

THE HYDRANT

The Monthly Bulletin
for Members of
Intermountain
Therapy Animals

Volume 22/Number 3

MARCH 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*

March (lots of demand for us!)

Tuesday, March 1 ~ Hillcrest High School Hope Week

Thursday, March 3 ~ U of U: Kappa Kappa Gamma Philanthropy Week

Tuesday, March 8 ~ ITA Board of Directors meeting, 7 pm

Wednesday, March 9 ~ Saint Francis Xavier's Day of Reading Presentation

Thursday, March 10 ~ Weber State: Davis Transition Fair

Thursdays, March 10, 17 & 24 ~ New Team Training Classes

Sunday, March 13 ~ MEMBER SCREENINGS

Thursday, March 24 ~ Cache County Candlelight Vigil

Sunday, March 27 ~ NEW Team Screenings (including trainees from Montana and Mexico!)

Tuesday, March 29 ~ IJ Wagner Jewish Community Center



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!



Quincy, partner of Tammy Hart, enjoying a high school presentation in February.



Tony, newest partner of Michelle Olden, makes his debut at Carrington Court in February.



RETIRING



Lynn Bacon & Ruby

(Bozeman) Lynn & Ruby are retiring. Ruby is now 14 years old. They started as a team in October 2017. Thank you both for your participation in ITA!



Katie Gradick & Freya

(Salt Lake) Katie & Freya are taking some time out for now because, in addition to being a physician, Katie just had a baby, Mia, and things have understandably gotten a bit overwhelming for their family. They became a team in November 2019.

We will miss you all! Thanks for all you have done for ITA and for your communities!



PARTNER LEAVING EARTH



Ella, partner of Brenda Byrom

(Helena) Ella passed away suddenly at the age of 11-1/2. She and Brenda served as an ITA team since March of 2014, almost 8 years. We are so sorry.

MOVING for NEW ADVENTURES



Suzanne Dautre & Sasha

(Salt Lake) Suzanne and Sasha are going East to spend some time with Suzanne's children, in the New York City area for awhile, and then up to Maine for another while. She is renting out her house and expects to be gone for six months ... or maybe longer, or maybe even longer than that! We are passing this wonderful team to our colleague group, New York Therapy Animals, so they can be a team there, too. Godspeed, Suzanne & Sasha!



FUN !!



In all the year's of ITA's existence, we have not had a hospital bed to make use of during our team training and testing.

Thanks to a generous donation at the end of 2021 from the **Bonneville Basin Kennel Association**, headquartered in Draper, we have been able to procure a home model, complete with electric raising and lowering and side rails. We've even managed to make it more friendly with dog images! We are ever so grateful for their unexpected gift, and very excited to add this equipment to our training experiences.



InfiniteWags™

Another Valuable Offer for ITA Members and Friends!

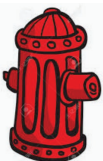
A new and comprehensive pet shopping site, Infinite Wags, has asked to help ITA on their site. **YOU** get 10% off any pur-

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





Quality of Life Scale

for Aging and Ailing Pets

The decline and loss of our beloved companions is difficult to bear. While it is painful for every good-hearted person, for ITA members it can be especially poignant after having shared such amazing life experiences with our partners.

We all want to do the right thing for them. We want to have as much time as possible, but also want to make sure that they do not suffer; that we don't let them go "too early or too late;" that we are honoring their needs instead of our own. For many of us, reading the signs to determine when the time has come for euthanasia can be a harrowing experience, with feelings of anxiety, guilt, fear and grief.

You may be aware that in the last few years hospice care has been developed for our animals. A renowned veterinary oncologist, Dr. Alice Villalobos, who specializes in the care of terminally ill pets, developed a program she calls "Pawspice," based on the human model of palliative care. She also developed something called the Quality of Life Scale, a calculable

resource designed to help people evaluate their animal's situation and needs.

The Quality of Life Scale examines seven key quality-of-life factors: **hurt, hunger, hydration, hygiene, happiness, mobility** and, finally, "**more good days than bad.**" The animal's well-being in relation to each factor is rated on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being ideal. For example, within the Pawspice program, a score of 35 (an average of 5 on each factor) is considered sufficient quality of life to justify continuing to provide hospice care to the animal.

Assigning a numerical score may seem too cold and calculating to you, but along with your own instincts and deep understanding of your companion's personality and needs, a consideration of the factors can still provide some guidance during a traumatic, bewildering time. The seven factors are explained in more detail in the Quality of Life scale on the next page.



Quality of Life Scale (cont.)

CRITERION	DESCRIPTION
Hurt	Adequate pain control; breathing ability is of top concern.
Hunger	Is the pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does the pet need a feeding tube?
Hydration	Is the pet dehydrated? For patients not drinking enough, daily subcutaneous fluids can supplement fluid intake.
Hygiene	The pet should be brushed and cleaned, particularly after eliminations. Avoid pressure sores by providing soft bedding and turning the animal over often. Keep all wounds clean.
Happiness	Does the pet express joy and interest? Is the pet responsive to family, toys, etc.? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored, or afraid? Can the pet's bed be moved to be close to family activities?
Mobility	Can the pet get up without assistance? Does the pet need human or mechanical help (e.g., a cart)? Does the dog feel like going for a walk? Is the pet having seizures or stumbling?
More good days than bad	When bad days outnumber good days, quality of life might be too compromised.

Original concept, Villalobos, A. (2004). Quality of Life Scale Helps Make Final Call, *Veterinary Practice News*, September. Formatted as a scale for Villalobos A. and Kaplin L. (2007). *Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human-Animal Bond*. Ames, IA: Blackwell Publishing, revised for 2nd edition (2017). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell. Adapted with permission from Dr. Alice Villalobos.

Hurt. The first and perhaps most important consideration is how much pain the animal is in. Pain control must be effective and should be given preemptively. Also, an inability to breathe is rated at the top of the pain scale in human medicine. Caretakers, therefore, must be able to identify labored breathing in pets and provide timely relief when possible. If the pet cannot breathe properly, even with the help of oxygen therapy, nothing else matters.

Hunger. Malnutrition can develop quickly in animals who refuse to eat. Offering a variety of foods, hand feeding, and placing food in the pet's mouth and rubbing the neck to encourage swallowing may be very helpful.

Hydration. Caretakers should learn how to assess for proper hydration in their pets using the pinch test. In general, animals should receive 10 mL of fluids per pound per day. An animal who isn't getting enough fluids may benefit enormously from subcutaneous fluids, which can be administered via injection at home.

Hygiene. Pets should be kept clean and should not be left to lie in their own soil after elimination. Animals (in particular, cats) who are having difficulty grooming themselves can be brushed and stroked gently with a sponge dampened with a very diluted solution of lemon juice and hydrogen peroxide.

Happiness. Can the animal's wants and needs still be met? Are they depressed, lonely, anxious, or bored? Pets can have scheduled fun time that they look forward to every day, such as petting sessions from family members or low-key play (e.g., cats batting at a toy or showing interest in a moving laser light). To avoid isolation, it may help to move the animal's bed to where the humans are during the day.

Mobility. There are various options to compensate for reduced mobility. Cats can be helped into their litter box. Dogs who show interest in going outdoors can be assisted with a sling or a cart. Medication may help. Mainly, is the pet—independently or with assistance—able to get up and move around enough to satisfy normal desires?

More good days than bad. An animal's quality of life is compromised when the number of "bad" days outnumbers the number of "good" days, or when there are too many bad days in a row. Bad days might be filled with unpleasant experiences such as nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, frustration, falling down, weakness, seizures, or physical discomfort.

AWI's presentation of the Quality of Life Scale is intended only for information purposes, not as veterinary advice. As always, it is important to consult with your veterinarian on these matters. We also understand that there are no easy answers—each case is different and each individual human and companion animal relationship is different. But we have a responsibility to see that our pets don't suffer unduly. With that in mind, the Quality of Life Scale provides insight into what our pets may be dealing with and what we can and should do to help them.

We all want to give our closest companions the highest quality of life in the time they have left. We also need to know when and if to make the heart-wrenching decision that euthanasia is the kindest option when life is no longer worth living for them. It is an admittedly hard thing to do when we don't want to let go, when we want to hold tight and bargain for just a little more time. 🐾

For more information on the Quality of Life Scale, visit the Pawspice website at <http://bit.ly/2TyNoBY>.



Animal Lifesavers

by Beth Wolfer

I work for an organization that saves animals' lives, Best Friends Animal Society. Every year, 347,000 healthy, adoptable dogs and cats are killed in America's shelters simply because they don't have a home or family of their own. That's 950 sweet, sentient souls every single day. Forty per hour.

When Best Friends began in 1984, it was estimated that 17 million dogs and cats were dying unnecessarily—so we have definitely come a long way.

I love my work and find a lot of meaning in it. I don't work directly with the animals—I work in raising the money to carry out all of that lifesaving. Both in work and in my volunteering as a team with ITA, I see how pets save lives, too. In my six years (and three dog partners), I've witnessed deeply moving experiences between pets and people.

At one hospital on a snowy Saturday, I had finished my "rounds" and was waiting at the elevator with my partner Alvin to go home. As the doors opened, a woman stepped out, knelt down on the ground, threw her arms around Alvin's thick neck, and said, "Oh thank goodness. I was hoping to see a therapy dog today. I really need this."

We found a quiet room where she could spend some time rubbing Alvin's belly, looking into his deep, heart-melting brown eyes, and soak

up the healing energy of a dog. As you know, we never inquire about anyone's circumstances, illness, or reasons for needing a dog-hug. But this time, the woman shared that her 25-year-

old daughter had been in a terrible accident, and this was the day they were going to remove life support, meaning it was only a matter of a little time before this woman experienced my own worst fear—losing a child. And while my dog couldn't save her daughter's life, I'm sure he gave this mom the comfort and strength to face what came next. I could barely

keep it together as we finished up our visit and headed to the parking lot. Once in the car, I put my head on the steering wheel and sobbed.

As you also know, there's something about the unconditional love of a dog—and some cats, too—that helps us through tough times. I have a friend who'd adopted a rambunctious dog who needed tons of stimulation and exercise. She was going through a prolonged divorce and was quite depressed. The last thing she wanted to do most days was go for a hike or a long walk with her dog. Yet he got her out of the house and, invariably, she was glad he did.

I've experienced that phenomenon where pets intuitively know when a person is hurting. My

(continued next page)



Beth with [above] her late partner Alvin and [below] her current partner Edgar



Animal Lifesavers (cont.)

friend Marsha used to work at a cancer treatment center where a dozen or more people would be receiving chemo infusions in one large room. When the pet therapy team came in, the dog always knew who most needed his calm presence and would walk straight to that person and put his head on their knees.

I have personally had less transformational contact with cats—my two mostly look at me in judgment or disgust when I'm down or, god forbid, crying. Still, they make me laugh all the time. I remember when my old guy Toby, now 15, used to be obsessed with string-like objects. On his rounds at night (when he used to be allowed outside at night), he'd bring home string, hair ties, ribbons, and once, a toddler's hat that had chin ties. I put that hat on a rock in my front yard so that the parent would see it next time they walked by with their hatless toddler in a stroller. But damn if Toby didn't bring it back inside—three more times! My daughter and I started joking that maybe he'd done away with the child just to keep the hat for himself.

At work, I've known plenty of "cat lady" donors whose homes are resplendent with cat-themed items: dish towels, figurines, clothing, pillows and, of course, actual cats. I've heard stories of how their cats kept them company after their husband died or woke them up when their breathing changed, indicating a health scare.

One cat that's my hero, though, is Louise. Louise is my daughter Rose's four-year-old cat who lives with her in her apartment. Louise lived at my house for her first couple of years—she was rescued from a local no-kill organization. But when Rose moved into her own place, she

was excited to take Louise with her. Louise was likely excited too, as at my house she was frequently pounced on by her little cat brother Harrison or brushed by too closely by one of the dogs. Sometimes Louise perched on a kitchen stool just to take swipes at any passing dog. So I think everybody was relieved when Lou and Rose went their own way.

Louise really came into her own as a single pet with Rose, rediscovering kitten qualities like playing with toys or jumping from couch to chair to floor to counter to couch repeatedly.

Well, a few weeks ago, Rose was struggling with both of her jobs. She'd been a Behavioral Tech in public schools, working with one or two kids at a time who, for various reasons, spent most of their time beating her up—biting, kicking, scratching, spitting on and swearing at her. It was getting toward the end of the school year, and she'd just about reached the limit of what she could endure from these boys (because they were always boys).

Her other job for several years was as a server at a local farm-to-table restaurant, and she had seen some staff turnover due to her manager's worsening mood swings and criticism. Finally, Rose decided she'd had enough, too, and resigned from that post after a lengthy exit interview where she hoped what she shared with her boss would help improve things for the next batch of servers.

So at 25, she was in that "what do I do with my life" phase, feeling overwhelmed and barely resisting the temptation to compare herself with her two older sisters who seemed to be in great careers and have life all figured out. Of course, if you asked each of them, they would say that



they were feeling similarly overwhelmed at 25, as was I.

Rose had struggled with some depression and anxiety off and on for a few years, but she hit a new low in late May of 2021. She called to tell me that she'd seriously considered taking her own life in the middle of the night, and that she needed help.

When I got to her apartment (in what felt like about ten seconds, since I was in turbo mother tiger mode), I made my way gingerly up the three flights of stairs to her door, as I'd recently undergone hip replacement surgery.

Rose was lying on the couch, puffs of spent tissue all around her from crying long and hard. I held her and stroked her hair and resisted the temptation to clean up all the Kleenex.

She'd had a hard time sleeping the night before, she said. She'd doze and then wake up frequently, and each time she did, her thoughts would be progressively darker— about her future, about her past

She had been through a lot in the last 18 months, including ending an abusive relationship with a guy for whom she almost moved to Australia, and enduring a sexual assault on a first date eight months after that. Add to these traumas one exhausting, draining job and another scary, really difficult job—not to mention the Covid pandemic—and the scene was set for a major meltdown.

I had always been able to get her through her funks before with the help of a therapist and her two sisters, but this one was different. She had overwhelmed herself with all of the unanswered and unanswerable “what if” and “why me” questions and had come to the point of

wanting to end her life.

She had never expressed a specific plan before, so I just about died myself when she told me, “in the middle of the night, I found myself wondering if the ceiling fan would hold my weight.”

This statement sent me into overdrive mom-mode, and I said, “you’re coming to stay with me.”

She objected feebly, saying she couldn’t leave Louise.

In fact, she said that during the night, Louise had been extra snuggly. She head-butted Rose constantly and was very vocal, making chirps and clicks that Rose had never heard before. She wouldn’t leave Rose’s side, wherever she went in the apartment, and Rose said, “I think Louise may very well have saved my life last night.”

God bless Louise.

So not only have I observed animals saving lives from a distance, but now I have experienced it firsthand as a mother. Rose is doing much better now, through therapy, medication, time, and lots of support. She and Louise spent a month with me (and all of my other pets) and moved back to her place a couple of weeks ago.

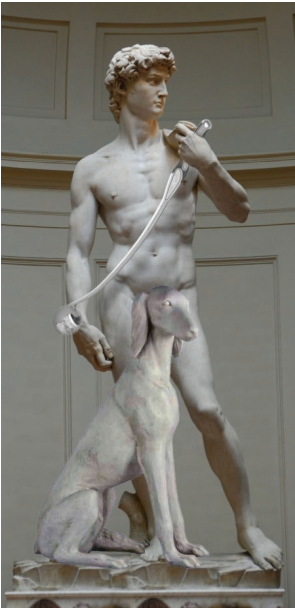
So in our case, and in many others, lifesaving was a two-way street. We rescued Louise and she sure as hell rescued my daughter.

—Beth Wolfer
July 2021



The Lighter Side

Great Art ... Embellished



David & Friend



Mona Lisa & Friend



Venus deFido



The Howl



Self Portrait with Coned Dog



The Last Supper ~ with Guest

