HABIT Newsletter

Veterinary Medicine -- Other Materials (Newsletters, Reports, Etc.)

Spring 2010

HABIT Spring 2010

Department of Comparative Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine

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Neither rain nor sleet nor snow will delay the expansion of H.A.B.I.T. Ruff Reading programs in East Tennessee. We were set to open two new school programs in Jefferson County when the spate of snowy weather began. Between snow days and snow schedules, the Ruff Reading program added two new schools: Dandridge Elementary and Rush Strong Elementary.

Last fall, Mary Kay Winters, Literacy Leader at Dandridge Elementary, began the application process for her school. Just as winter was beginning, Special Education teacher Dana Bridges applied for Rush Strong Elementary. Luckily we had a monitor in Ms. Sue Wolff who was willing to travel down from Parrottsville to Jefferson County. With these pieces in place, we were ready to place volunteers in both schools. Teresa Maples and her German Shepherd mix “Casey” began visiting Ms. Winters’ students at Dandridge Elementary on the same day that Lauren Billingsley and “Amber” began visiting at Rush Strong Elementary. It was a banner day for H.A.B.I.T. and Jefferson County Schools, especially on a snow schedule!

Since then, Mary Kay, Teresa, and “Casey” have been doing individual reading sessions with students that Mary Kay feels will benefit the most from the motivation of the visiting dog. Lauren and “Amber” have been visiting with Dana’s classroom at Rush Strong to the delight of the students in her special needs class. News got around about the Jefferson County Schools plunge into animal-assisted therapeutic activities in the classroom, and our two new Ruff Reading classrooms were featured in the February 25 edition of The Jefferson Standard Banner. The Ruff Reading program was featured as an asset of the local school system. Thanks to staff writer Dale Gentry, “Amber” and Lauren were shown (above) at work with Ms. Bridges’ students who were beaming with obvious glee.

Thanks to the success of these first two classrooms, we now have two more classrooms on the waiting list at Rush Strong and Dandridge Elementary. White Pine School recently completed their application. It’s satisfying to all of us on the H.A.B.I.T. team to see the benefit of animal-assisted therapeutic activities begin to take hold in a new school system. I know we say it frequently, but we can’t do it without your assistance. Every new school needs a monitor and several volunteers; when one teacher gets the program, frequently enthusiasm for the Ruff Reading program spreads throughout the school.

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Our condolences to our H.A.B.I.T. families.

“Maxwell” Schram
“Chili” Rush
“Romeo” Hayward
“Bea” Lauten
“Shadow” Speck
“Angel” Dreyer

ECONOMIC SITUATION CAUSES 2010 BANQUET TO BE CANCELED.

For years now, I’ve looked forward with great anticipation to our annual H.A.B.I.T. banquet, as I hope others have. It’s been a special time to enjoy the company and camaraderie of fellow volunteers and ardent animal lovers. I mean, where else can you share a “brag book” filled with photos of your four-legged family members?!

It should come as no surprise to anyone that the economy continues to take a toll on all sectors of the business world and unfortunately, non-profits are no exception. At a recent board meeting, we took a long, hard look at our “bottom line” and felt that in the best interest of our organization, we needed to cancel the banquet this year and redirect those dollars for program expenses. The need is so great for the services we provide to our community, and we feel our decision demonstrates the wise stewardship of the funds that have been entrusted to us. We know you’ll agree that our primary responsibility is to those we serve.

Hopefully, as the economic forecast improves, so will the possibility of our hosting a volunteer appreciation event once again. In the meantime, those of us on the H.A.B.I.T. Board hope you realize how much your efforts are valued, not just by us, but by the thousands of people that are touched by your loving concern each year.

You are H.A.B.I.T.

Sue Beverly
Banquet Chair
Board of Advisors
Animal Advocacy and Signs of Stress

You will be the final authority on what is right for your animal. You know them better than anyone else does. Do not put yourself or your animal in a situation that could be detrimental to either of you. You MUST act as your animal’s advocate at all times. The animal must be under your control while you are visiting, and you reserve the right to terminate a visit at any time if you feel your animal is tiring, getting tense, or in danger. Even animals have good days and bad days. Dr. New would remind us, “They are not a prescription that can be taken down from a shelf and administered as needed.” It is our feeling in H.A.B.I.T. that animals can and do enjoy these visits as much as the people, but only if you remain aware of how your animal is reacting to the visit.

Other pet visitation programs in the country use kittens or puppies, and while everyone would like the opportunity to hold a cute, cuddly puppy or kitten, we do not use young animals in our H.A.B.I.T. program. First, personalities in young animals are not fully developed enough to be evaluated, nor can a thorough medical evaluation be made since some diseases may have an incubation period longer than the animal’s current age (they simply have not lived long enough for the disease to show up!) One year is the minimum age for a H.A.B.I.T. animal. Another reason is that it is just too stressful on these young animals to be held and played with for any length of time. Sadly there are stories of incidents of kittens or puppies dying from stress after a long visit going from lap to lap.

Stress is a concern even for an adult dog, cat, or rabbit in a visitation program. Even though the animals and we humans enjoy visiting, research has shown that for humans, communicating, conversations, and such ARE stressful. We are inclined to extend these findings to our animal volunteers. Keep in mind that any volunteer, human or animal, can get burned out by overdoing.


Possible signs of stress include but are not limited to the following:

- Panting
- Laying down and refusing to get up
- Pulling towards the door
- Sleeping more than normal after the visit
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Shaking, yawning, or scratching
- Refusing food
- Licking lips or drooling
- Avoiding eye contact
- Sweaty paw prints of the floor
- Restlessness or freezing
- White rim of eye exposed more than normal

Human-Animal Bond in Tennessee

ENRICHMENT FEDERAL CREDIT UNION SUPPORT H.A.B.I.T. MISSION

On February 2, 2010, H.A.B.I.T. received a $600.00 donation from an Enrichment Federal Credit Union’s Pet Pals fundraiser. We feel so fortunate to have the support of Enrichment Federal Credit Union employees. In the picture, H.A.B.I.T. Program Administrator, Karen Armsey is receiving the check from the Pellissippi branch manager and H.A.B.I.T. member, Ellora Bryant, pictured with her dog Ember.

For more information about the Pet Pals program or any other programs at Enrichment Federal Credit Union, please go to https://www.enrichmentfcu.org or call them at 531-1600.

Karen Armsey receives donation from Ellora Bryant, Pellissippi Branch Manager of Enrichment Federal Credit Union
PAW PRINTS by Karen Armsey

“Bea” Lauten was not a classically beautiful dog: she had a huge scar on her head; she was so skinny that you could see all her ribs; and she had this long skinny tail that she could use as a whip. In fact, it was her tail that I first noticed; it was always wagging.

When I was first starting my job at H.A.B.I.T., Dr. Susan Lauten stopped by the office to talk with my predecessor, M.L. Dotson, and she had “Bea” with her. While she was standing at the door, I realized that the thumping noise I was hearing was “Bea’s” tail hitting against the door. And because they were talking about something I was not involved in, I asked if I could take “Bea” for a walk. While I had her outside, we stopped and sat in the sun for a few moments. While I talked to “Bea” about my day, she looked me straight in the eye and listened to every word that I said, and the tail never stopped wagging.

As I got to know “Bea,” I learned what an amazing dog she was. “Bea” was a H.A.B.I.T. dog who worked with special education classes starting at Lonsdale Elementary School, but at that time she was working at Dogwood Elementary School. According to Dr. Lauten, “Bea” loved her work. I could tell from the monitoring forms that I received and the stories I would hear that the students had a special connection with “Bea.” I learned just how important “Bea” was to the students when my dog “Maggie” and I substituted for “Bea” and Dr Lauten.

Dr. Lauten had hurt her back and was not going to be able to visit with the students for six weeks. Because a couple of students had made progress with the help of the dog, we thought that it would be good to have “Maggie” go in “Bea’s” place. I was quickly to learn that, while they thought “Maggie” was a perfectly nice dog, she was no “Bea.” Every week I visited with them, I was told by at least one of the students that “Bea” would do it differently, and that they missed “Bea.” I am sure that the sun was shining on the day that “Bea” returned to the classroom;

if it was not shining in the sky, it was shining in the faces of the students when they saw their friend and Dr. Lauten walk back into the class. “Bea” had fought and won a battle with cancer before I met her, but you would never have known she was ever sick. The tail just kept wagging. Dr. Lauten saved her from a bad situation, so no one knew her age. When she started to slow down, it was hard to tell if it was from old age or ill health. Dr. Lauten retired “Bea” from H.A.B.I.T. a year ago, but I always hoped that she would bring her back. I learned a few months ago, that “Bea” had left us; I am saddened by this very much. I miss having her listen to my stories, but most of all I miss the drum beat of her tail.

“Bea” Lauten was not a classically beautiful dog on the outside, but on the inside she was one of the most beautiful dogs I have ever had the pleasure to meet. She taught me that life’s journey is not always easy and that sometimes you end up with scars. But if you stay hopeful, never give up, and never stop wagging your tail, you will end up where you can make a difference and maybe even change some lives.
If the saying is true ‘It takes a village to raise a child’, then it helps if there is a fluffy white dog to lead the villagers to the children. “Boudreaux” began his Ruff Reading career last year at Belle Morris Elementary in center city Knoxville. His name speaks to his heritage as a Hurricane Katrina rescue. Both last year and this, the kids have dramatically increased their reading skills. Their drive to improve is fueled by the often hilarious antics of this dog. This Cajun is not one to passively lay around as the children take turns reading to him. No, he places a pom-pom like paw on their arm if they begin to falter. He lies on his belly and looks directly at them as they read. He even sticks his head over the book occasionally to see the pictures. As a result, his kids are convinced he totally gets into the book, and they will frequently turn their book around to show him the pictures.

Inspired by his antics, I have often shared the most recent hilarity with friends and family. Having also heard the detailed state of the classroom, the inspiration to volunteer began last year. The classroom was woefully short on quality books and supplies. With budget constraints, the class only had a handful of tattered books when “Boudreaux” began his Ruff Reading assignment. Those who learned of the need began to offer support in the way of books and other supplies. One mother made it a learning opportunity and took her son to a local used book store where they collected a shopping bag full of gently used books for the class. Another group made fluffy fleece pillows for the reading area. One prominent local doctor even got into the act. He supplied the class with new reading lamps, tons of books, and a new reading area rug. As if that wasn’t enough, he even began to send them a book a week with a note of encouragement. After he had made a personal visit to the class to read to “Boudreaux’s” Bunch. Here is the really amazing part: I never asked anyone for anything. Yep, that’s right. All of these gifts and more were purely inspirations of the individuals hearing about “Boudreaux’s” exploits and the classroom situation.

The teacher in “Boudreaux”’s second-grade class, Ms. Waring, made incredible use of the books and supplies offered. She has energetically structured class work around the gifts and made sure every child has at least one book at home to read. She even creatively designed a writing center with the gifts and has the children write thank-you notes to the contributors as a way to incorporate writing skill development into the process. The children have become aware of the global community of volunteers interested in their well-being and willing to lend a helping hand. Nice story, right? It doesn’t end here.

In early January, I fell and broke my leg. My right leg. My driving leg. Faced with the possibility of disappointing “Boudreaux’s” Bunch, I needed a way to get across town each week and deliver my little Cajun to his kids. Several folks had told me they would love to watch him in action some time. I took them at their word. I sent out emails asking for chauffeurs and received a 100% response. A different driver was lined up for each week for eight weeks. Now, an army of folks were in for the treat of their life. They too got to witness the Cajun magic in action. Every chauffeur had the same fate… they left their hearts in that classroom. One by one they began to offer their support to Ms. Waring and “Boudreaux’s” Bunch. One made sure Ms. Waring was appropriately recognized and supported for her amazing work. Another couple offered their help to the class. Several brought gifts of healthy snacks and additional books. One truly inspired chauffeur contacted Ms. Waring and arranged to volunteer in the classroom for two hours each week. As a retired nurse, her nurturing and loving presence is securing much needed confidence for several struggling students. Again, no one was asked to contribute anything other than a ride to the class. Each volunteer answered the call of what was placed on their heart as they witnessed the kids reading to the Cajun.

In their own way, hurricanes and broken legs can be blessings. Just ask the Ruff Readers in Ms. Waring’s class. It has taught me a valuable lesson. Had I not shared the stories from the classroom, I would have denied these volunteers the opportunity to do something they truly wanted to do. It taught me that caring people love to have the chance to share their time, talent and resources with those who have a real need. It taught me that tragedies and hardships also bring opportunities.

Forty-one pounds of fluffy white fur, one black ear and a heart as big as Louisiana can make magic happen in a classroom. He can also lead an army of volunteers to the village children.

By Donna Silvey
When you think of an emergency or a disaster, what pops into your mind? Hurricane? Tornado? Ice Storm? Living here in East Tennessee, it is easy to become complacent about natural disasters; they happen on the coast or out in another part of the state. But what about a house fire or power loss? Even a burst water line can be an emergency if it is your home that is either without water or is flooded. Every article you read about emergency preparedness tells you that you need to have a kit ready to grab and take with you in case you need to evacuate your home. But what about your pets; what do you do with them? And what should your personal kit and your pet preparedness kit have in it?

What to do if you cannot leave the house?

• Bring your pet inside as soon as you know that there is an impending emergency. Emergency situations cause stress for both you and your pet. This stress may cause the pet to become disoriented or panic, and they may wander away from home.
• Keep a leash on your pet or place them in a carrier so that you can keep them under control.
• Keep them with you or in a crate if they are stressed.
• Make sure that your animals have current identification on them in case they get loose. Make sure that this information also contains a cell phone number or out of area number on it just in case your land line is not working.

Keep your Pet Preparedness Kit with you and your pets.
What if you are not at home?

• Work with a trusted friend, neighbor, or family member who can get to into your house and get your animals.

Make sure that they know where the Pet Preparedness kit is. What if you are told to evacuate

• Remember, if it is not safe enough for you, it is not safe for your pet. Take your pet with you; you may think that you will only be gone for a few days, but in reality you have no idea how long it will be before they allow you to return home.
• Plan ahead for the location that you will evacuate to; find hotels or motels outside your immediate area that take pets and if they have any restrictions. Call ahead and make a reservation as soon as you think you may have to evacuate.
• Please be aware that according to the Red Cross website: “Most Red Cross Shelters cannot accept pets because of health and safety concerns. Service animals that assist people with disability are allowed in Red Cross Shelters.” So now what? There are some national hotel chains that will allow pets. During an emergency evacuation, many of those that normally will not allow pets will change their policy, but be sure to call ahead.

• Find family and friends that you are willing to keep both you and your animals.
• Find a boarding kennel or veterinary office who might take your animals if you have to shelter elsewhere.

Remember to take your pet preparedness kit with you.
After the emergency

• Remember that, just because the emergency is over, it does not mean that life will be back to “normal”. Your pets have gone through a major stress event, so be patient.
• Because the animal’s normal landmarks and smells may be gone, which can make it easy for them to become lost, keep them on a leash or in a crate for a few days until they become acclimated again.
• Consult your Veterinarian if they show behavioral or health problems that last longer than a few days.

With a little bit of planning and some time spent pulling everything together, you will give yourself and your family a greater peace of mind.

Links:
http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.d8aefcf214e576bf97149fe43181aa0/?vgnextoid=72c51a53f1c37110VgnVCM1000003481a10aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default
http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ffy619
Basic Emergency Supply Kit

- Water: one gallon per person per day for at least 3 days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food: at least a 3 day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and NOAA weather radios with tone alert and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries

First aid kit:
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, plastic sheeting, and duct tape
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food
- Local maps
- Cell phone with charger
- Important Papers

Papers to keep on you:
- Personal I.D.
- Credit Cards
- Medical Information
- Doctor's name address and telephone number
- Emergency cash
- Driver's license

Special folder papers:
- Disk of family records including the following information
  - Checking Account numbers and bank
  - List of savings and investments including CD, Stocks, bonds, and mutual funds
  - Credit card safety record
  - Household inventory
  - List of Insurance policies with name of company, type of policy, and policy number
  - Copy of will, living will, and trust documents
  - Bank account numbers
  - Other forms of importance: Titles (house, car, other property)
  - A copy of birth, marriage, divorce, death, and adoption certificates
  - Passports
  - Educational records
  - Military records
  - Debt instruments
  - Other special papers that would be difficult or impossible to replace if lost.

Pet Preparedness Kit
In a waterproof container put the following
- A Ziploc with: your pet's medications, medical records, a written description and a photo of you and your pet.
- A first aid kit
- An extra leash and collar
- Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavioral problems, and the name and phone number of your veterinarian.
- You will also need a crate or pet carrier with blankets or towels inside for bedding or warmth.
- 3 days worth of food and water.
- Bowls, a litter box, and litter.
- Cleaning supplies: Paper towels, liquid dish soap, a small bottle of household bleach, and a package of garbage bags.

Remember to check both kits 2 times a year to make sure that everything is still up to date, and that neither the medication nor the food has passed its expiration date.

I appreciate the patient efforts of the teachers (and facility contacts) from each school, and the support of their administrators. Especially, I’m thankful for our H.A.B.I.T. volunteers who are willing to travel, share their time, and ultimately share the love of their beautiful dogs. Thanks to all of you who had the vision to bring H.A.B.I.T.’s Ruff Reading program to Jefferson County.

H.A.B.I.T. has participated in/or was requested for the following special events:
- Mardi Growl
- Open House - University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine
- Open House - Village Veterinary Hospital
- Event at Sevier Heights Baptist Church
- Talk at Johnson Bible College
- Veterinary Social Work Summit
- Knox County Library Children’s Reading Festival
- Critter Fest
- 4-H Camp
Things to remember...

When you and your animal are on a H.A.B.I.T. visit please remember to wear your I.D. badge. Your H.A.B.I.T. animal must also wear his/her animal badge, the H.A.B.I.T. scarf. Please make sure that the scarf is clean and in good shape; it is the animal’s uniform, and they deserve to be proud of how they look.

Always remember that a retractable leash is not to be used on a H.A.B.I.T. visit; use a short leash. No matter how well behaved your dog is, it is harder to control a dog when they are on a retractable leash; a short leash gives you greater control of the animal, and this will help especially if you are visiting with a client who is not completely at ease with the animal. Please remember that even if you are carrying the dog, you need to have them on a leash in case they jump out of your arms. A short leash is required no matter how small your dog is.

Always sign in and out when you make a visit, as well as record the number of contacts that you make. Remember a contact is anyone (staff, client, family) that interacts with your dog.

If you are a school volunteer remember to only visit the classroom to which you are assigned. Also take special care when you are walking in the hallway; only children with a signed permission form can pet the animal and, because it is hard to know who does and does not have a signed form, do your best to keep the children from petting the animal in the hallway.

In Memory

• “Lucy” a wonderful, crazy, loving dog by Marilyn & Edward Carlin, Joan & Steve Cohn
• “Natasha” Beloved Westie of Angus Gordon by Louise & Frederick Conrad
• “Zach” the Lab by Janet Carnes
• “Bea” Lauten, by Karen Armsey
• Darryl Beaton by The H.A.B.I.T. office staff
• “Shadow” Speck by Northshore Animal Hospital
  Joan Cohn “Angel” Dreyer by Bob and Betty Dreyer
• “Ella” Sura- Johnson by Karen Armsey

Thank you for your donations.