

LEAVING EARTH

Boone, partner of Laurie Christie

(Salt Lake City, UT)

Sweet Boone started therapy work late in life, just before turning 10, and his career was fairly short (May 2022 to December 2023) but he did some truly memorable things during his time with us. Laurie let us know that he died in mid-March, at age 14. Our hearts break a little at each of these losses; we are so sorry.



WOO-HOO !!

We were contacted by Dr. Jereld Rice, DVM, the Medical Director of the Gallatin Veterinary Hospital in Bozeman, who said that he would like to collaborate with ITA in some way.

Bozeman Leader Nancy Dodd went promptly to meet with Dr. Rice, and the result is that ***their hospital is going to offer ITA members a 10% discount on veterinary services!***

This is extraordinarily good news for our Bozeman chapter; you all know how expensive vet care is getting for our companions.

Moreover, this is the first time in our whole history that a vet has offered ITA members a discount, so we are thrilled and grateful to Dr. Rice. And also a bit jealous of our Bozeman chapter!



**Dr. Jereld Rice, DVM,
Medical Director**

**Gallatin Veterinary Hospital
1635 Reeves Road East
Bozeman Montana 59718
406-587-4458**



Fun Idea from a Member

ITA member **Tami Brown**, who works in both the Salt Lake and St. George areas, told us that she likes to send a message from her dog, **Troy**, before going on a visit, to help her clients get introduced to Troy and anticipate his visit. It also gives them some things to talk about when they get there in person. An example of one of Troy's messages is shown at right (scroll added here to get your attention!).

We haven't heard of anybody doing something like this in all our 31+ years, and it's a really clever and creative idea.

Thanks, Tami & Troy!



HAPPY TAILS by TROY February, 2025

My Mom & Dad went skiing in a place called *Jackson Hole* earlier this month, and my brothers and I stayed with our friends Jolyn and Troy while they were gone. Jolyn calls her human partner "Troy-Man" and calls me "Troy-Boy" when we stay there, so that the two "Troys" know which one of us she's talking to.

Last February when Mom & Dad went away and left us with Jolyn & "Troy-Man", Jolyn took me out with some other 4-legged friends on a hike up on the mountain. As we were getting back to the car and she told us to load up, I decided that I missed my mom & dad too much and wanted to find them, so I took off up the mountain. At first it was a lot of fun running around and doing whatever I wanted to do, but then I started to get scared. I was in a place where I'd never been hiking before, so didn't know which way to go, but I kept my nose to the ground and about 5 hours later I found my way across the front of the mountain and back to my house. My Oma & Opa were there and they gave me tons of love and attention the rest of that evening. Mom says it's a miracle I found my way home, but I think it's just part of my Superhero powers! I learned my lesson though, and I don't plan on ever doing that again! Jolyn & dad will always come back for my brothers and I. Besides, I have a job now, and responsibilities, and I'm much more mature than I was back then.

Speaking of my job, mom showed me this comic strip that she saw in the paper, and I told her it would be perfect to bring with us and share with all the nice people in the big building who love on me and give me lots of attention.



With lots of happy tail wags,
Troy-Boy



Being Partners with Our Animals

You all know that one of our underlying principles at ITA is to always seek improvement, to always get better at the intense and complex work of animal-assisted services at all levels.

Among the subjects that have been garnering a lot of our attention over the past couple of years are the importance of seeking our partners' *consent* for each encounter; to give them *choices* from moment to moment, and to consider more deeply what it really means to *be a partner* with our companion animals who are serving with us in this important work. We're going to dip our toes into these ideas quite a lot in the future, and herein we will just start by citing some comments about partnership to get everyone thinking. It's going to be mind-expanding and challenging, but definitely worthwhile. (-KK)

What does "partnership" mean to you?

We call our animals partners. "Pet Partners" is even the official name of the whole major colleague organization that we all know.

When we've asked the above question in our workshops, students have offered the following concepts that apply when people enter into a partnership. They say that partners:

1. Treat each other with respect as equals
2. Act with mutual consideration
3. Trust that you have each other's backs
4. Cooperate on decisions
5. Honor each other's boundaries and limits
6. Communicate back and forth regularly
7. Recognize that both of you have unique/complementary/essential skills that the other does not have

When, however, you imagine a partner as an *animal* rather than a *human*, it becomes considerably more challenging to define how those same principles will actually function. Let's go through the list again:

1. Does it give you pause to really think about considering your animal "equal?" Each one is a living, breathing unique being with opinions, preferences and even fears that are unique to them. But "equal" in value and importance?
2. What might it mean to "act with mutual consideration?" More than once we have heard humans say, "I tell my dog what to do and he does it—isn't that all that matters?"
3. History is replete with amazing stories of dogs who protect or save their humans from disaster, and vice-versa. What does it look like to "have each other's backs" in the less dramatic, everyday business of going on therapeutic visits with your dog?
4. What might it look like to cooperate and collaborate on decisions during such visits, moment to moment?
5. Are you truly able to honor your animal's boundaries and limits? What about when you're leaving the hospital at the end of a long, emotionally draining session, but a nurse begs you to visit just one more person

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Being Partners with Our Animals (cont.)

who really needs a therapy animal? How hard is it to turn down that plea?

6. We know that our animals are communicating direct and non-stop about their feelings and reactions in every situation, but we humans have a long history of not recognizing or paying much attention to those communications. Have you gotten better since being a therapy team? Do you keep a hand on your partner as much as possible? Do you make sure to read his/her face frequently? Do you talk, softly but often, to your partner as you navigate each client and setting during a visit?
7. Can your ego handle the idea that your animal partner has qualities that are vital to therapy work that you do not have? Many of you have had the experience of your dog recognizing which person in the room was most in need of their attention and come away in awe at “How could he possibly have known that?” Your clients won’t necessarily break into a smile the moment you enter the room—but they do when your dog

does! The bodies of all your clients will not be flooded with oxytocin and other endorphins when they see you, but they will be when your dog is near.

Many of the things mentioned above might fall under the category of advocating for your dog. We all cite that requirement often and automatically: “It’s an important part of my job as a handler for me to be an advocate for my dog.” True enough, but how much are we actually thinking about the nuances of that vital responsibility when we are with our dog on the job?

Roll these ideas around in your thoughts and actions over the next while and see what might change for you? We had a student in a recent class admit very honestly and bravely, “I am realizing that it can be really hard to advocate for my dog!”

Next time we’ll dive deeper into the fine points of what it means to get your dog’s *consent* and give him/her real *choices* from moment to moment.



OUT & ABOUT

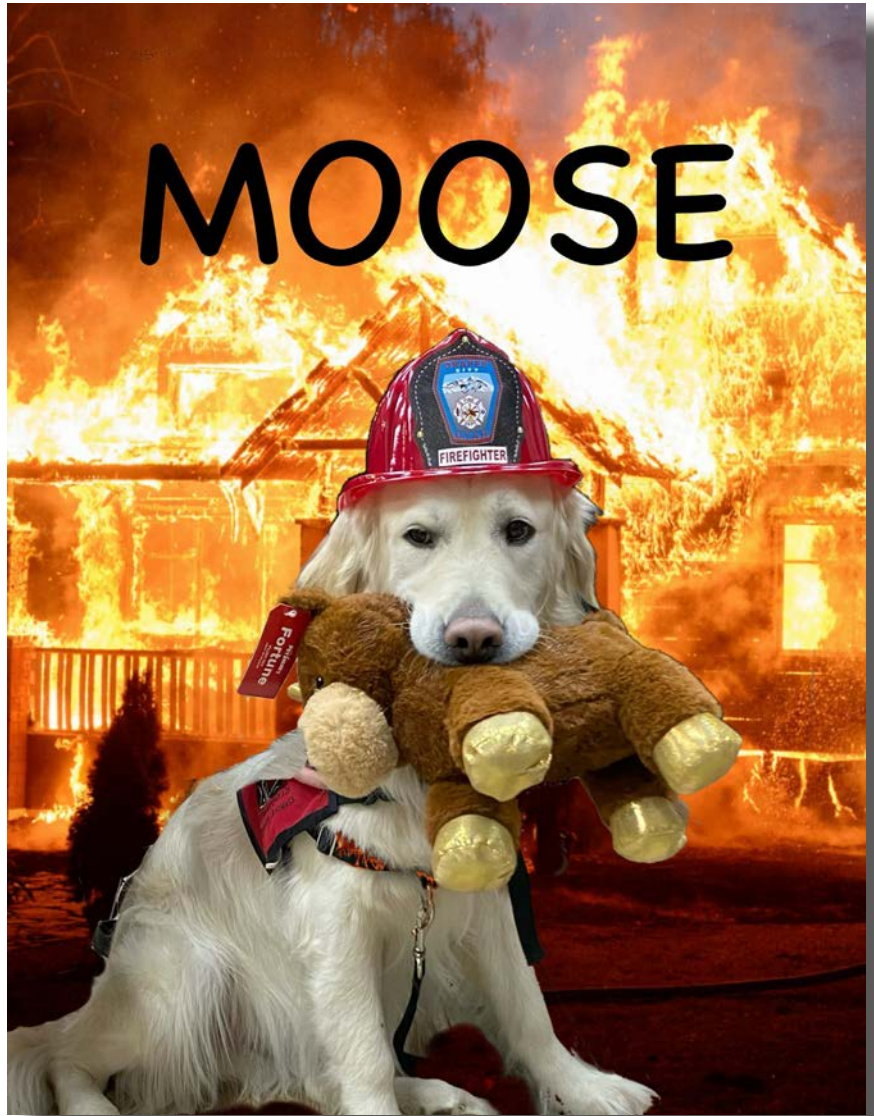


Jennifer Miller and Moose ran into some paramedics at Lone Peak Hospital a few weeks ago who loved Moose.

In fact, they loved him so much that the next week they called the ER to ask if he was there!

Jennifer & Moose were there, and they offered to stop by the fire station on their way home from the hospital. During their visit, the firefighters and paramedics loved Moose so much! They gave him a stuffed Moose and a firefighter hat, took pictures with him in the fire truck, and fed him some yummy treats.

Then they took one of their pictures, added a flaming background, and now have it hanging in their fire station! Way to win friends, Moose!



Leslie Adams' husband had surgery at Huntsman Cancer Hospital last Thursday. She told us, "Just wanted to share some wonderful feedback I encountered at Huntsman Cancer Hospital. I asked the staff about the visiting dogs from ITA. Oh my goodness! How they gushed about ITA and their love for the visits! And they all wanted a **Coco** card."

"Just that encounter was very uplifting to me and my husband during his stay. I continue to be very grateful for being a ITA member. Thank you, thank you & thank you!"



Dogs in Art

There is a stunning piece of art on display in the lobby of Ryan Veterinary Hospital, a photo collage of his late golden retriever, Fantine, composed of nearly 500 shelter dogs who received lifesaving care from Penn Vet. It was commissioned and donated by Richard Lichter, a member of the Penn Vet Board of Advisors.

The description of the photo collage in the lobby of Ryan Veterinary Hospital, “*These unknown dogs are invisible, unnoticed unless you come close and look,*” bears two meanings. One is the literal experience of viewing “Fantine.” It appears at a distance to be an impressionistic rendering of a golden retriever, but up close one can see the faces of other individual dogs, nearly 500 of them. Then there is the symbolic meaning, that these once-invisible shelter dogs were noticed by the dedicated hospital staff.

Lichter’s charity enables shelter dogs with complicated medical needs that exceed the treatment capacity of shelters to receive the care they need at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine through the Penn Vet Shelter Medicine Program. These are dogs who otherwise would have been euthanized, says Lichter, who is also a member of Penn Vet’s board of advisors.

“It’s all over the map,” he says of their conditions. “A lot of them had broken bones, through a car accident or some other sort of accident. There’s been hip dysplasia. There’s been cruelty cases, sadly, and a lot of parvovirus cases.”

These are some of the stories of the 500 dogs whose faces make up the visage of his golden retriever, Fantine, who died in 2022 at age 11. Fantine was treated for osteosarcoma later in life at Ryan Hospital.

Hyemi Sevensing, associate dean of institutional advancement at Penn Vet, says the original idea was for the Fantine piece to be placed upstairs in the treatment areas. “We recognized that it needed to be in an area where it is vis-



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Fantine (cont.)

ible and inspirational to all, to pet owners, to our clinicians, and to our veterinary students,” Sevening says. “It is particularly poignant to Ryan Hospital’s reception staff, who greet our clients and their pets during times of emergency or duress.”

Lichter says the inspiration for the Fantine collage came from Vik Muniz, a Brazilian artist who reimagines famous artworks using other images, found objects, and eccentric

mixed materials. He bought a Muniz piece that recreates an Édouard Manet painting using images of other people’s faces. Penn Vet had been sending Lichter pictures of the dogs from shelters, and Lichter gave these to an artist to reformulate into Fantine’s likeness.

“I think it’s very uplifting,” he says. “Those dogs would not be alive, most of them, if it weren’t for Ryan Hospital, because they all went through specialty treatment.”



Close-up of the nearly 500 images of dogs that make up the whole mosaic of Fantine.



The Lighter Side

