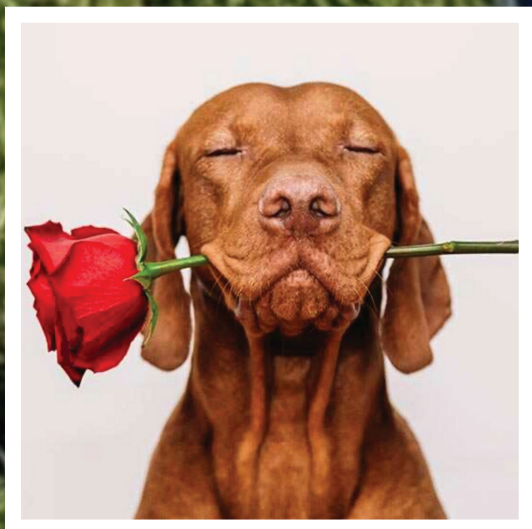


# THE HYDRANT

The Monthly Bulletin  
for Members of  
Intermountain  
Therapy Animals

Volume 22/Number 2

**FEBRUARY 2022**



# Are you current with ITA?

**ITA Office Hours:**  
**Monday ~ Thursday, 9 am to 5 pm**  
**(Fridays - CLOSED)**

## **Membership Dues:**

**Individual \$99**

**Family \$150**

## **How to Pay:**

Call the office with a credit card (801-272-3439), request a PayPal invoice, or send a check to PO Box 17201, SLC, UT 84117.

## **Update your Contact Information:**

If your contact info remains the same, you can just make your payment.

If any of your contact info has changed, please let us know by responding to this email or you can use the membership renewal application on our website in the member's section.

*If you are not planning on renewing your membership, please let us know so that we don't send more notices.*



*\*from the 2022 "Animals in Swimsuits" Pinup calendar by Planet Wilderness*

## February+

**Tuesday, February 8 ~ ITA Board of Directors meeting, 7 pm**

**Wednesday, February 9 ~ Sand Ridge Junior High in Roy**

**Thursday, February 10 ~ ITA Chapter Leaders' ZOOM meeting, 4 pm**

**Wednesday, February 16 ~ ITA Affiliate Leaders' ZOOM meeting, 4 pm**  
**and Skyline High School in Salt Lake**

**Thursday, February 17 ~ DOG LANGUAGE with Catherine Cookson**

**Thursday, February 24 ~ Walking Club in Sandy**

**Saturday, February 26 ~ Walking Club in Magna**

### **NOTES:**

- Most events have been cancelled or postponed once again because of the surge in COVID cases in Utah, including our annual Volunteer Celebration, usually occurring around Valentine's Day
- Sunday, March 13, 2022 ~ MEMBER SCREENINGS (Call for an appointment soon!)



# Service Opportunities ~

Our list of facilities is still growing, despite recent setbacks and suspensions. We could sure use more teams to participate! PLEASE go to:

# ITAVOLUNTEERS.COM

to find some rewarding new possibilities for yourself and your partner to make someone's day!



Donny, partner of Linda & David Weiskopf, with a grateful nurse at Ogden Regional Hospital.





# RETIRING



## **Yvonne Jelberg & Artie**

(Bozeman) Yvonne & Artie have been an ITA team since November 2007. Artie is 16 and slowing down and needs to retire, so Yvonne is transitioning to be an ITA Supporting Member. Thanks for 15 years of wonderful work together!



## **Spice & Jonathan, partners of Adele Delp**

(Helena) Adele is retiring her two dear little mini-horses. Spice had become a bit sassy and Adele was no longer sure she could trust her around other people, so she found her a home with lots of other mini-companions, where she is doing well. Jonathan developed an inoperable tumor and had to leave earth early in January. Adele and her minis have been partners since December 2013.



## **Abigail McCarthy & Aidan**

(Salt Lake) Abigail & Aidan have been an ITA team since February 2015. Aidan is 10 now and starting to have some health issues. They have been a stalwart R.E.A.D. team, and Abigail went extra miles by getting us yearly grants from her company, CompHealth, for which we are ever so grateful.



# PARTNER LEAVING EARTH



## **Kylee, partner of Julia Urbanek**

(Ogden) We are so sad to lose sweet Kylee, who volunteered with her mom Julia for almost 15 years, since June of 2007. She was also named ITA Therapy Animal of the Year in 2019, and Julia also served as a Team Evaluator. Plus Dave, Julia's husband and Kylee's dad, came to countless screening events over the years to help as an assistant.

Kylee also demonstrated a lot of spunk and bravery by agreeing to be in pictures for our gala in 2008, "Paws on the Furniture." She came to Henrikson-Butler and fearlessly posed on their Herman Miller contract furniture—at right is our favorite shot from that session, which was one of several of our dogs that appeared in the program, etc. for the event.

We are so grateful to the Urbanek family for all they have contributed to ITA and to their community.



# Valentine-Worthy Thoughts

*"Only LOVE can be  
divided endlessly and  
still not diminish."*

*- Anne Morrow Lindbergh*



*LOVE  
is the most  
durable power  
in the world.*

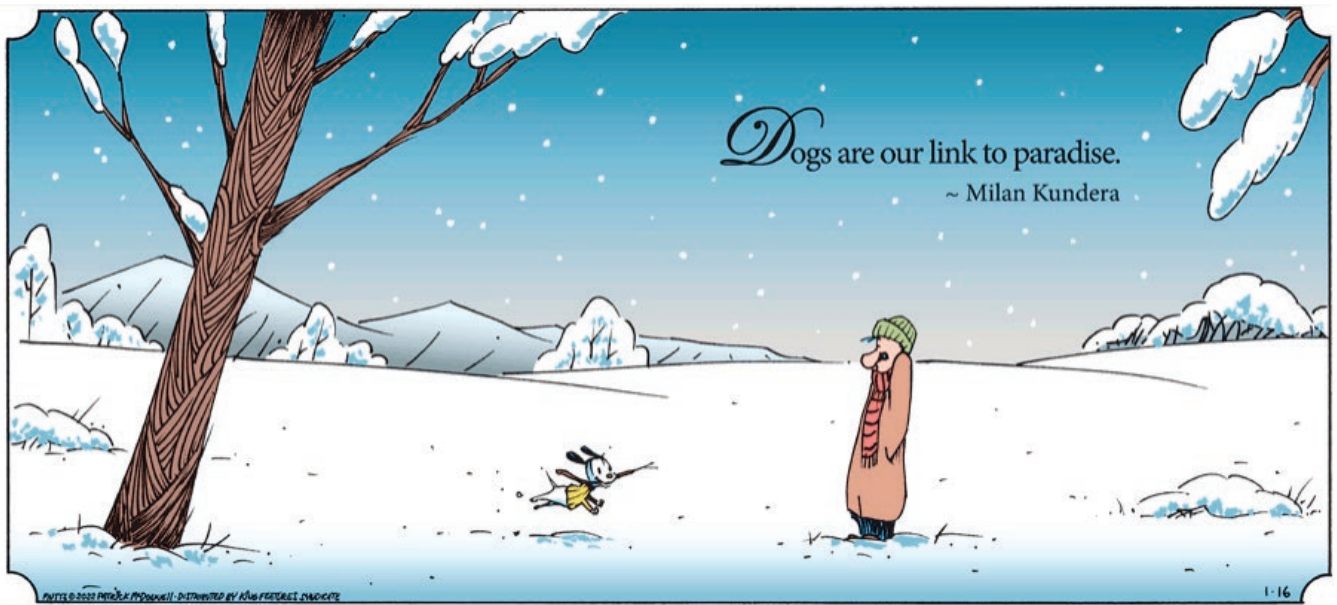
*- Martin Luther King, Jr.*

THERE IS A LAND OF THE  
LIVING AND A LAND OF THE  
DEAD, AND THE BRIDGE IS  
**LOVE**, THE ONLY SURVIVAL,  
THE ONLY MEANING.

*- THORNTON WILDER,  
IN "OUR TOWN"*

*All animals dream.  
But only dogs dream of us.*

*- Berkeley Breathed*







# Horses

## Respond to Human Emotions

**R**ecent research conducted by scientists at England's Universities of Sussex and Portsmouth suggests that an empathetic bond isn't just a sentimental feeling shared by equine enthusiasts—horses may indeed be able to discern and even remember human emotions.

Researchers designed an experiment using photographs of humans with either an angry or a happy expression on their faces. They showed these photos to 21 horses and recorded their responses. When shown the photographs of the angry faces, the horses' heart rates increased, and they showed a preference in how they looked at the images: the horses turned their head so that they could look at the photo with their left eye, which sends information to the right brain hemisphere. This is not surprising as horses—and other species—are known to process possible threats with the right half of their brain. When shown the photographs of happy faces, the horses showed the opposite bias, preferring to look with their right eye, thereby sending information to the left brain hemisphere, which processes positive social stimuli.

A few hours after showing the horses the photos, the people who had been in the photographs appeared

before the horses in person, with neutral expressions on their faces. The horses' only exposure to these people was through the photos they had briefly viewed earlier. To further control the experiment and prevent unconscious cueing, the models did not know which of their photos—the happy face or angry face—the horses had been shown.

Surprisingly perhaps, the horses appeared to remember each person and their previous mood from the photographs. The horses who had seen the angry face photograph warily checked out that person with their left eye, and their heart rates increased, just as they had when viewing the photos. The horses who had seen the happy face photo did not show a left- or right-gaze bias, and their heart rates remained normal.

The study provides evidence that horses can read human facial expressions and even remember a person's previous mood when encountering them later in the day, both of which support the idea that horses can empathize with humans.

from *When Animals Rescue*, by Belinda Recio



# PAYING DEARLY (Fraud Warning)

As with every other category of life, there are inherent risks in buying a dog over the internet! A recent article in the January 2022 issue of *AARP The Magazine* recounted this horror story:

Danny Shelton's family has always included big dogs. So when family pet Lois was stricken by cancer, they were crushed.

Shelton decided to surprise his wife with a new puppy. He scanned the internet and found just what he was looking for.

"The dog's name was London. It had on a little Christmas hat," said Shelton. After a quick phone call, the deal was done. London was in Georgia, the breeder said, but could be flown to the St. Louis airport for \$700. Shelton wired the money from a Walmart and received a bill of sale over email. He prepared to surprise his wife.

But then, the breeder wrote him a text saying, "There's a problem at the airport in Atlanta. Security is quarantining the dog, and they need another \$500 to release it."

That was the moment it hit Shelton like a punch in the gut. He'd joined a growing list of people scammed by fake online breeders. ***The Better Business Bureau said reports of pet scams are up nearly sixfold since it last studied the problem in 2017.*** "A lot of people are really emotionally devastated," said the BBB's Steve Baker.

Shelton's story has a happy ending. A breeder heard about what happened and let Shelton pick a puppy from her very next litter.

When the family visited, one of the pups immediately ran to Shelton. "She picked me," he said.

It may seem that it should have been obvious there was a scam brewing here, but as we all know, when dogs are involved, we become emotionally vulnerable.

May we reiterate some other crucial reminders that may seem obvious to some people, but not to everyone at all times!

- Impulse choosing/buying/acquiring of any animal is not a good idea for you, or for the animal.
- Choosing a companion animal based on pictures alone is also not a good idea for you, or for the animal.
- If you're going for purebred, find out about the characteristics of the breed and whether one of that breed is a good fit for you, your family, and your lifestyle.
- Do not acquire ***your next canine family member*** sight unseen from any breeder, online or otherwise.
- While in some situations an in-person meeting is not reasonably possible, it's always best to meet a new family member in person before making a decision that will last for a decade or more!

- KK







**A**s noted in the calendar listing on page 2, the interminable COVID pandemic has, for the second year in a row, rendered it unsafe and irresponsible for us to hold our usual Volunteer Celebration in February.

We are most disappointed by this, because our February party is one of the few chances where our members have a chance to get together, get better acquainted and have some fun.

However, we remain optimistic, and this year instead of cancelling entirely, we are merely postponing a celebration, and hoping we can gather sometime in the spring, perhaps even outside. In which case people could also bring their dogs!

Please stay tuned for better news!

# InfiniteWags™

## Another Valuable Offer for ITA Members and Friends!

A new and comprehensive pet shopping site, Infinite Wags, has asked to help ITA on their site. **YOU** get 10% off any pur-

chase when you use the code below, and **WE** get a \$5 donation.

**\$5 GOES TO THIS CHARITY  
WHEN YOU USE OUR  
10% OFF DISCOUNT  
CODE: THERAPYANIMALS**

SHOP NOW

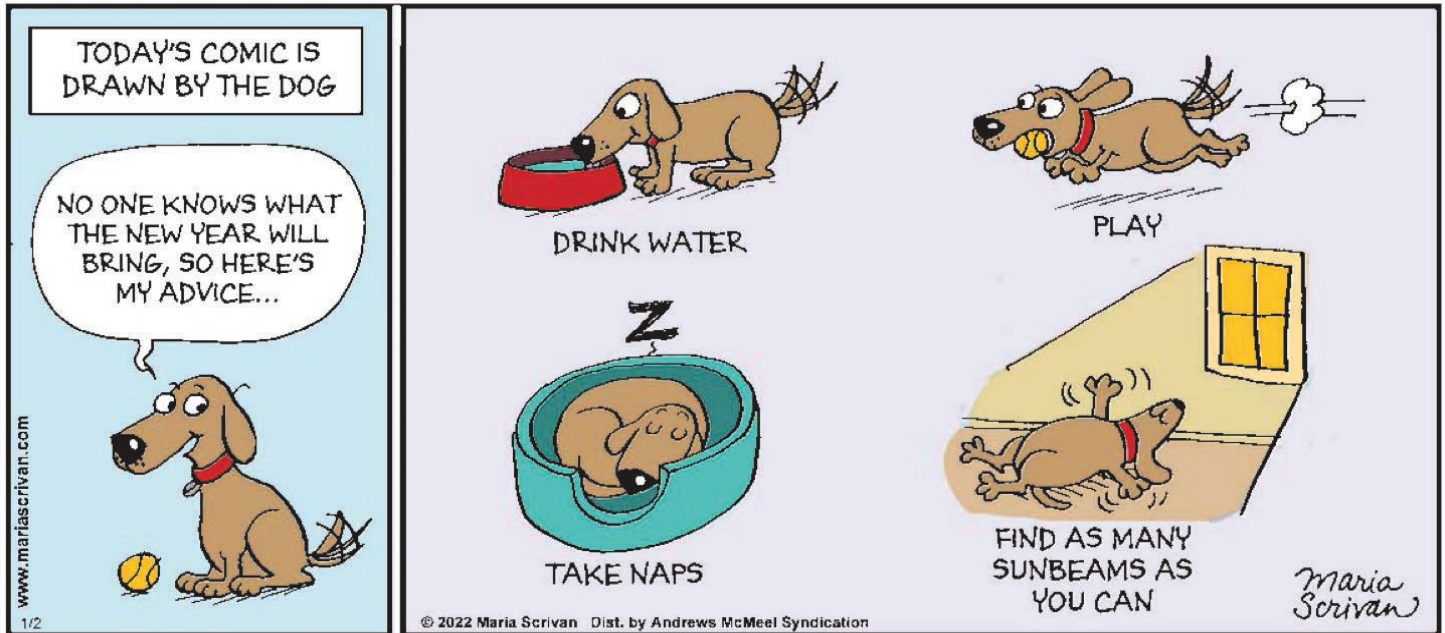
 [InfiniteWags.com](https://InfiniteWags.com)



# The Lighter Side

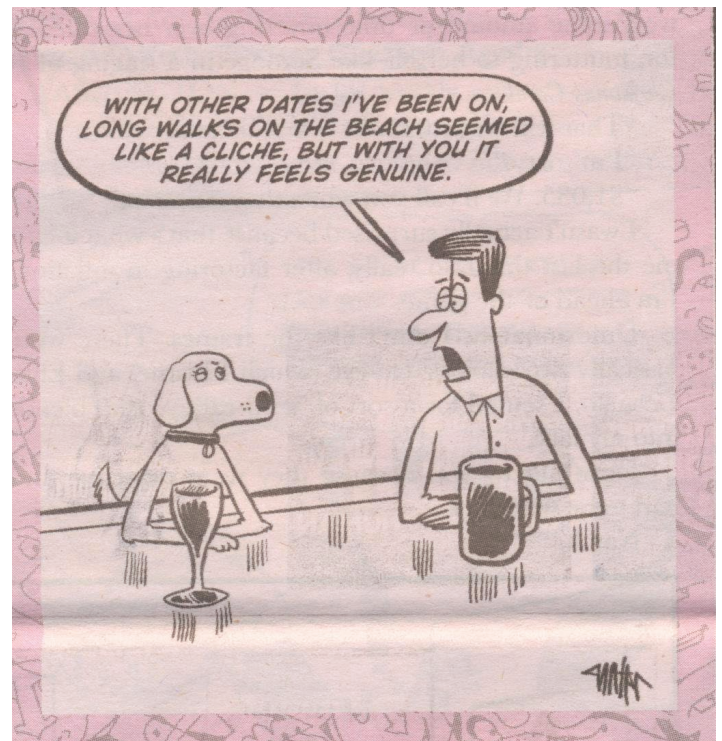
Half Full

by Maria Scrivan



Smile ~

It's the second best thing  
one can do  
with one's lips!





# How Does YOUR Dog Feel About HUGS??

*Here is a subject fraught with controversy, and one especially pertinent for those of us who partner with therapy dogs*

**T**o be entirely honest, we must acknowledge that there are some people who believe passionately that having animals participate in therapy is nothing more than animal abuse.

We at ITA have always heard those voices, and we strive constantly to educate our handlers about dog language; about speaking for their partners to maintain proper boundaries; and about being constantly aware of what dogs are “saying” and feeling. We emphasize that we are not

to *USE* our animals; that they are not to be viewed as pieces of equipment. Rather, each is an individual being whose preferences and opinions need to be honored and supported.

With all that in mind, we cannot ignore the ongoing controversy about whether we should let people hug our ITA dogs. Our dog language expert, Catherine Cookson, points out constantly that humans are primates, who get great satisfaction from hugging, while for dogs many of the things we enjoy doing are rude and inappropriate.

But then, there are ITA dogs who are just fine with hugs, not only tolerating them but seeming to enjoy them.

In addition to common client hugs, like the one shown above with Dusty Miller, in the last few years we have been invited more and more often

to campuses for “de-stressing” events for students. The COVID pandemic has increased this demand among healthcare workers, too. But the increasing demand begs the question whether what is de-stressing for humans is stress-raising for our animals.

Following are viewpoints from two well-known and respected dog researchers, Stanley Coren and Marc Bekoff. We urge you to read this discussion thoughtfully and consider, monitor and manage carefully what is appropriate for your own ITA partner.



## The Data Says “Don’t Hug the Dog!”

Dog researcher Stanley Coren got pushback from students at a college de-stressing event when he asked them not to hug his own dog, which inspired him to do some research on this important topic. One student who was studying developmental psychology lectured him on how beneficial hugging is for humans, and her naive assumption that it must therefore be beneficial to dogs, as well.

As we know, of course, dogs are not human children. Dogs are technically cursorial animals, which is a term that indicates that they are designed for swift running. That implies that in times of stress or threat the first line of de-

*(continued next page)*





# Your Dog and Hugs (cont.)

fense that a dog uses is not his teeth, but rather his ability to run away. Behaviorists believe that depriving a dog of that course of action by immobilizing him with a hug can increase his stress level and, if the dog's anxiety becomes significantly intense, he may bite. For that reason, certain websites, which try to educate children and parents in order to reduce the incidence of dog bites (such as Doggone Safe), make a point about teaching children that they should not hug dogs. Furthermore, a few years back when a children's book entitled *Smooch Your Pooch* recommended that kids hug and kiss their dog anytime and anywhere, the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) felt that it was necessary for them to release an official statement that strongly advised parents to avoid purchasing the book, since "this information can cause children to be bitten."

Given how widely accepted the idea is that hugging is not something that dogs like, and that hugging a dog may be associated with increasing the likelihood of a dog bite, I was surprised that a search of the scientific literature produced very little experimental evidence to support that belief. I did find two articles that showed that getting bitten on the face was much more likely if you were hugging or kissing a dog. However, the authors of both studies seemed to suggest that the proximity of the person's face to the dog's mouth was the most important factor, rather than something like the hug itself. For that reason, I decided to collect some data on this issue.

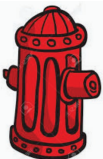
The signs of stress and anxiety in dogs are well established, and are easily observable, at least by trained individuals. Obviously at the high-end of stress, we have dogs who bare their teeth. But, there are subtler indicators. The most common sign of anxiety is when the dog turns his head

away from whatever is bothering or worrying him, sometimes also closing his eyes, at least partially. Alternatively, dogs will often show what is commonly called a "half-moon eye" or "whale eye" which is where you can see the white portion of the eyes at the corner or the rim. One common visible sign of stress or anxiety is when the dog's ears are lowered or slicked against the side of his head. Lip licking or licking a person's face can also be signs of anxiety, as can yawning or raising one paw. These signs and other similar ones should be easy to detect in stressed dogs. All that I needed, then, to conduct the research was a source of photographic material showing people hugging their dogs.

Fortunately for me, the Internet abounds with photographs of people and their pets. If you put the search terms "hug dog" or "love dog" into something like Google Image Search, or Flickr, you will get a virtually infinite scroll of pictures of people and their children hugging their pet dogs. I decided to look at a random sample of 250 such pictures. I used a variety of criteria to try to keep the data as clean and precise as possible. I only used photos where the dog's face was clearly visible. I also eliminated situations where one might expect the dog's stress level to rise because of factors other than being hugged (such as when someone lifts a large dog off the ground while hugging them). Each picture received one of three possible scores:

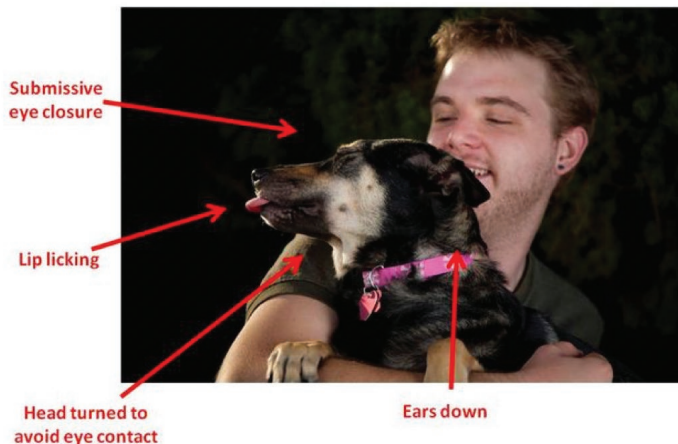
1. One could judge that the dog was showing one or more signs of stress or anxiety;
2. One could judge that the dog appeared to be relaxed and at ease;
3. One could decide that the dog's response was ambiguous or neutral.

Two examples of dogs that scored as being stressed while they were in the process of being hugged are shown on the next page.



# Your Dog and Hugs (cont.)

## Canine Stress Signs



*I can summarize the data quite simply by saying that the results indicated that the Internet contains many pictures of happy people hugging what appear to be unhappy dogs.* In all, 81.6% of the photographs researchers scored showed dogs who were giving off at least one sign of discomfort, stress, or anxiety. Only 7.6% of the photographs could rate as showing dogs that were comfortable with being hugged. The remaining 10.8% of the dogs either were showing neutral or ambiguous responses to this form of physical contact.

I suppose that one aspect of the data that struck me as interesting comes from the fact that the photographs that I used were obviously posts by individuals who wanted to show how much they cared for and shared a bond with their pet. This means that the people who were doing the

Internet posting probably chose photos in which they felt that both the person and the dog looked happiest. Nonetheless, around 82% of the photographs show unhappy dogs receiving hugs from their owners or children. This seems consistent with other research which suggests that people, especially children, seem to have difficulty reading signs of stress and anxiety based upon their dogs' facial expressions. Much more relevant for the current question is the fact that this data clearly shows that while a few dogs may like being hugged, more than four out of five dogs find this human expression of affection to be unpleasant and/or anxiety arousing.

The clear recommendation to come out of this research is to save your hugs for your two-footed family members and lovers. It is clearly better from the dog's point of view if you express your fondness for your pet with a pat, a kind word, and maybe a treat.

## "Hugging a Dog Is Just Fine When Done with Great Care"

Marc Bekoff Ph.D., was asked to respond to Coren's essay. He said he was somewhat surprised by its "overarching conclusion."

He said, "While the data seem to agree with Coren's conclusion, I believe that we need much more information before prescriptively saying, 'Don't hug the dog.'"

Not all dogs are unconditional lovers, nor are they all sponges for hugs. **When in doubt, don't hug.**

The bottom line for me is that hugging a dog is okay when the human gives very careful consideration to who the dog is, their relationship with the individual, and context. It is essential to pay close attention to the overall context in which the hugging is taking place. For example,

*(continued next page)*



## Your Dog and Hugs (cont.)

is the dog nervous? Is there food around? Every single dog with whom I have had the privilege of sharing my home loved hugs from me and some of my friends. However, two of them didn't like hugs from anyone but me when there was a lot of noise; one didn't like anyone close to him when there was food around; and one, who was terrified of thunderstorms, didn't like hugs from anyone at all in the midst of thunder and lightning or shortly thereafter. I needed to know each dog as an individual and respect their differences. And I always told visitors and others about their individual personalities so that everyone could get along just fine.

So, a safe rule of thumb to follow, in my humble opinion, is to pay close attention to what you know about the individual dog and what she or he is telling you. And, if you're unsure, don't hug the dog! Better safe than sorry.

Just like people, some dogs love it, some sort of like it, and some may not like the close contact at all. This follows in line with the fact that dogs are not all unconditional lovers nor sponges for hugs, and we need to respect these differences

***If you're going to hug a dog  
you must pay attention  
to the context.***

***A rule of thumb before  
hugging a dog is to pay very  
close attention to individual  
differences, your relationship  
with the dog, and  
the situation at hand.***

when interacting with them.

Becoming a student of dog behavior would be a win-win for all: It's essential to get things right and to tell the truth. The truth matters.

I thank Coren for writing his essay because it's so interesting that we know so little about what dogs are thinking and feeling when interacting with humans in different situations. It also raises questions about what people need to know about the animals with whom they choose to share their homes.

Choosing to live with another animal is a huge decision.

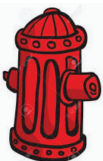
Becoming the guardian for another sentient being requires deep thought. Indeed, I think it would be a great idea for potential dog guardians or owners to have to take a short course on dog behavior, or on the behavior and needs of the particular species with whom they plan to share their home.

It's essential to get things right when trying to understand just whom dogs are and why they do the things they do. Unfortunately, this isn't necessarily what happens even in books that are alleged to be of the academic sort. People can be seriously misled when beliefs and casual stories are substituted for facts. The truth matters.

It also would be a great experience for the youngsters who will be living with the dog and who, at some time later in life, may choose to share their lives with a dog. It would be a win-win for all: Those dogs who like hugs can receive and savor them, and those who don't will be left alone and be just as happy.



One of our first "hug" pictures: Dillon the terrier mix at the Utah School for Deaf and Blind in Ogden (c1995). Talk about a restraining hug!





# Your Dog and Hugs (cont.)

## So, What Will YOU, as a Therapy Dog Handler, Do?

Coren's and Beckoff's opinions are very well-considered, and yet they do not entirely agree. Beckoff goes into thoughtful detail about managing dog-hugging in your own home and family, but says nary a word about what happens when you open that situation up to one or more strangers interacting with your dog on a regular basis. Not just the strangers and their way of choosing to hug, but in an environment that is often strange and unfamiliar as well. Now we have a geometric increase in the kinds of stressful possibilities that may feel like an assault to your dog. Beckoff's sound advice (highlighted in the box on the previous page) takes on a whole new level of concern for handlers of therapy dogs.

We ourselves just published, in our latest NEWS, a photo essay of healthcare workers encountering a therapy animal for the first time after our long hiatus. The joy is quite obvious in the faces and body language of the humans, and we have been touched and validated by the reception that our teams have received.

But as you can see in the center photos on this page, there is only one case (Susan Daynes' Reggie, who has squinty eyes and a big, relaxed smile) where it's entirely clear that the dog, too, is finding the encounter most satisfying. We trust that our handlers knew their partners were okay in the others. We have

long relied on the assumption that we can trust our handlers to not put their dogs in any situation that the dogs would find uncomfortable. And of course we have always had a "restraining hug" as an exercise in our team testing, because we feel it important to see how a prospective therapy dog reacts to that condition. But that only simulates one kind of situation, not all the real possibilities.

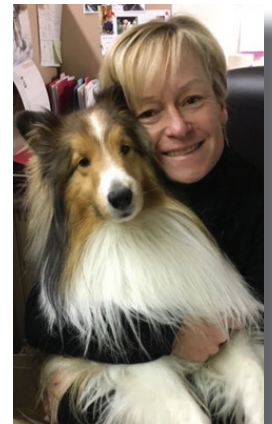
My own two most recent Sheltie companions (non-therapy dogs both) have shown me both extremes: Skye (at right, with Sue in the office) could never get enough hugging or squishing or cuddling in any position or situation—but *only if he already knew you as a friend*. He was totally terrified of strangers. Tristan, on the other hand, loves to meet new people, but he does not want them

to pet him *at all*. He is fond of my petting, and requests it, because I know all his favorite spots. But I learned early that if I hugged him, he would immediately start to "grrrr" in his throat, so I don't do that to him at all!

The bottom line is that when you hug a dog ***it must be on their terms***, not yours—or your client's.

We ask you, in the most ardent terms, to study your own ITA companion thoroughly, if you haven't already, so that you will know exactly what s/he prefers and enjoys.

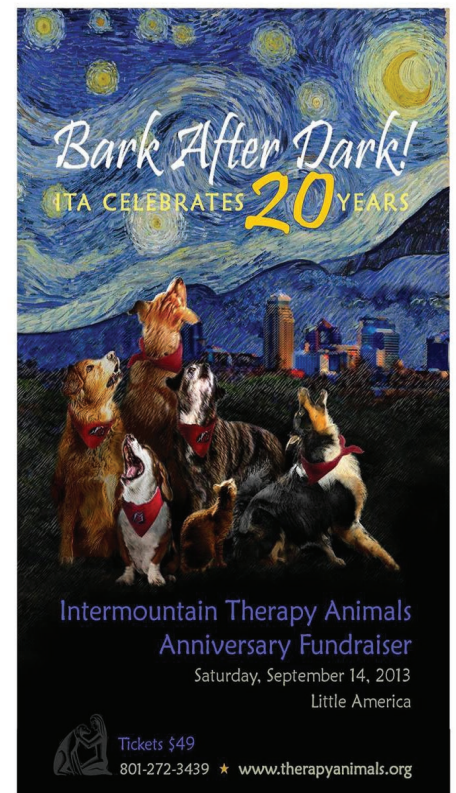
– Kathy Klotz





# ITA MEMORIES

ITA Celebrates 20 Years with “Bark After Dark”  
at Little America in September 2013



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: (1) Erik Eikenberry & partner Otis got a lot of smiles; (2) ITA's Sharry Buhanan-Decker poses in front of our impressive "Wall of Stars;" (3) the "Bark After Dark" theme image created for the event by Chris Pellegrino; (4) ITA member David Weiskopf of Ogden rendered a R.E.A.D. scene in stained glass for our auction; (5) our array of "20 ITA teams for 20 years" was another crowd-pleaser; and (6) the 3 Davises and their 3 totally cool and collected ITA therapy cats cruised the ballroom, to the absolute amazement of everyone.

