trailing, air scenting, and human remains detection on both land and in the water. Breeds currently being utilized are German Shepherds, Golden Retrievers, and Bloodhound, as well as mixed breeds.

The TN SRT-A is a charitable, non-profit organization and is based in Newport, Tennessee. According to the TN SRT-A January newsletter, team members spent 2,120 hours training in 2007. For more information, visit their Web site: [www.tnsrta.org](http://www.tnsrta.org).

The Great Smokies Chapter is located in the Appalachian District of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

For more information about the Tennessee Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, you are invited to visit online at: <http://www.tndar.org/>. For information about The Great Smokies Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, you may visit online: <http://www.tndar.org/~greatsmokiesdar> or e-mail Linda Jones, Chapter Registrar, at: [LindaJones865@bellsouth.net](mailto:LindaJones865@bellsouth.net).



Photo (below): Suzie Ferguson, Canine Search Specialist with the Tennessee Special Response Team-A, was presented with the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR), Southeast Division, Second Place Community Service Award for outstanding service to the community. From left: Tennessee First Vice Regent and Great Smokies Chapter Registrar Linda Jones, Suzie Ferguson, Great Smokies Chapter Regent Betty Baker, and Suzie's faithful canine team members, Schatzie and Cherokee.



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# Hello

My name is Ruth Sapp and I am proud to be working with each of you as the new East Tennessee Program Coordinator for HABIT. Since I joined the HABIT team in June of this year, I have had the opportunity to meet many of you in person, especially if you work in the Ruff Reading Program. During my initial orientation, I was able to meet several visitation volunteers, and I have continued to make new acquaintances at various community outreach events. I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting all of you in a face-to-face encounter, although many of us have at least shared some e-mail or phone correspondence.

So, it stands to reason that you might be asking, "Who is this new person whose name I have been seeing lately?" or "Whose voice is that on the phone?" And, as I know you are passionate about the success of HABIT, I am sure you've also been wondering just what I'll be contributing to an already great program.

To begin with some quick biographical data, my roots are firmly planted here in East Tennessee. I am a Knoxville native and a graduate of Central High School (Class of 1983). I currently live in North Knoxville, where my husband and I are grateful that our Golden Retriever Dorrie and our three cats (Tigerlily, Etta, and Oliver) allow us to share a home with them.

Professionally, my career path has revolved around the social work arena. While studying social work at the University of Tennessee, I was fortunate to start work at the Florence Crittenton Agency in Knoxville. It would be my workplace home for sixteen years. During that time, I had the privilege of working with numerous dedicated volunteers. My duties eventually expanded to include management of the volunteer program, coordination of all campus training, and hiring entry level staff. In my last years at FCA, I was involved in recruiting and training foster parents, too. I left FCA after sixteen years in order to complete my degree in Organizational Management from Tusculum University in 2006.

Creating a positive change in my community and lives of vulnerable people has driven my career interests. You can imagine how thrilled I was to have the opportunity to follow a career path here at HABIT that allows me to marry my desire for creating positive change, my past experience in volunteer management, my social work background, and my lifelong admiration for the animals who share our lives.

In joining the HABIT team, I am delighted to work with Dr. New and Karen Armsey and to provide them with an extra pair of hands to help them continue to meet and stretch HABIT's goals. I look forward to helping the HABIT program grow throughout East Tennessee, so that together we can all help bring the healing and therapeutic companionship of our animal friends to our friends and neighbors throughout the region.

The benefits of the human-animal bond have been ever-present in my life and it is now my great pleasure to create avenues that bring it into the lives of others. I look forward to working with all of you and to meeting you in person in the days to come.



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## Johnson Bible College Students Focus on the H.A.B.I.T. Schools Program

### By Vicki McKernan

Last year, students from Johnson Bible College (JBC) were invited to use the H.A.B.I.T. Schools Program as a springboard for their research project required for their Master in Education degree. Some of these graduate students had observed H.A.B.I.T. dogs visiting classrooms and spending time with children. These observations sparked an interest in documenting the effect a dog might have on a child's attitude toward reading.

It was decided that Susan Berry's kindergarten class and Vicki McKernan's fifth grade class at West Hills Elementary would be the basis for the research data. Before the research project began, each child was asked questions about their attitude toward reading. Each child then read at least twice a week in the company of a H.A.B.I.T. dog and volunteer. At the end of the research project, each child responded to the same questions concerning their reading. In the fifth grade, the results showed that the children enjoyed reading more when they could read in the company of a dog. The children claimed that the dog provided more motivation to read as well as a calming, non-judging atmosphere.

Regarding the kindergarten classroom, the children's responses indicated no marked improvement in reading in the company of a dog. The kindergarten teachers, however, felt there was an increase in the children's desire to practice reading when they knew they were going to "read" with the H.A.B.I.T. dog. It was also obvious to the H.A.B.I.T. volunteers that the children simply enjoyed the dog's companionship.

H.A.B.I.T. volunteer Gina Hodge recognized that her dog, Amos, responded to each child on almost an individual basis. Amos seemed to sense what each child needed: he was quiet with some children and more outgoing with others. The kindergarteners often shared their books with Amos and often pointed out their favorite parts. Likewise, volunteer Patti Frost loved spending time with the children and only wished the project had been longer so that the children could have established a stronger bond with her dog, Frosty.

Due to JBC's schedule, this project covered only a 4-week period. Both the graduate students and the classroom teachers felt that this type of research would have yielded truer and more positive results had it covered a several month period instead of a few weeks.

Master's Candidate Jennifer Cochran, who participated in the research project said, "This action research project allowed me to see the benefits of a therapy dog in the classroom. I was able to see many ways dogs can assist student learning and pleased to have statistical data that backed up what I have seen. Therapy dogs are a beneficial addition to any school." H.A.B.I.T. was pleased to have been a part of this endeavor and know that our volunteers (and the dogs!) enjoyed it as much as the children.

We extend our thanks to the students Lindsey Fehl, Rachel Van Hook, Jennifer Cochran, Rachel Jett, and Mitchel Poynter, and their faculty advisor, Dr. Chris Templar, for their interest in documenting what our volunteers see during every visit.



HABIT Volunteers Patti Frost and "Frosty" with Students at West Hills Elementary School.



# The Back Page

## In Memory

In Memory  
Hyrain Kitchen and Celebration of Yvonne  
Kitchen's  
70th Birthday  
(co-founders of HABIT since 1986)

by  
Frances A. Santo Domingo  
Robert & Jean Whitaker  
Robert & Lynn Young  
Ben Thomas Powell  
James & Joann Pope

"Amos"  
by  
Debbie Fox

Gail M. Milligan, Jr.  
by  
Vivian Beretta  
Connie Pearson

Mikey  
by  
Marilyn & Ed Carlin  
Francie & Neil Foster

Sabrina  
by  
Janine, Mick & Josie Nordquist

Taylor  
by  
Kim & Mark Tichon

"T.O.", Companion of Jason Cohn  
by  
Joan & Steve Cohn  
Marilyn & Ed Carlin

"Lucy", Companion of Phyllis & Ken Hirsh  
by  
Joan & Steve Cohn

Rachel Nicholson  
by  
Janine Nordquist

## In Memory

"Maya" Rodgers  
by  
Joan & Steve Cohn  
Marilyn & Ed Carlin  
HABIT Office Staff

Frank Weissman  
by  
Jane & Robert Schneeweiss

"Chocolate" Haines  
by  
HABIT Office Staff

Marilyn Carlin's Mother  
By  
Steve and Joan Cohn  
HABIT Office Staff  
Francie & Neil Foster

"Murphy" & "Diva" Underwood  
by  
Donna Terzak

"Emmy" & "Rudy" Cavell  
by  
Donna Terzak

"Murphy" Underwood  
by  
John Roszell

"Sophie"  
by  
Joan & Steve Cohn  
Karen Armsey

Dottie Sherer's Mother  
by  
HABIT office and Board Members

"Buford" Armsey  
by  
Tressie Brown  
Ruth Sapp

## In Memory

Janet Perris (Marilyn Carlin's Mother)  
by  
Myrna & Irving Russotto  
"Sammy" Gilpin  
by  
Susie Stooksbury

"Cherokee" Ferguson  
by  
HABIT Office

"Sophie" Sapp  
by  
HABIT Office

Barbara Hanson  
by  
Janine & Mick Nordquist

Sadie  
by  
Janine, Mick & Josephine Nordquist

## In Honor of

In Honor  
Yvonne Kitchen's 70th Birthday  
by  
By Frances A. Santo Domingo  
John & Jane New

Bob Freeman's Birthday  
by  
Marilyn & Ed Carlin

Dr. Richard Bass' selection as a Corporate  
Fellow  
at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory  
by  
Joan and Steve Cohn

Vi Cooper's improved Health  
by  
Joan and Steve Cohn.

## Donations

Marilyn Carlin's Birthday  
by  
Joan & Steve Cohn  
  
Cathy Barnes "Special Birthday"  
by  
Sandy & Harry Klingler  
  
Meredith Lecroy  
  
W. & K. Brock  
  
Linda & Jeffrey Gilpin  
  
Vicki & Patrick McKernan

## Habit Losses

HABIT Losses  
"Taylor" Tichon  
"Gage" Haun  
"Buffet" Phillips  
"Charlie" Compton  
"Hooch" Kenny  
"Buford" Armsey  
"Cherokee" Ferguson  
"Cinnamon" Randle



Dept. Of Comparative Medicine  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
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### Executive Committee

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