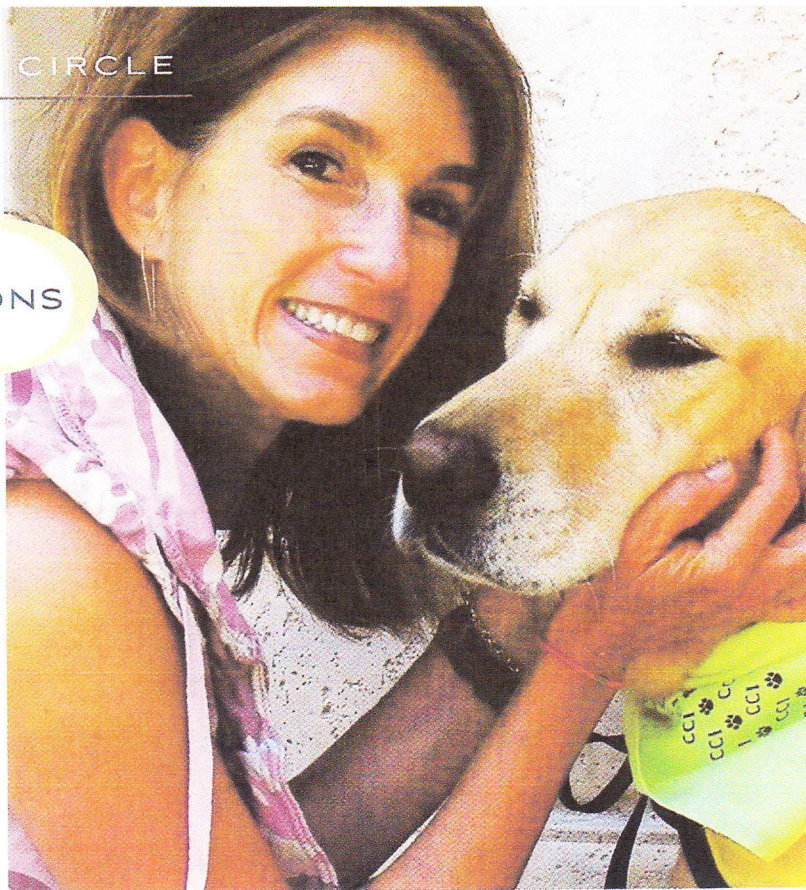


ICONS



WHO'S YOUR PAW?

Dogs may be man's best friend, but Nancy Baumann makes them man's best helper, too.

Nancy Baumann started out tentatively, just testing the waters as a volunteer at the Southeast Region of Canine Companions for Independence. The group, which trains dogs to assist the disabled with everyday tasks, was welcoming, and Baumann soon found the temperature to be amazingly warm and herself immersed in the experience.

At the time, Baumann had no idea she would become such a passionate advocate of a program that has helped more than 3,000 physically disabled and hearing-impaired people live more independently and comfortably.

The extraordinary compassion and patience that Baumann felt for the cause

led to her role as a puppy raiser. This may not sound all that different from simply being a pet owner, but because these puppies are destined to be canine companions, the 14-month program is highly structured.

"Puppy raisers get puppies at eight weeks old," Baumann says. "From the beginning, we teach them all of the basic commands. We take them into public places – even onto airplanes – as puppies in training. We integrate them into movie theaters and restaurants." Baumann laughs. "I used to think that the stir I caused when I went to those places was because of me, but when I stopped raising the dogs, I realized that it was all about the puppies!"

During her 12-year association with the organization, Baumann has served as a dedicated member of its Southeast Board of Directors, during which she has been an officer and member of the organization's executive committee. Her devotion and ability to inspire others helped to catapult her into her current position as president of the board.

Baumann tapped into her network of associates, and they caught her enthusiasm. A contact with SeaWorld and Anheuser-Busch evolved into a relationship that led to the creation and support of the Orlando Campus, where the puppies continue their special training. Phone calls to local corporate leaders and philanthropists furthered awareness.



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creating additional revenues and partnerships.

“Our mission is to maintain our Circle of Love,” Baumann eagerly explains. “There is no beginning or end to a circle. You can add to the circle or take a different place in the circle, and it still maintains its integrity.”

Thanks to Baumann’s hard work and her ability to inspire, Canine Companions for Independence has a home in Central Florida.

One of Baumann’s unique visions brought about the creation of the annual Tales and Tails Benefit almost 12 years ago. Each year, the attendance has grown exponentially, resulting in increased financial benefits.

This year, the guest host will be Jack Hanna, renowned director emeritus of the Columbus Zoo in Columbus, Ohio. Hanna has a special affinity for Orlando as he worked at the Central Florida Zoo in the 1970s. His frequent television appearances have made him instantly identifiable, and his most recent television series, *Jack Hanna’s Into the Wild*, received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Children’s Series in 2008. Hanna’s charismatic presence and offbeat humor will enliven the dinner and an evening filled with silent auctions, raffles and other events.

– Susan Cross

Log onto cci.org/talesandtailsgala for information about Tales and Tails on November 8.