

THE BOND



NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN FRANCISCO SPCA ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY PROGRAMS

Greetings everyone,

The holidays are nearly upon us and we have a lot going on in the AAT department!

Inside you'll find more information on our upcoming recertification roundtables happening in February and March. The content of the roundtables will be heavily informed by the discussions coming out of the December focus groups.

We are trying to get a good distribution of team length of service and dog size/age, and though space is limited, we could use more people who've joined in recent years—particularly a few more who have joined in the last three—for our December focus groups. Those with questions or concerns about the CGC are also encouraged to attend so we can be sure we address your questions, regardless of your length of service. Please email me (jhenley@sfsPCA.org) if you'd like to participate.

Speaking of time in the programs, our annual AAT Volunteer Party is coming up and we will honor Barbara Asaro (*Hera*), Liz Althaus (*Bindi*), Sondra Bishop and Alan Eggert (*Savannah*), Rebecca Bridges (*Stanley*), Rebekah Davis (*Gilligan*), Vanessa Doyle (*Cal*), Michele Fishbein (*Denver*), Nina Heusch (*Sadie*), Margie Kaminsky (*Angie*), Shari Marks (*Toby*), Suzanne Mayer (*Ollie*), Aine O'Connell (*Sammie*), Carol Selsted (*Sophie*) for five years; Beth Martello (*Bella*) for ten; and Barbara Thompson (*Lincoln*) for twenty years of bringing the human-companion animal bond to those in our community who cannot access it on their own (often in times of greatest need). We also want to highlight Kathleen Russell (*Grace*) for *thirty years(!)* of SF SPCA service. **Thank you so much and congratulations!!!**

And last, but not least, around the organization we are looking forward to the annual Holiday Windows at Macy's—you will find out how to get involved with Windows later in this issue. Windows is one of our biggest fundraising and adoption events of the year. This is also a time of year when people make annual contributions to the Society or AAT in particular. We have put together a "wish list" for AAT, which you can find on our [website](#), but our top request is for x-pens to use in Canine Connection.

Our *biggest wish*, however, is that everyone reading has wonderful visits and safe, peaceful holidays with loved ones.

Very best to all and thank you for supporting AAT,
Jennifer

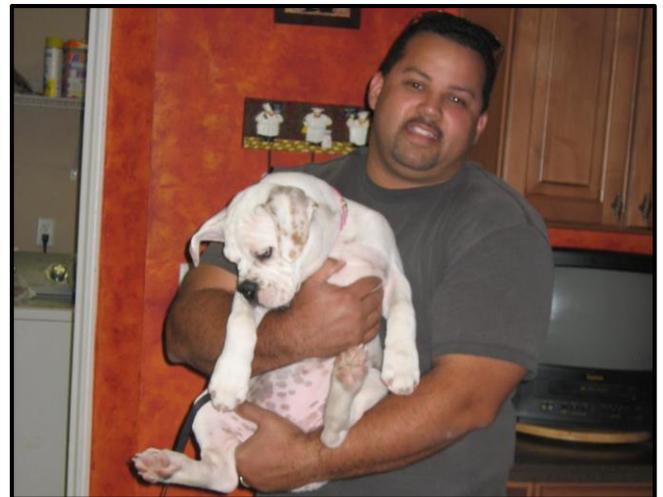
Canine Connection Comes Full Circle

When you meet Angel Velez Jr, you notice his beaming smile and his adorable handful of a puppy, Mia. Angel is one of our many veterans who've taken part in the Canine Connection program, a partnership with San Francisco Veterans Administration Medical Center (SF VAMC). This is the story of how one squirmy little pittie, adopted out under the name "Snuggles", found her forever home and now helps her guardian heal in an unexpected way.

Angel's father was in the Army and, after becoming a parent early in life (age 19), he joined the Army, too. He was in a rapid deployment infantry unit in the 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, NY.

When Angel first joined the Army, he spent a few years on training missions or deployments and they didn't have a dog. One cold winter night, while he was home from deployment, Angel and his family saw a tiny black spot on the snow-covered sidewalk. Huge snowflakes were falling and they could barely see the asphalt in front of them, but as they drove closer they realized the black spot was actually a dog...a fully grown Rottweiler. When they pulled over, she jumped into the car, cold and hungry (and pregnant, they soon discovered!). While she was in their care she slept in front of his children's door and proved to be a great companion. At the time, however, they had not received Army housing and couldn't keep her once the storm passed; they had to surrender her to the Army pet shelter a few days later.

Once Angel and his family got into Army housing a couple of months later they returned to the Army pet shelter. They were hoping to find the dog they'd surrendered, but she had already gone to her forever home. In her stead, his family found her nine puppies up for adoption—all of them completely black, except for one, who was white a black nose and a few brown spots on her ears. They knew she was the one and, for sixteen years, Lexie (*puppy photo below*) was their loving family dog. That's where Angel's dog ownership as an adult begins, but not where our story ends.



Angel is a recent transplant to San Francisco, having arrived September, 2016. He grew up mostly on the east coast and Puerto Rico. His parents always had a dog in the house and he has cared for a variety of animals—rabbits, cats...even a raccoon. Angel, who is now a part-time employee and student at the Academy of Art University (pursuing a master's degree in visual development) participated in our March 2017 Canine Connection (CC) program. He says the sessions helped him understand a dog's point of view and he liked that the training is rooted entirely in positive reinforcement. He found the series educational and thought the AAT visits were such a great way to end the program. He especially liked visiting because Angel enjoys being able to give back to his fellow veterans.

In July AAT and Behavior & Training partnered to begin offering puppy socialization hours once a month to graduates of the CC program. Angel has become a regular, attending all of our socializations, but the August one is where he first met “Snuggles”. She was just six weeks old when Angel worked with her, getting her accustomed to tooth brushing, ear checks, and general grooming. Little did we know, it was love at first sight!

It turned out to be the right time in his life for Angel to get a dog. In anticipation of adopting her, he went online and found the name Mia, which just seemed to fit. Now, at sixteen weeks old, she’s running the house and Angel has his work cut out for him training her—but he’s loving every minute of it! Angel does his best to make sure she’s always engaged, and constantly uses the positive reinforcement training techniques he learned in CC.

[As we were talking, Mia was super energetic and Angel pulled out a toy that distributes treats—Canine Connection’s “managing frustration” session in action!]



Mia at 6 weeks



Mia at 16 weeks

While in CC, he also learned about the difference between therapy dogs, assistance dogs, service dogs, and companion dogs. When he adopted Mia, Angel thought he might want to train her to be a therapy dog. He soon found out that she would be crucial to helping him, too. As Angel explains, “my father passed away on July 23rd in Puerto Rico. He had beautiful military funeral and ceremony with all the honors for his 33 years of service. My mom wanted me to have my father’s flag from the ceremony, but I said you keep it a while mom, you should have it, I’ll get it from you later. When Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico on September 20th, I couldn’t get in touch with my mom and sister. When the hurricane was happening, I was watching the news and they were showing images of flash floods and devastation. Later that evening I had a dream where I saw my dad’s flag floating in the flood waters. Mia woke me up out of that nightmare by licking my face. It’s like she just knew something was wrong.”

She continues to wake him from nightmares and went from “Snuggles the Shelter Puppy” to “Mia, the Hero”. I asked if there’s a message he has for other veterans, in light of Veteran’s Day coming up on Saturday, the 11th. Angel shared, “there’s a lot of awareness out there for veterans who need or want service dogs and the care or service that they provide, but I think a lot of them sorta close the door if it’s not a service dog, strictly speaking. And that’s one of the things through Canine Connection that I realized: companion dogs are as much a blessing as a service dog for many of us. The healing they provide is just as great and vets should look into adopting.” In light of the love and joy Mia has brought Angel, and that he has brought her, too, we couldn’t agree more!

Please email AAT@sfpca.org or phone 415.554.3060 if you are a graduate of Canine Connection and would like to participate in puppy socializations or for more information on the CC program.

AAT News and Upcoming Events

Welcome to AAT!

This quarter we are delighted to welcome the following teams to the AAT Programs:

Dana Wiltsek with Scout	Liz Berliant with Jazzy
Nicole Moskowitz with Flapjack	Marsha White with Alice
Gerri Grossman with Pippi	Kat Thomas with Loo Loo
Lyn Batia and Tom Smith with Wrigley	
Mariah Simoni Wong with Hannah the pigeon	
Sofie Hernandez—our newest staff pet (pictured below)	



Annual AAT Volunteer Party

When: Tuesday, December 5th from 6:30-8:00 PM

Where: The Grotto at Sports Basement, 1590 Bryant Street

RSVP: Affirmative only to AAT@sfpca.org or 415.554.3060

We are delighted to announce our next AAT Volunteer Party will be on Tuesday, December 5th at The Grotto at Sports Basement. There will be snacks, wine, soft beverages, cake, a shopping discount, and anniversary awards.

It’s great to be back there again and I hope everyone looks forward to coming together in celebration of another outstanding year of AAT in our community!

Diane sent an Evite to all current volunteers on November 6th. Please be sure to review your entire mailbox.

Save the Date: Upcoming AAT Roundtables

Rolling out Recertification (Sunday date)

When: Sunday, February 25th 3:00-4:30 PM

Where: AAT offices, 201 Alabama Street, 2nd Floor

RSVP: Affirmative only to AAT@sfpca.org or 415.554.3060

Jeff Murray and Michelle Morgan will lead this discussion

Rolling out Recertification (Evening date)

When: Tuesday, March 6th 5:00-6:30 PM

Where: AAT offices, 201 Alabama Street, 2nd Floor

RSVP: Affirmative only to AAT@sfpca.org or 415.554.3060

Jennifer Henley and Michelle Morgan will lead this discussion

Rolling out Recertification (Morning date)

When: Friday, March 16th 10:00-11:30 AM

Where: AAT Offices, 201 Alabama Street, 2nd Floor

RSVP: Affirmative only to AAT@sfpca.org or 415.554.3060

Shelley Smith and Michelle Martens will lead this discussion

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In Memoriam

Last quarter we said goodbye to the following amazing dogs:

Lulu Watson

Lulu had some big shoes to fill when she started doing therapy work after her “big brother” Jackson retired—and fill them she did, with aplomb! Lulu visited Presentation Convent for several years, bringing comfort and joy to the residents and staff there.



Ten years ago, after Janet’s family rescued Lulu, they learned that she was an extremely rare breed of Alapaha

Blue Blood American Bulldog—“a breed known to love everyone and be suited to many types of homes because they are so affectionate and adaptable” according to www.vetstreet.com. The rescue group told them much later, but Janet says, “we didn’t care—we just loved her! We will miss her so much as she was such a sweetie and a fantastic therapy dog, knowing she had been given a second chance.”

Lulu is very much missed, but not forgotten. Janet’s newest pup, Casey, will begin training after getting a bit more settled.

Huge thanks to Janet for sharing Lulu with our community!

Hank Gottlieb

We were so lucky to have Hank, aka Handsome Hank or Superstar Hank, in our programs for as long as we did and we’re sending so much love to his mom, Shelley, during this most difficult time. Since Christina knew Hank so well, we thought we would share her memories of this amazing pup:

Hank was known as "Superstar Hank" to those that he visited and worked with throughout the years in AAT. He brought so much joy to those he visited at the Jewish Home, Laguna Honda, SF Adult Day and UCSF. Many therapy dogs have the gift of knowing when they are needed most, and Hank was no exception. Shelley and Hank were frequently asked to make special trips to UCSF for those patients in critical situations and end of life visits. These visits, so important to the patients and family members, can be quite emotional for the AAT volunteers and pets, but Hank seemed to know how much he was needed and



he gave everything he had. During one of these visits, he simply lay still for an hour beside a patient, calmly comforting. Hank will always be remembered in AAT as a Superstar—top of his field and one of the best we'll ever have. Thank you to Mom, Shelley, for sharing him with us and so many for all of these years.

Thank you, Hank...you will be greatly missed by the many, many people you've touched.

Rhea Chee (dog sister of Herbee Chee)

Rhea passed away peacefully at home on August 30th, she was 13.5 years old, surrounded by small a circle of friends, each of whom represented a significant part of her life.

Rhea was a rescue, a mixed breed of some sort. She went to work every day with her guardian, Sue, for 12 years and her photo was on the wall with all of the other employees. Rhea was part of the company family. Shortly before retirement, Sue contemplated getting another dog, because Rhea would no longer have her “pack”.



Then a white dog was hit by a car in the wee hours of the morning in front of Sue’s workplace and co-workers took the dog to SF Animal Care and Control (SF ACC). During the week they wondered how the dog was faring, so Sue volunteered to go to SF ACC to check. A volunteer brought out the dog, who was intact, unchipped, and unclaimed. When it was time to take him back to his kennel, he wouldn’t budge and continued to follow Sue

around, so she brought Rhea in to SF ACC for a meet and greet. They sniffed at each other, and that was it; Herbee joined the family.

Rhea is very much missed. She is survived by her loving guardian, Sue Chee, and loyal dog brother and AAT therapy dog, Herbee, who is slowly acclimating to life without her.

A Different View

One of the fantastic things about working at a larger animal welfare organization is getting to see different careers and ways of working with animals. As you probably already know, in addition to AAT and other programs, the SF SPCA has a busy Spay/Neuter Clinic. In the most recent series of Canine Connection, Spay/Neuter RVTs and VAs (Registered Veterinary Technicians and Veterinary Assistants, respectively) have been helping out. Each day we had a new RVT or VA scheduled to work with our program. They got to meet a wonderful group of veterans and do either therapy dog work, puppy socialization, or go on an AAT visit.

Our innovative collaboration is the brainchild of Renee Skye, who is an RVT herself and manages the Spay/Neuter team. As she explains, “all of our medical staff are committed to their primary



role here at the SF SPCA, but surgery is a long day and they’re in one room standing for up to ten hours.” The work they do is incredible: on average 30-40 surgeries per day for all adoptable SF SPCA shelter cats and dogs, public pets, feral cats, and pets from other organizations, including rescues and SF Animal Care

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and Control. They also work with VET SOS to spay/neuter the animals of homeless persons in the city. In addition to all of the spaying and neutering, Renee's team does a variety of procedures for in-house (pre-adoption) animals; e.g. cherry eyes and amputations.

With all of these surgeries, RVTs and VAs in Spay/Neuter are largely seeing animals in various stages of anesthesia and they spend their time in a single room. Being part of Canine Connection gets them out and involved with another department, and enables them to see dogs with a job and having fun.



As Renee says, "definitely people enjoy AAT, and want to try an offsite visit—we will continue to partner. S/N is also working with other departments to give the techs and assistants a broader view of

the Society, including Adoptions, Community Cares, and more!"

From the AAT perspective, we have enjoyed getting to know staff from another department and being able to show another way the human-animal bond can help people. Our primary goal in Canine Connection is to work with veterans who may have trouble with community integration and we use dogs to facilitate skill building—both dog skills and people skills. This partnership enables us to show others some of the work we do with veterans here in San Francisco.

SF SPCA News and Upcoming Events Holiday Windows

When: November 17th through January 1st

Where: Macy's at Union Square, Stockton @ O'Farrell

RSVP: Go online at <https://www.sfspca.org/holiday> (for those without internet access, please phone 415.522.3523)

Windows is coming! Last year hundreds of animals found forever homes and we collected tens of thousands in donations.

There are three ways to volunteer at Holiday Windows:

Outside Greeter: In this important and fun role you greet the public, talk about the animals, share info about the SF SPCA, and collect donations. There is no advance training required. Shifts are 2-2.5 hours. We especially need people mid-week, and between Christmas and January 1st.

Matchmaker: This volunteer job does require some training. We also ask that you have some puppy or kitten handling experience and enjoy engaging the public in a potentially hectic environment. You'll register for training when you contact Volunteer Services. There are two Matchmakers at a time for 3-3.5 hour shifts. You welcome the public, then show kittens and some puppies to potential adopters. If you are interested in becoming a Matchmaker, please email Liora, Volunteer Services Director, at lkahn@sfspca.org

Team Leader: This is a position that supports other volunteers and the overall success of the event. Liora thinks AAT volunteers would make particularly great team leaders, so, if interested, please contact her directly to register for a training session and your shift(s). Again, her email is lkahn@sfspca.org.

New Veterinary Behaviorist Joins SF SPCA



As one of 74 board-certified veterinary behaviorists in the United States, Dr. Wailani Sung has a passion for helping owners prevent or effectively manage behavior problems in companion animals, enabling them to maintain a high quality of life. Dr. Sung obtained her master's degree and doctorate in

Psychology, with a special interest in animal behavior, from the University of Georgia. Upon completion of these graduate programs, she earned a doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from the University of Georgia.

Dr. Sung relocated to the Seattle metropolitan area and opened her own behavior clinic after practicing general medicine, emergency, exotics, and behavioral medicine in Arizona. She is now coming to San Francisco to work at the SF SPCA Behavior Specialty Service and will help you with your behaviorally challenged dog, cat, or bird. She does not consider any patient or problem hopeless; her treatment protocols are rooted in scientific information on animal behavior, psychopharmacology, and learning theory.

Dr. Sung frequently lectures on managing common behavioral issues. She also consults with veterinary practices to design programs and train staff in best practices for making vet visits less stressful, and develop treatment protocols for patients with behavioral issues. Many of Dr. Sung's behavioral articles are published on the website, *Vetstreet*. Dr. Sung is also a frequent contributor to the *Healthy Pet* magazine and *PetMd*. She is a co-author of the soon to be released book, *From Fearful to Fear Free*, in which she collaborated with Dr. Marty Becker, Dr. Lisa Radosta, and Mikkel Becker.

An equestrian enthusiast, Dr. Sung spends her free time riding horses or relaxing at home with her husband and their two dogs, a senior cat, a red-bellied parrot, and a citron-crested cockatoo.

Pass It On

The Animal Assisted Therapy department helps members of the San Francisco community engage in the human-companion animal bond.

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The mission of The San Francisco SPCA is to save and protect animals, provide care and treatment, advocate for their welfare, and enhance the human-animal bond.

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