



Southwest Companion

The Southwest Region Newsletter of Canine Companions for Independence



Summer 2008 Issue: February 2008 Graduates, "Summer" Love at WOOFSTOCK, "Bliss to You" by Trixie Koontz

Military Veteran Conquers New Challenges

by Katie Malatino

On the first day of each Team Training, all staff and students gather in the Training Room for introductions. We go around the room one by one and say our name, our hometown, and either a little-known fact or hidden talent. Some people share how they can curl their tongues, that they are former spelling bee champions, or that they can bake an exceptional cheesecake. But if you're Jay Huston, you share that you were a Military Interrogator and Linguist fluent in Russian and Polish.

That was just the tip of the iceberg. Jay retired from the Army in 2004 after 20 years, but he didn't stop serving his country. He now works as a Senior CBRNE Analyst at the U.S. Northern Command in Colorado Springs. (CBRNE stands for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives.) Jay helps prevent terrorists from using Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in the U.S.

Jay's extraordinary character was quickly revealed in Team Training. A natural leader, he was often the first to try a command in front of the class. He was elated when Instructors announced he was pre-matched with Timo II, a big, black Labrador/Golden Retriever cross. From the get-go, Jay was always quick to shower Timo with praise for a job well done. He got a kick out of the young students in his Team Training class, and made fast friends with everyone. He was even the class spokesman at the graduation ceremony. As Jay explains, "Team Training was one of the highlights of my life. After my accident it was hard for me to get

please see Military Veteran on page 3

Jay Huston and Service Dog Timo II graduated in February 2008.

Photo by Amber Sliffe

Director's Chair

by Linda L. Valliant



It seems to be everywhere. It matters not if you are at a crowded shopping mall or in the quiet solitude of your own home—it is there. It is bigger than a breadbox or smaller than a niggling speck depending on the way the stars align, and the side of bed you arose from—but it's there. It is the state of the economy. Like any pervasive entity, many topical adjectives have recently been applied: struggling, down, weak or just plain bad.

All right, now that we have named our elephant—what to do about it? CCI is a non-profit organization that enhances the lives

of people with disabilities by providing highly trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure quality partnerships. Our work doesn't lend itself to following economic cycles. For us the continuum of breeding, raising and training assistance dogs to be matched with children and adults with disabilities needs to keep its pace or we risk major dislocations in our ability to serve. Cutbacks that disrupt the two-year period it takes to get a dog from birth to placement would have serious long-term impacts for people with disabilities waiting to be placed with a canine companion.

The conclusion is clear: CCI must continue to lead the way in the assistance dog industry and provide hope to people with disabilities. Those CCI serves will, in turn, reap the rewards of increased independence, inclusion and unconditional love from the moment they first lock gazes with their canine partner.

This is where you come in. We need you to stay with us and support our

mission even as gas prices go through the roof and grocery costs are forcing newly creative meal choices. The CCI family boasts deeply caring and compassionate people. Our family members are also prudent and need to know their money is being well spent. We understand!

The Southwest Region is on track to place 44 new assistance dogs this year. Every donation that you make buoys our ability to achieve and even surpass this important goal. Each Graduate Team is projected to have a working life of eight to 10 years. And, unlike other units of service, a CCI assistance dog is on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Therefore, the typical Graduate Team's working life translates to 78,840 hours of service; teams created in 2008 will go on to log up to 3.5 million hours of service. Talk about return on investment!

Linda Valliant

In Their Own Words

CCI Southwest is privileged to have Dr. Robert Cartin as a regional board member who has served CCI for more than 15 years. Outside of CCI, Dr. Cartin is the owner/Chief of Staff of the Mission Animal & Bird Hospital in Oceanside, California. He and his wife, Melodee, have two children—daughter Mackenzie, 16, and son Griffin, 15. They share their home with Clifford, a 12-year-old Golden Retriever/Labrador cross; Danny, “13 pounds of canine fluff of unknown and questionable ancestry”; Squeakers, a cat “who allows the rest of the family to live in his house”; and Zazu, a 13-year-old cockatiel.

Tell us about the Mission Animal & Bird Hospital.

I am very excited about the new facility that we are building nearby, at the corner of Highway 76 and Benet Road [in Oceanside]. The 11,000 square foot facility will not only be a state-of-the-art medical facility, but will also provide Doggie Day Care and a five star Pet Resort, where owners can board their pets when they go out of town. We hope to have the grand opening in late Spring 2009.

What was your most memorable moment at CCI?

At one of the first graduations I attended, a graduate spoke about working as an attorney in Denver. He left his office late one extremely cold winter evening



Dr. Cartin and his son, Griffin, are joined by puppy in program, Prada, in front of the CCI sign that Griffin is remodeling for an Eagle Scouts project.

please see In Their Own Words on page 6

February Graduates



Kristin Brown
Successor Service Dog,
Kathy II
San Marcos, CA
Janice and Dan Flynn
Santee, CA



Ryan Cottor
with Facilitators Holly
and Jonathan Cottor
Skilled Companion Dog,
Java VI
Scottsdale, AZ
Patricia Bird
Denver, CO



Alexandria Haines
with Facilitator
Greta Haines
Skilled Companion Dog,
Phinneas
Dallas, TX
Jan Ford
Santee, CA



Jay Huston
Service Dog,
Timo II
Colorado Springs, CO
Sheila Lupton
Highlands Ranch, CO



Maxwell McCormick
with Facilitator
Elizabeth Atondo
Skilled Companion Dog,
Brissa
San Marino, CA
Peter and Brenda Rothermel
Murrieta, CA



Stephen Sibus
Service Dog,
Bogart III
La Quinta, CA
Inmates of NAVCOM Brig
Miramar, CA



Kane Urban
Service Dog,
Harielle
Fort Worth, TX
Astrid and Chris Miliffe
San Diego, CA

Military Veteran

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out of bed in the morning. I would just lay there thinking about whether it was even worth the pain that was surely going to grip me. At Team Training I couldn't wait to get up to face the day! It's the same each and every day for me now."

Jay had been struggling with limited mobility and physical pain that are the result of a spinal cord injury. He fractured his spine in two places during an Airborne Operation, which took a year to be diagnosed. Then, through further testing, it was revealed that he had a spine disorder. Eight years and nine surgeries later, 22 of Jay's 24 vertebrae are now fused, stabilized by rods, screws, and plates.

Since Service Dog Timo moved in, Jay's life has changed for the better. He now gets around more and with greater ease, and he's a happier person. His family life has improved thanks to Jay's new positive outlook. Jay and his family "can't imagine Timo not being by [his] side."

Jay's career has also benefitted from his

Veterans Initiative

Recently, CCI began an initiative to serve more veterans with disabilities, especially those who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many veterans with disabilities have the desire to live independently, the cognitive abilities to handle a dog, and the upper body strength that is characteristic of many successful assistance dog users. CCI is proud to be able to serve those who have sacrificed for our country.

partnership with Timo. Before, Jay had to limit work-related travel because he was unable to do physical tasks like pick up his shoes from the floor, remove his socks, or retrieve dropped items on his own. Now, Timo helps him with all of these tasks and more. In fact, CCI Training Manager, Todd Young, taught Timo a customized command for one of Jay's unique needs. Jay's biggest obstacle while travelling used to be his difficulty getting out of rental

cars. Thanks to Todd, Timo now tugs on his leash with just enough momentum to safely pull Jay out of his car!

Now, Jay is ready to "give back" to CCI and his comrades in the military. Jay has volunteered to help with outreach so CCI can provide more assistance dogs to disabled veterans. Paul O'Brien, CCI Colorado Director, explains, "Jay's contributions to this initiative will be significant because he is both a CCI graduate and a veteran of the Army. He knows both sides of the coin, and his insights will be valuable as CCI works to provide more independence to veterans with disabilities who have sacrificed so much for our country."

Jay wants more veterans to understand the gift of having an assistance dog. "One of the hardest things I ever had to do was 'hang up' my uniform and admit that I have a disability I cannot live with on my own. I have had Timo [with me] at appointments and have seen the joy in the eyes of veterans put there by my amazing dog...I have been given a great opportunity and a gift for which I will remain eternally grateful."

Volunteer Highlights

Red Earth Chapter

by Dawn Ramsey

The Red Earth Champions are busy working on the 2008 event lineup. We started this year with the Shawnee Mall Easter Mutt Strut. Linda McMahan and her puppy in program, Delores III, kept the ball rolling with an information table at our local Tractor Supply. Still to come, we have been working hard on the June 21 Celebrity Waiter Gala. We are also preparing for the Snoopy 10K race and the Crooked Horn Bicycle Tour later in the year.

Linda and Delores III have already participated in numerous school programs and delivered informational speeches to local clubs. Dawn Ramsey and her Service Dog, Nero III, have been participating in library reading programs and will continue throughout the summer.

We said goodbye to Delores III when she was turned in for Advanced Training in May and hello to a new puppy, Benisa, in June. In August, Denae Athay will be turning in her puppy in program, Rosner, as well. We are all looking forward to



Graduate Team Dawn Ramsey and Nero III attended CCI's recent "A Good Dog Morning" event in Dallas.



Ryan Elementary School students gather around CCI puppy in program, Chapman, at the school's "Fun Run" that benefitted CCI.

their graduations.

Finally, we are anxiously awaiting the arrival of Staff Sergeant Christina Corry of NAVCOM Miramar. Chris has volunteered to assist us in getting a prison puppy raising program up and running. Welcome aboard, Chris!

The Red Earth Champions are currently recruiting new volunteers and puppy raisers in the Oklahoma City/Shawnee area. If interested, please e-mail loudawn@att.net.

Valley of the Sun Chapter

by Pat Lawson

The Valley of the Sun Chapter started 2008 with a bang! CCI was represented at the Arizona Disabilities Expo, the Hearing Expo, the Arizona Renaissance Festival, a St. Patrick's Day Parade, an ice cream social in Scottsdale's Cold Stone Creamery, a "Puppy Raiser Coffee Clutch" at Starbucks, and more!

Also, this year we formed the Valley of the Sun Youth Group! This group of elementary through high school students is facilitated by Vice President, Liz Rosen-Ducat; Puppy Raising Chair, Mary Thompson; and Board Member at Large, Bob Melikian. They serve as CCI ambassadors at various events, including Valley of the Sun youth-oriented activities that support CCI's mission.

The second annual "Ryan Elementary School Fun Run" was held on Valentine's Day. More than 600 Ryan Elementary School students participated in this one-mile run to support CCI! Preced-

ing the event, the students sold T-shirts to raise funds for CCI. They raised over \$1,200, which was presented to the Valley of the Sun Chapter in their annual Pride Assembly. Thanks Ryan Elementary, you guys rock!

May begins Golf Season in the Valley of the Sun. We are kicking off our Fifth Annual "Dog Days of Summer Golf Classic."

This year's tournament will be held on September 26 at Ocotillo Golf Resort. Registration is now open for golfers and sponsors. The last three tournaments have sold out by mid-July, so if you want to be a part of this year's tournament, register ASAP at www.ccigolf.org!

Utah Wasatch Champions

by Linda Weiskopf

Please welcome our first ever Utah CCI Chapter, the Wasatch Champions! Officers Melanie Dutcher, Amy Kernan, David Weiskopf and Erica Forbush are proud to represent the puppy raisers and graduates of Utah. Thanks to Erica, we now have an official blog for our chapter, which can be viewed at <http://wasatchchampions.blogspot.com/>.

Many outreach events have already taken place and many more are planned for the remainder of the year. In March and April, four different school presentations were made featuring puppies in program Filia, Zeeland, Tanny, Vargas II, and Connor IV, along with their respective puppy raisers. We also attended the Family Links Conference North for parents of children with disabilities, the Utah Prader-Willi Syndrome Association Spring Parent Meeting, and the Mothers with Autistic Kids luncheon.

The highlight of our April activities was a potluck dinner hosted by Richard and Debbie Tompson. It was attended by puppy raisers, graduates, release dog families, and 14 CCI dogs! Playtime was the highlight for the pups, while the puppy raisers enjoyed getting to meet many graduates and their families. A

great experience for all!

The month of May offered many more opportunities to share the CCI story. A number of graduates and puppy raisers kicked off the month by participating in the Autism Speaks “Walk Now for Autism” event with more than 4,000 attendees. It was the first time many of these parents had heard of the CCI program so it was a great opportunity to boost CCI awareness. Later this month will be the Prader-Willi Walk and “Strut Your Mutt” events. Also, on June 14, a booth at the Venture Outdoors Festival promises an opportunity to educate over 5,000 attendees about CCI.



Graduate Sawyer Hamilton, sister Josie Hamilton, and newest Utah CCI puppy in program, Cara II, at the second annual CCI potluck dinner.

We are also working on developing our fundraising capabilities and look forward to input from all of our champions. Please contact Linda Weiskopf at (801) 786-0502 or lweiskopf@relia.net if you wish to submit ideas or are interested in attending upcoming events.

New Mexico

by Phylis Wright

April was an exciting month for Champions in New Mexico! First, we welcomed Northeast Graduate Team Buddy Hayes and Helice (a.k.a. Ellie) to the Southwest Region. We're thrilled to have such dynamite representatives of CCI here! Also in April,

Southwest Region Executive Director, Linda Valliant, and Training Manager, Todd Young, travelled to Albuquerque to host the “A Good Dog Morning” outreach event. Approximately 40 people attended to learn about CCI from staff, volunteers, and Graduate Teams. We hope the audience included many future volunteers and candidates!

“A Good Dog Morning” served as the perfect event to introduce our first major fundraiser, the “Enchanted Canines Golf Classic.” The tournament will be held Friday, July 25, at the Arroyo del Oso Golf Course in Albuquerque. Register now at www.ccigolf.org for a fun day of golf to support Canine Companions for Independence! There will be prizes, contests on all par threes, raffles, and a silent auction. Register as a single, twosome, threesome, or foursome, but check sponsorship details first because many include twosomes or foursomes! Registration includes green fees and cart, practice tee, luncheon, polo shirt, golf towel, and a golfer goody bag filled with souvenirs! Pay by check or credit card. Contact tournament director, Pat Lawson, at 602-312-3040 or at makntrax@cox.net with questions or to receive a paper registration form.

Colorado Satellite Office

by Lynda Miller

The Colorado Office has moved! We are very excited to settle into our new offices at 126 E. Las Animas Street in Colorado Springs

We are also working hard on several upcoming events, including:

● **11th Annual Balenseifen Memorial Golf Tournament** This exciting tournament, sponsored by the Colorado Wyoming Petroleum Marketers Association, will take place at The Club at Pradera in Parker on June 9.



The new headquarters building for CCI Colorado—126 East Las Animas Street, Colorado Springs, CO, 80903.

- **An outreach event in Aspen** We are looking forward to introducing CCI to the Aspen community with a small gathering on July 8.
- **Good Times Car Show** Local Colorado Car Clubs will sponsor this event to benefit CCI on August 17 in Colorado Springs.
- **Journey to Independence** Our gala will be held on August 18 in the Vail Valley. Joan and Bob Solon are once again chairing this event, which is shaping up to be one of the best ever!
- There will be numerous public awareness events that CCI volunteers will be attending throughout the summer.

In addition, CCI Colorado is proud to announce that on May 17 The Retired Enlisted Association's (TREA) Memorial Foundation presented two checks for \$10,000 each to CCI! The funds sponsored two local Graduate Teams: Hearing Team Jim Young and Ellea and Service Team Jay Huston and Timo II. Thank you, TREA, for your amazing support of CCI and our efforts to serve veterans!

According to the Journal of Science (March 2008) people who make gifts to charities reported they were happier than those who didn't give.

In Their Own Words

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and proceeded in his wheelchair to his van in the nearby parking structure. As he was about to get into the specially-equipped van, he dropped his keys and could not reach them. He waited outside of his van, in the freezing cold, for what seemed like hours until someone came by and picked up his keys. He said he honestly felt he might die there. As everyone in the audience listened, with our eyes welling up, he explained how wonderful it would be to never have to fear this would happen again.

Is there anything you'd like to say to our readers?

To CCI volunteers, donors, and staff, I hope you understand that your work and contributions are like the proverbial ripple effect from the pebble in the pond.

It is not only the graduate whose life is changed... Because that graduate is now

more productive, he or she can make a positive impact on the lives of others. Who can argue the impact that our program makes on an entire family when a parent sees a child open his hand for the first time to pet his new assistance dog? Who can argue the benefit to society when a person receives an assistance dog and now feels confident enough to go to college? What about the impact that a parolee makes when he re-enters society with a different attitude and skill set because of the prison puppy raising program?

In the end, there is no way that any of us can fully appreciate how many lives are affected by CCI's work and the efforts of the volunteers, donors, and staff. Nevertheless, I hope that everyone keeps throwing those pebbles in the "CCI pond."

News from CCI Staff



Julia Simolon and Patti Irby recently passed the practical and written exams to progress to Level III Apprentice Instructors. Both have made tremendous contributions to the Southwest Region Program Department.



David Zaring recently joined the team at CCI Southwest as Caretaker. In addition to maintaining the campus inside and out, he plays a critical role during Team Training by making future graduates feel welcome during their stay and helping them with whatever they need.

Wish List

For the Campus:

- Whirlpool High Capacity Reverse Osmosis System water filter Model # wher25 or similar
- Bagless vacuum cleaner
- Tool set
- Bean bag chairs
- Easels for posters

For the Dogs:

- Treadmill
- Plastic play set with slide (large, for ages 3+)
- Small area rugs with no-slip grip
- Large area rug with short carpet strands
- Multi-disc CD player for the kennels

For the Dorm Rooms:

- Area rugs and throw pillows—navy, red, and light blue colors
- Everest & Jennings Rehab Shower Commode Chairs
- Wireless tower for north hall internet access

For Graduation:

- 5-6 small floral arrangements for graduation brunch on 8/23/08
- Canon XL2 video camera

Thanks to all those who granted our wishes from the last newsletter! Christina Amoroso, Joanie Ehrnstein, Nancy Fairfield, Dale Feine, Tim Gackstetter, Leslie Hennessy, Michael Hennessy, Jackie Jelen, Jim Johnson of GE Johnson Construction, Michael Stafford, Amit Stern, and Pegge Wilson. Girl Scout Troop 1610 led by Tracy Borin and Girl Scout Troop 684 led by Laurie Maslauski also donated generously.

Journey to Independence Gala Auction items needed...

We are busy assembling a unique menu of auction items for the October 4 event. Do you have something to contribute? Here are some ever-popular ideas:

- Foursome at your golf club
- Weekend at your vacation home
- A treasured piece of art
- A piece of vintage jewelry

To donate, contact Chuck Contreras at (760) 901-4305.

Upcoming Events

June 21

Celebrity Waiter Gala
Shawnee, OK

June 28/29

La Jolla Festival of the Arts
La Jolla, CA

July 25

Enchanted Canines Golf Classic
Albuquerque, NM

July 26/27

Viejas Service Dog Awareness
Alpine, CA

August 23

CCI Graduation
Oceanside, CA

September 9

A Good Dog Morning
Salt Lake City, UT

September 26

Dog Days of Summer Golf Classic
Chandler, AZ

October 4

Journey to Independence Gala
The Grove of Anaheim
Anaheim, CA

October 18

Arizona Puppy Workshop
Phoenix, AZ

For more information about these events,
please call (760) 901-4308.



Volunteer Bruce Ross rides into the May graduation ceremony for the finish of the *Ride for CCI*.

Photo by Amber Sliffe

“Summer” Love at

A Festival for Dogs & People

Woofstock



WOOFSTOCK: A Festival for Dogs and People may have been held on April 12, but it sure felt like summer with record high temperatures! Happily, despite the 90 degree heat, plenty of pooches and doting dog owners gathered in Balboa Park in San Diego to celebrate 60's-style for Canine Companions for Independence (CCI). Decked out in tie dye and flashing peace signs, canines and humans alike enjoyed all the attractions including shopping, live music by Jackson Patrick, a K-9 playground, flyball, Disc Dogs, and a Kids Fun Zone with games and prizes. Free doggie ice cream donated by Frosty Paws earned some wild wags!

Special thanks to all of WOOFSTOCK 2008's Gold Level and above sponsors, including: Animal Magazine of San Diego, Hornblower Cruises, PETCO and the PETCO Foundation, and Ruff Haus Design. Also, thanks to our Silver Level sponsors: The Collared Scholar, Federal Heath Sign, Great Travel By Design, The Honest Kitchen, the Law Office of Michael Hennessy, Metropawlitian Dog, The OC Dog Magazine, and Vineyard Bank.

A heartfelt “Thank You!” goes out to CCI's extraordinary volunteers who helped at the event, especially our tireless WOOFSTOCK 2008 Committee. Chaired by Cheryl Crawford, members included Karyl Carmignani, Linda Comunale, Willie Crawford, Darci Huerta, Davielle Huffman, and Candy Kieley. We appreciate all of your hard work!

Overall, WOOFSTOCK 2008 attracted more than 1,000 attendees and raised over \$17,000 for CCI!



WOOFSTOCK Festival goers enjoyed watching demos by Disc Dogs in Southern California. Here, six-time puppy raiser, Todd Murnan, wows the crowd with his Belgian Malinois, Bella. Photo by Ken Sergi—WOOFSTOCK photos available for purchase at kensergi.com

Ride for CCI

Volunteer puppy raiser, Bruce Ross, recently completed the challenge of his life to benefit Canine Companions for Independence (CCI). Starting at CCI's National/Northwest headquarters in Santa Rosa, Bruce rode his bike 700 miles down the coast of California to the Southwest regional facility in Oceanside over the course of two weeks. Bruce is not a professional cyclist nor had he ever biked such a great distance prior to this ride. This giant undertaking was solely to benefit CCI's mission of *providing highly trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure quality partnerships*.

The *Ride* took Bruce across the Golden Gate Bridge and down the California coast, spreading the word about CCI along the way. On May 31, Bruce victoriously biked into the Southwest Regional graduation ceremony to present a check for the funds raised on the *Ride*, and on a bittersweet note, to turn in his puppy in program, Zenon, for Advanced Training. Bruce is a fine example of the outstanding dedication of CCI volunteers. Our sincere thanks go out to Bruce and everyone who supported the *Ride for CCI*!



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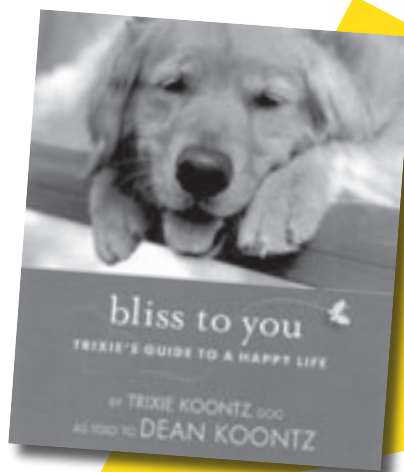
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Bliss to You, by Trixie Koontz, Dog, as told by Dean Koontz, will be published in September 2008. Trixie, a retired CCI Service Dog who lived with Dean and Gerda Koontz until her death last year, shares her tips for living a happy life and proves that the biggest love lasts more than a lifetime. All author's royalties from this book, like Trixie's previous titles, *Life is Good* and *Christmas is Good*, will be donated to CCI.

If you would like to be one of the first to have your own copy of *Bliss to You*, sign on as a sponsor for the Journey to Independence Gala. All Gala sponsors will receive a complimentary copy at the October 4th event!