

# GREAT NEWS about MEMBERS



**Tundra**, partner of **Linda Webster**, was issued his very own Salt Lake County Jail Identification Card since he's such an important visitor who provides invaluable "Paw Support" for the staff.



**Ellen Folke** won the **Dog Writers Association of America 2025 Annual Writing Competition**, for excellence in the category of **The Written Word ~ Human/Animal Bond**.

We included her full article in the *Hydrant* of May 2025, but we are attaching it to this month's issue again, as an inspiration for all of us and our work in animal-assisted services.



Ellen is currently an ITA Instructor and Team Evaluator. Her partner Benno passed away in July of 2023 after 7 years as an ITA team. But we're happy to report that Ellen is due to pick up a new Bernese puppy in the next few weeks . . .



# A BIG AWARD FOR ITA



## 2026 Founding Forward Award Winner

On February 9th, Kathy Klotz accepted **Founding Forward's George Washington Honor Medal** in the category of Community. The award was presented to her by former Utah Governor Gary Herbert.

We are so proud of Kathy and applaud that she is receiving the recognition she so richly deserves for her 30+ years of dedication to ITA!

Deep gratitude to Ellen Folke, who nominated Kathy and ITA for this prestigious national award, completing the comprehensive application process with eloquence and energy!



[Kathy Klotz accepting award (top);  
Kathy and Ellen Folke chat with  
another award winner]

A group of ITA members was honored to attend the awards luncheon in the ballroom at Little America to celebrate and support Kathy and Intermountain Therapy Animals.

**FOUNDING**  
*forward*



[Attending the ITA Table (right to left): Jose Woodhead  
Susan Daynes, Brett Beasley, Jane Fischer, Kathy  
McNulty, Ellen Folke, and Preston Chiaro  
Also in attendance: Becky Butler and Melissa Byrd]



[Kathy Klotz escorted by the attending Honor Guard.]



# FOUNDING FORWARD CITATION for INTERMOUNTAIN THERAPY ANIMALS

*This is Ellen's nomination of ITA for the Founding Forward Award.*

Picture a toddler who inadvertently walked into a campfire. Her feet are healed now, but all she can remember about walking is excruciating pain. Her nurse rolls her wagon along the hospital corridor, and they turn the corner. At the other end of the hallway is a gorgeous, smiling Golden Retriever. That little sprite climbs out of her wagon and toddles the length of the hallway to greet her newest friend.

These types of animal-assisted interactions are facilitated by Intermountain Therapy Animals' volunteer teams as they fulfill ITA's mission to enhance the quality of life through the human-animal bond. Teams consist of volunteers and their own companion animals. They visit those who are physically or developmentally disabled, emotionally or psychologically impaired, lonely or suffering from depression, in settings ranging from hospitals, counseling centers, nursing homes, memory care centers, detention homes, schools, and libraries.

ITA was founded in 1993 with just three teams, and they have become one of the largest and most successful local organizations providing animal-assisted service in the US. Over thirty years later, there are 360 teams serving 170 institutions. In 2024, ITA teams visited nearly 300,000 clients.

Kathy Klotz has been with ITA since its inception in 1993 and became Executive Director in 1997, following 25 years in a corporate envi-

ronment. Kathy believes that putting people and animals together for the happiness and healing of both is one of the most joyful and rewarding types of "work" on earth.

A foundational ITA principle is to ensure that every animal is a willing and joyful participant in this work – anything less would be cruel. This is a unique volunteer organization because the work happens out in the field. This is not a service that can be learned alone or online. Every team is unique. Every client is unique.

ITA has never had to file a liability claim, has never been dismissed from a facility, and has never received a complaint about incompetence. This validates the safety and efficacy of their training and testing procedures.

- For ITA's dedication to maintaining the very highest standards in the field of animal-assisted services,
- for their thoughtful professionalism in their delivery of service to the community,
- for their work to enhance the quality of life through the human-animal bond,

It is with great admiration that we present Kathy Klotz and Intermountain Therapy Animals the George Washington Honor Medal in the category of Community.



## ITA Board Succession Committee

The ITA Board of Directors has been contemplating a strong and vibrant future for the organization. About 15 months ago, the Board's Succession Committee began meeting to focus on three key areas: planning for leadership continuity in the event of an emergency, strengthening the effectiveness of the Board, and thoughtfully considering what new leadership at ITA should look like.

With Kathy's support and guidance, we anticipate beginning the search for a new Executive Director in the coming months. Kathy has graciously agreed to assist with the transition and continue contributing in the areas she has most enjoyed and so skillfully developed over the years.

We are profoundly grateful for the 32 years of heart, vision, and dedication Kathy has devoted to growing ITA into the region's leading therapy team nonprofit. Her expertise, commitment to excellence, and unwavering passion have shaped who we are today. There truly will never be another Kathy.

We will keep you informed as this process moves forward. In the coming months, you may also receive an invitation to explore board service. As always, we remain committed to supporting our staff, therapy teams, and community as we honor and continue our mission of "enhancing the quality of life through the human-animal bond."

Sincerely,

The ITA Board Succession Committee



One of our ITA members, Linda Webster, is a board member for Ruff Haven, the only organization in Utah focused solely on providing temporary foster care for pets whose families are facing crisis.

We want to give them a shout out because in these unpredictable times, it's good to know there are folks out there making sure that people's beloved companions are receiving comfort and care.

Right now Ruff Haven's most urgently needed items are:

Collars • Leashes • Muzzles • Blankets  
Protein Paste • Dry and wet dog food

We know lots of our members have spare, unused items in their animals' collections (or a bag of food someone doesn't like!), so any support would be welcome, and all donations are tax-deductible (Federal Tax ID 85-0838808).

*If you have anything to offer, you may just drop it off here at ITA and Linda will make sure it gets to Ruff Haven's facility.*

They are also in need of more short-term foster homes, if you can help in that way!

You can find out lots more on their website:  
<https://www.ruffhaven.org>



# TRANSITIONS

## New Teams



**Cindy Garbee & Dani**  
Kalispell, MT  
February 2026



**Allison Griswold & Birdee**  
St. George, UT  
February 2026

## Handler with New Partner



**Kim Gilmore and Rumour**  
Columbia Falls, MT  
Kim has been a member since  
July 2018.

## Retiring Team



**Donna Andreassi  
& Harper**  
Bozeman, MT  
Retiring due to Harper's  
health issues. Members since  
July of 2023

## Leaving Earth

### Mr. Bingley, partner of Leslie Wasden



Mr. Bingley died on February 22nd due to failure of his pancreas. He was almost 10 (born in June 2016), and he and Leslie have been an ITA team since July of 2018. Most recently they worked at the State Hospital and the Center for Change.



**Claudia Bauleth, ITA Board Member**

## **Why I Have Included ITA in My Will**



**I** have been an animal lover all my life, and I can truly say that I have experienced dogs' unconditional love for over 30 years, thanks to my companions. I have owned black labradors since 1991. Throughout all these years, I remember coming home from work tired and stressed, but as soon as I walked in and my dog(s) greeted me, nothing else mattered. Then, I would take them for a walk, no matter how tired I was, and I could feel the stress melt away. When I had bronchitis, my normally-high energy lab

sat beside me on my bed very calmly, waiting patiently for me to get better. I have endless examples of my dogs' unconditional love.

Even before becoming an ITA Board Member in 2025, I was always reading articles on how dogs helped humans overcome emotional and physical challenges. I am a strong believer in the healing power of animals. They give us unconditional love, they do not judge, criticize, or have expectations.

For all those reasons, when drafting my will in 2017, I ensured that ITA was included as one of my beneficiaries. To me this was an easy decision. I am grateful to be part of this exceptional organization.

*- Claudia*

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**Melissa Byrd, ITA Staff**

## **Why I am a Monthly Sustainer for ITA**

**F**or almost 29 years as a proud member of the small but mighty ITA staff, I've had the incredible opportunity to connect with our dedicated volunteer teams and hear about their impact firsthand from clients, their families, compassionate facility staff, travelers at the airport, and so many wonderful individuals in between! Time and again, I've witnessed how our therapy teams uplift spirits, ease the challenges of medical treatments, and lighten the final days of loved ones. Feeling inspired by their tremendous impact, I signed up for an automatically recurring monthly donation to ITA. Even though it's a small contribution and I wish I could give more, I believe every bit helps support the remarkable people and animals who bring so much joy and hope to those they serve!



*- Melissa*

