HABIT Winter 2007

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Retirement Creates a New Volunteer

Ed Carlin and his wife, Marilyn, moved to Knoxville from Houston in 1994 when he took the position of Chief Financial Officer of Goody’s. Marilyn joined HABIT with Maggie, her Golden Retriever, soon after they came to Knoxville. Later, Evie, also a Golden Retriever, joined Maggie as a HABIT volunteer. Ed loved to hear stories of their visits. He also wanted to join, but long hours and travel for his job prevented him from doing it. He always said that when he retired he would become a HABIT volunteer.

Last spring Goody’s was sold, and Ed decided to retire. Again, he talked of being in HABIT. He wanted to take Zoe, his Golden Retriever, to volunteer. After his dog’s evaluation he called to tell me Zoe had passed; it was obvious how excited he was.

The first visit to Thompson Cancer Survival Center West went very well. Zoe (and Ed) passed with flying colors. After the visit he was so excited that he called Marilyn from the parking lot to tell her. He couldn’t wait until he had gotten home to give her the good news.

Now the “Carlin Team” are regulars at Thompson Cancer Survival Center. Every Tuesday they are greeted with enthusiasm at the facility. Ed was surprised how many people greet Zoe by name (Ed is only known as the person who brings Zoe).

This has been the fulfillment of a dream for Ed. Often people say they are going to do something but never do it. After 12 years Ed really did what he said, and many people are benefiting because of this.

By Joan Cohn
Recently I had the honor of attending a memorial service for one of our canine volunteers. This sweet girl had been a HABIT dog for 4 years and had unexpectedly stopped eating and lost the use of one of her legs. A massive tumor which involved most of her major organs was discovered. In the unexpectedly shortened time they had with her, her humans kept her as comfortable as possible. When told it was time, with the help of their Veterinarian, they unselfishly ended her pain. It was very sad, breaking the hearts of not only her family, but also of everyone who knew her.

The memorial service took place at one of the HABIT Ruff Reading Schools where she had worked. As would be expected, there were few dry eyes in the room. To me, the most striking thing wasn’t the tears, but those who were shedding them. Yes, there were a few children who were sad and who shed a few tears, but they were not the ones who grabbed my attention. It was the adults, who circled the room, who dabbed their eyes, and tried not to sniff too loudly. In fact, even before the service started one of the staff members walked around the room handing out tissues, which were taken by staff members representing both genders, ages, and all positions in the school. A few words of comfort were spoken, happy memories shared, and by the end of the service there was even some laughter. As the students and adults filed out of the room, most of the staff stopped to hug the HABIT volunteer, or to offer a few words of comfort.

The reason that I tell you this story is not to make you sad; too many people shared the joy of this companion for us to be sad. This memorial service reminds us that when we take our animal on a visit, we never know whose life will be impacted. I am sure that when this HABIT volunteer started, she thought that she and her beloved pet were going to make a difference to only the students in their classroom. I realized while watching the people at this service that every HABIT visit is like the pebble thrown into the calm water; the waves go out further then any of us know, gently touching lives; and that is a gift our companion animals share with everyone they meet.

From the Chair:

Our Ruff Read program continues to grow. The School Committee has formulated many new ideas and will also continue to implement the current programs. The enthusiasm and ability of the committee is amazing. Anne Hayward has put her time and energy into building this program, but, more importantly, she has put her heart into it. Anne now feels it is time for her to step aside and let someone else chair this committee.

Now we must look to the future and build on the foundation Anne has provided. I’m sure this will happen with the support of our volunteers. There are so many people who have in the past provided support and now hopefully will provide leadership for this important program.

As always, thanks for all you do,
Joan Cohn

Save the Date.

The date for the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet has been set for April 30, 2007. We will be holding this event at the Buddy’s Bar-b-q Banquet Hall which is located at 5806 Kingston Pike in Knoxville. The meal will be free for all active volunteers; a guest meal will cost $20.
This year the HABIT program took part in the Simon Mall Evening of Giving. This involved HABIT volunteers selling entrance tickets to a special sale at West Town Mall. Tickets sold for $10, with $3 going to the Simon Corp. which they use to support their public charities; HABIT kept $7. Because of the selling skills of a few very dedicated volunteers, we were able to raise $547. We would like to thank Cathy Youmans, Jeanne Sharpe, Lin Helsel, and Joan Cohn who were a huge part of the success of the sale. A special thank you also goes to Kristen Thayer who at the very last minute stepped in to work the night of the sale. Karen, our Program Administrator, contributed much time in obtaining and distributing the tickets and also keeping track of the finances. Once again the HABIT volunteers proved why this program is as special as it is. Next year we hope to expand sales for this event and raise even more money for our organization.

The HABIT program is pleased to announce that it recently received a gift of $500 from the Knoxville Pediatric Group. We are very thankful for the support that the KPG has shown to our continuing mission to serve the community, and to Linda Fogle for her role in this gift.

Because of the magnanimous gift of our Chair Person, Joan Cohn, the future of the HABIT program is a bit more secure. Joan, who in the past has given not only her money, but also her time and talent, has given a substantial amount of money to the HABIT program. Because of this donation and the matching funds given by the College of Veterinary Medicine, HABIT was able to reach its financial goals for 2006. Joan says the reason she made this donation is the hope that it will be used as “seed money” for a capital fund which will guarantee HABIT’s continued fiscal health. She also indicated her hope that this gift will encourage other HABIT volunteers, to give as generously as they can to the capital fund so that HABIT will continue to serve our community as well as others.

HABIT and River Dog Bakery continue a successful partnership in the dog biscuit market. Sales of the biscuits continue in the area. The HABIT Fundraising committee would like to thank the volunteers who continue to work with area businesses and make this the success that it is. If you would like to purchase biscuits or would be willing to help establish places to sell these biscuits, please contact Janet Testerman at 865-250-4860.

Another fund raiser, “PAWS for SMILES” took place on March 3, 2007. Students from Bearden Middle School, West Valley Middle School and Grace Christian Academy of Karns in Oak Ridge visited Shannondale Health Care Center with John Roszell and “Parker”. The children were able to see the value of animals and humans in the volunteering process. Hopefully, they will volunteer in some capacity themselves someday. This program was underwritten by UT Cancer Institute, Jewelry Television, and Covenant Health. HABIT appreciates the support of Donna Gobbell, who coordinated the program at Bearden Middle School, the students, and the Corporate sponsors, all of whom helped to make this such a success. Also, a big thank you to Austin Printing Company for making t-shirts for each participant.
HABIT volunteers say the darnest things

The following are some of the things that HABIT Ruff Reading volunteers have said about their time in the classroom:

“The best time was just the little moments when they would share something about themselves with us - whether it was a silly thing, a boo boo from the playground, or something that they were particularly proud of accomplishing. And we made sure to always tell each of them, whatever their level of ability, that we could see that they were learning so much this year and that we liked the way that they read to us - whether that was: sounding out the words, taking the time to think about what the story meant or how it was coming together, using animated inflections while reading, or speaking up and reading clearly so we could hear them well.”

“During the year I noticed that some of the poorest readers seemed hesitant to read. By the end of the year, they loved coming to read to Maya or Inca. I think that we helped all the students in this class. At the end of the year reading was fun for all!”

“The kids there really enjoyed Indy and actually did practice reading. It did seem that we mostly provided a sounding board for them. I learned of the girl whose parents are divorcing, and many hopes and dreams. Getting to participate in the “gab” session with Indy was quite the motivator to finish math homework quickly and correctly.”

“Chipper appeared to enjoy his experiences at West Hills and Rocky Hill Elementary Schools. The Rocky Hill class had children capable of very different levels of interaction. Chipper helped one girl walk in the hallway. This was a difficult task for her. Another child used Chipper as a focal point to stay calm. He would pet Chipper for the entire visit. Apparently, sitting still is a challenge for him.
What if my animal does not pass the behavioral evaluation?

I am sure that everyone who has brought their animal for a behavioral evaluation has thought those thoughts and has asked that question of either the animal evaluator or the Program Administrator. Most people who want to become HABIT volunteers know their animals well enough that they would not bring them in for an evaluation if they did not believe that they would pass. However, it is hard to think positively while you are waiting and the evaluation is taking place. There are very few reasons an animal is automatically rejected, one of which is biting or snapping at the evaluator.

The biggest reasons why dogs do not pass the evaluation the first time are (in no particular order): jumping, pulling on the leash, and poor socialization. Our HABIT evaluators are very knowledgeable in animal behavior; if they see a problem, they will do everything possible to help the owner correct it. Don’t be embarrassed if the evaluator tells you that there are things that you need to correct in your animal; it is their job. If there is a problem, don’t take it personally; listen to the advice of the evaluator, work on the issue, and once you feel the problem is solved call the HABIT office to set up a new evaluation.
Small Dogs Make a Big Impact

HABIT animals come in all sizes, however when people think of HABIT dogs they often think of the larger breed of dogs, such as a Golden, Labrador Retriever, or a big, lovable mutt.

Nevertheless, anyone who has ever watched one of HABIT’s smaller volunteer’s visit will have no doubt that smaller animals can bring magic to the lives of those they see. They have unique abilities due to their small size; they can be put on a person’s lap or in their bed which thrills patients.

This once again proves that it is the animal, not its size that makes a visit so worthwhile for the people we visit.

Fred Roach and “Bailey”

Joan Cohn and “Sophie” with a patient at Children’s Hospital

Karen Vigorito and “Daisy”

Kathy Hatcher and “Scooter” with a patient at St. Mary’s Transitional Care
HABIT volunteers in their off time
Even HABIT volunteers need to let their “hair” down every once in awhile. When they are not out making the world a better place HABIT volunteers have many hobbies: wake boarding, taking part in obedience trials, hunting, or just hanging out with their friends. They show us that everyone needs to recharge their batteries every so often.

Cat Philosophy
There is no snooze button on a cat who wants breakfast. ~Author Unknown

Who among us hasn’t envied a cat’s ability to ignore the cares of daily life and to relax completely? ~Karen Brademeyer

There is something about the presence of a cat... that seems to take the bite out of being alone. ~Louis J. Camuti

Ways That You Can Further Help the HABIT Program

1. For $300 you can sponsor a program.
2. Volunteer to serve on a HABIT committee
3. Put your name on a list of volunteers who will work at special occasions, either with or without your HABIT animal.
4. Volunteer your talents and abilities. If you have a talent for writing you can help with the newsletter. Like to work on computers, help improve the HABIT webpage. Do you enjoy taking pictures? Volunteer your time to go with HABIT volunteers and take pictures of HABIT visits.
5. Are you a member of The Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, Garden Club, PTA or church organization which needs speakers for a meeting, let them know that HABIT is always available to speak and spread the good news of HABIT.
In Memory

“Kirchner” companion of Sue Weigel and former HABIT dog
by Vicky Anderson
Joan Cohn

“Am Can CH Amberac’s Nut’n But Trouble” former HABIT dog
by Dorothy Sherer

“Hank” a great cat and companion of Ellen Schnoll, and Terry Sam Hayward
by Joan Cohn

Gene Evans
by Joan Cohn

Mr. Edward Litwin
by Marilyn and Ed Carlin

“Enya” companion of John and LeAnne Dougherty
by John and LeAnne Dougherty
Jack and Jeanne Sharp

Clarke Dedmond
by Kathy Sullivan

“Putter” companion of the Larmee family
by Linda Fogle

Sybil Mayhugh
by Kathy Sullivan

“Millie” companion of Janie and Bob Jorn
by Joan and Steve Cohn

Pu Yi Yen
by The Fogle Family
Wayne, Linda, Sarah and “Sabrina”

“Maggie” companion of
Vicky Anderson
by Joan and Donald McMullen
Vicky Anderson
Joan Cohn

Jim Delap
by Ann Delap

“Jacob” Connelly Beloved companion of Becky Connelly
by Joan McMullen
Becky Connelly
Joan Cohn
Tara Burnette
Debbie Schmid

“Luke” Weimer companion of Heide Weimer
by Nancy Hugh
Catherine Marshall

“Amos” Gilpin
by Joan Cohn
Susie Stooksbury

“Sabrina” Fogle
by Joan Cohn
Dennis and Kathy Hayward
Karen Armssey
Linda Ullian
Tami Kesling

In Memory

“Maggie” Anderson
“Tandy” White
“Pedro” Lee
“Sabrina” Fogel
“Hildy” Pevy
“Kirchner” Weigel

In Honor of

“Jake” and “Waffles” Jay
by Adrian and Larsen Jay
Joan Cohn
by Peggy Swindlehurst

Cliff, Linda and Hannah Eberle
by Lisa and George Douglas
Suzie Swafford
by Monica and Christopher Swafford

“Polly” Cohn’s improved health
by Her Grandparents,
Joan & Steve Cohn

The speedy recovery of Matt Carlin
by Marilyn and Ed Carlin
Dr. Denise Frazier DVM
by Tamie Kesling

Joan Cohn’s Birthday
by Marilyn Carlin

“Peanut” Austin’s improved health
by Joan Cohn

HABIT would like to thank the HABIT volunteers who sent in pictures for the newsletter as well as Phil Snow and Greg Hirshoren for their continuous photography support.