

Peggy Chudd, 26-year member

Why I am a Monthly Sustainer for ITA

I first became involved with Intermountain Therapy Animals by helping with fundraisers for a couple of years. During that time, I saw firsthand how much dedication and behind-the-scenes work goes into making the organization successful. Eventually, in 2000 my dog Waldo and I became a therapy team ourselves, which gave me an even deeper appreciation for the impact this work has on people's lives. I'm grateful to have had six amazing hounds who have been with me on my journey with ITA.

My involvement with ITA has changed my life. The experiences, the people I've met, and the friendships I've formed through this work have meant more to me than I ever could have imagined. Visiting with Waldo and the five Bassets who followed is the part that brings me the greatest joy, but it's also given me a deeper understanding of compassion, community, and the importance of showing up for others.

Most people see the rewarding moments — the visits, the smiles, the comfort that therapy animals bring — but what goes mostly unseen is everything that makes those moments possible. There are office staff coordinating schedules, volunteers organizing events, preparing and supporting teams, and countless hours of work happening quietly behind the scenes.

That's one reason I believe monthly donations are so important. Even small, ongoing contributions help provide stability and allow organizations like ITA to continue serving the community every day. Consistent support helps sustain not only the therapy teams and their animals, but also the staff and others whose work makes it all possible.

For me, making a monthly donation is one small way I can give back and show my appreciation for an organization that has given so much to me. It's more than a donation — it's a way to support something I truly believe in and to help ensure this important work continues for others.

- Peggy



Emily Anthes explains why she doesn't sweat the question of how intelligent her canine companion is:

"Watson is everything we could want in a dog: sweet, gentle, goofy, loving. I don't need him to help me with the crossword ~ I just want him to curl up next to me while I do it."



Why I Have Included ITA in My Will



It probably seems obvious that having been the director for almost 30 years, and having no kids or grandkids, I would logically choose to leave a healthy percentage of my estate (and some monthly dollars) to ITA!

Here's the thing: I know of almost no other force or phenomenon on earth that so consistently makes a positive difference in people's lives as connecting with an animal. Our teams go out every day, with no judgment or discrimination, meeting with people big and small, old and young, who are going through the toughest moments of their lives, and suddenly, magically (but scientifically valid), things are better for those people. They can smile and laugh, relax and focus, feel some peace and comfort, gain some hope in dealing with their personal crises. What could be more worthwhile or more valuable than that??

Our world is full of complicated challenges, and I am so lucky to be a part of all these beings who truly make a powerful "pawsitive" impact everywhere they go. My favorite way of looking at it is that putting people and animals together, *for the benefit of both*, is the most joyful "work" on earth. And it's my honor to contribute in some small way to helping this work go on into the future.

- Kathy

Why ITA Focuses So Much On Relationship

A critical variable in a dog being able to join a patient in their health and recovery journey is ensuring that the dog feels he can trust his partner to listen to what he says and respond to what he needs. He needs to be able to flourish during all of his visits.

In addition to how the handler works with and supports their animal during the visits, it's also vital that there is balance in the rest of their lives together. Does the handler make time for spending time together? For play? For movement and activity in the ways the dog likes best? Maintaining that connection throughout their time "off-duty" is just as important.

Just as with people, our relationships with our companion animals need constant attention, consideration, empathy and connection.



Curbing Enthusiasm

You have likely heard us quote Suzanne Clothier's opinion as our underlying rationale for not permitting head collars for therapy dogs (*see her quote highlighted below*). It pretty much requires that our handlers have established a strong enough relationship with their partner that the dog enjoys responding to his human's requests and is willing to do so, no matter how appealing something else may be. One key moment in every visit is when you're introducing yourselves and waiting to be invited closer to the client. Our dogs are often bursting with enthusiasm to get in closer, and we need to see dogs who are willing to wait politely for permission to approach, rather than handlers who are hanging on for dear life, often with their dog in a stranglehold. Such a scene can also be downright scary to the waiting clients, who fear being overwhelmed.

We'd love to hear your own methods for training your partners to wait politely before advancing. Please feel free to share (write to kathy@therapyanimals.org) and you may provide inspiration for your colleagues who have struggles with this challenge. (-KK)

Connection & Control

by Suzanne Clothier

Control is not always about connection, but connection is what makes control possible.

Connection is about two minds working together. If the connection is not there between you and your dog, you will be unable to direct him, help him or really train him.

Connection can come and go. It takes time and practice to create a steady state of connection. Typically – and especially for adolescents! – the connection changes in quality, sometimes minute by minute. Your dog may be nicely tuned in to you, but you become distracted by your cell phone or a text or your own thoughts, and you tune your dog out. Or you may be very aware of your dog but he's forgotten about you because he saw a squirrel or smelled something wonderful.

Learning to stay connected is an important goal when working with any dog, particularly adolescents or dogs with behavior problems. Think of it as a balancing act that requires constant adjustment and awareness. It's a lot like driving in traffic! You need to keep assessing and altering your responses based on what's happening around you in order to prevent an accident. When driving on a very quiet

road with few or no other cars around, you can relax and be less vigilant — but you still have to practice good driving.

Sometimes, we get careless because we don't feel the need for deeply attentive driving. The same is true for you and your dog. Even in quiet settings, practice quality connection. It will pay off in big ways when things get more interesting or in more challenging situations.

One clue that the connection may need work is dependence on equipment. ***If you need equipment to maintain control of your dog, understand you're hanging on to your dog's body because you've lost his mind!*** Sometimes equipment is necessary, because the connection and the dog's skills (or yours) are not strong enough for that moment's challenges. That's okay! Just recognize that training is a process, and keep aiming for the highest quality connection you can have in any moment.

When you make staying connected the goal of being with your dog in any situation, training equipment becomes secondary, a way to keep the dog safe, a way to send signals in addition to your verbal and non-verbal signals.

Many dogs are well connected to their owners, right until something more interesting shows up! While this may be understandable, it can cause problems if you don't work to resolve it.



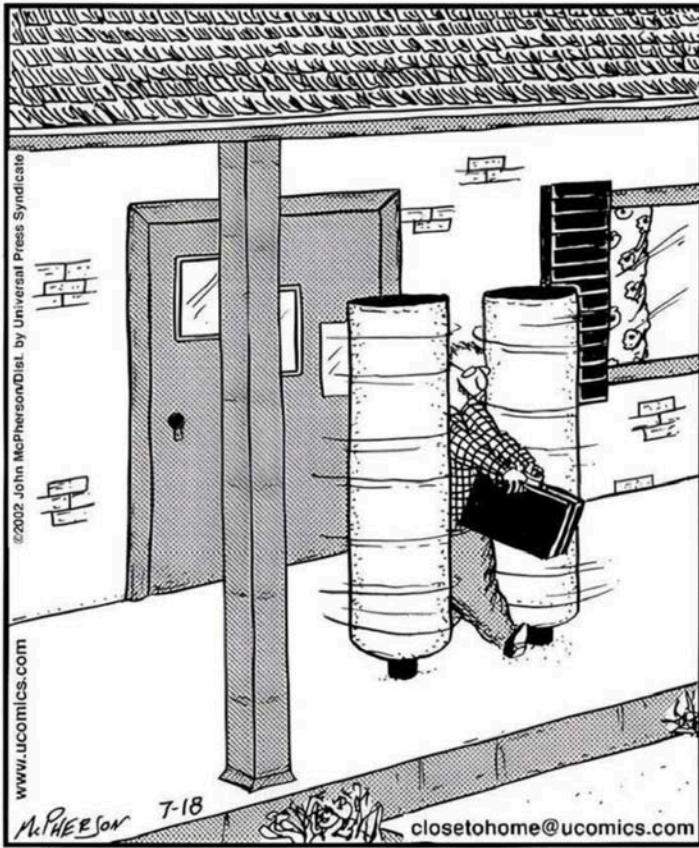
Dogs in Art



Miss Beatrice Townsend - John Singer Sargent 1882



The Lighter Side



As the owner of two golden retrievers, Doug swore by his new automated lint rollers.

off the mark.com by Mark Parisi



© Mark Parisi. Permission required for use.

