



# Southwest Companion

*The Southwest Region Newsletter of Canine Companions for Independence*



**Summer 2009 Issue:** *Golfers to Gather for the Canine Companions Invitational, CCI Salutes Military Veterans, Volunteers are Appreciated, WOOFSTOCK Packed the Park*

## Ongoing Support Ensures Success

*by Julia Simolon and Katie Malatino*

Some assistance dog organizations charge thousands of dollars for their dogs. Often, these organizations provide no support to their clients after a dog is placed. Canine Companions for Independence (CCI) provides highly trained assistance dogs, their training *and* ongoing follow-up services free of charge. The Southwest Region has graduated 781 teams since its founding, including 299 currently active teams. We are committed to the success of our graduate teams for the life of their partnerships.

We lay the foundation for this commitment in our two-week residential Team Training program. The purpose of the program is to not only teach candidates proper handling skills, but proper canine care is also stressed. In fact, at the end of Team Training the potential graduate is required to sign an agreement with CCI stating that the graduate will uphold CCI's high standards for safety, etiquette and canine health.

Only a few days after graduation, our clients receive their first phone call from a CCI instructor to help ensure the dog's transition



Training Manager Todd Young helped a team of physical therapists at the Naval Medical Center San Diego customize a command for Facility Dog Tommy III to help with their therapies for injured veterans. The physical therapists are (from left) April Walter, Kristin Vallent and Jacque Moore.

to their new home is as smooth as possible. "That first follow-up phone call is important because we want to establish a long term relationship with our graduates. This relationship is essential to the health, safety and well-being of the team," explains CCI Southwest Program Manager, Simi Balter.

A second follow-up phone call is made a few weeks later. This is the perfect time to address any concerns or problems, because the first few months are a critical time when handlers are establishing good habits and strengthening their emotional bond with their new assistance dog. Facility Dog Tommy III was recently placed with a team of physical therapists at the Naval

Medical Center in San Diego. Since Tommy works with injured veterans, Training Manager Todd Young coached his handlers on a customized "visit" command to use with amputees. The command is typically used to rest a dog's head on the client's lap while the client is seated. Now, thanks to Tommy's customized version, he is able to provide a welcome distraction and emotional support to

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## Director's Chair

by Linda L. Valliant



The very first time I made a presentation on behalf of CCI, I introduced myself by saying “I’m Linda Valliant and I have the best job in the world.” Six days into my tenure as Executive Director of the Southwest Region, that proclamation may have lacked a bit on evidence, but enthusiasm made up the difference.

Now, as a veteran with over six years of service, the evidence and enthusiasm of my claim soar to the same level. I *do* have the best job in world!

I am privileged to observe courageous people confronting the weighty challenges of their disabilities with determination to live as independently as possible with the help of an assistance dog. Seeing bonds of lifelong devotion and service form as gazes lock between canine and human partners are spine tingling episodes forever safe in my mind’s eye photo vault.

I interact on a daily basis with the most selfless and caring people imaginable—CCI volunteers. So many men, women and children give of their time, their talent and their treasure to help CCI succeed. The common thread that weaves the community of volunteers together is their collective mantra that they get much more than they give through their efforts.

I work with the most talented and dedicated group of people I have ever had the pleasure to meet. You cannot be successful at CCI without being 100% committed to the mission. That core value makes for the most cohesive and energetic work force imaginable. We recently completed our annual review process and each of my 27 CCI Southwest colleagues reported that they love coming to work—even on Monday morning. What a team!

Of course, CCI would not be able to open the doors on Monday or any other day were it not for you—our loyal supporters. You provide the inspiration and the practical means to change lives by matching exceptional dogs with exceptional people. Whether or not you are able to affix lots of zeros to the checks you write, does not matter. Every dollar that you donate is vital to our ability to fulfill our mission. We are friends and we are family and you are the icing on the cake of reasons why I continue to say with utmost sincerity that I have the best job in the world!

Thank you for your generosity and caring and for helping us through this difficult year!

*Linda Valliant*

## In Her Own Words

Leslie Hennessy has made great contributions to Canine Companions in the nine years she has been involved. She began volunteering as a puppy raiser and now, eight puppies later, she is a valued member of both the Southwest Region Board and the National Fund Development Committee. Recently, Leslie reflected on her dedication to CCI’s mission.



Leslie Hennessy is an eight-time volunteer puppy raiser. She is pictured with puppy in program, Emmy II.

“The most common question I receive from the public is, How can you give up a dog that you have raised? That question is easy to answer when one looks at the great service these dogs perform for their human partners, and the close bond that is formed between the two. I believe all humans have a purpose in life that goes beyond filling space and time. These wonderful dogs, bred and trained to serve, also have a special reason for being. When I train a CCI puppy, I am fulfilling my purpose and helping the dog find and fulfill his purpose with his future human partner. Giving up the puppy is part of the process so that the dog and graduate can be joined in partnership. Only then can they find their own way to serve in the world. After raising eight puppies for CCI, I am still certain of this goal and my part in the process.

“I became a CCI Southwest Regional Board member with the desire to support CCI’s fundraising efforts. I am excited to be able to help CCI work towards its organizational goals through my work on the board. Every donor and potential donor needs to meet a graduate team to understand the unique relationship that the two share. When one witnesses the strong bond between the dog and human, it is clear that these teams need and deserve our emotional and financial assistance.”

**February Graduates**



**Linden Aitken**  
Successor Service Dog Tor II  
Phoenix, AZ  
Linda & Jerry Mosteller  
Tempe, AZ



**Bill Callahan**  
Service Dog Taylor VI  
Baytown, TX  
John & Marcia Pearson  
San Diego, CA



**Mike Good**  
Service Dog Davis III  
La Habra, CA  
Pamela & Gary Adler  
San Diego, CA



**Rick Hall**  
Service Dog Filia  
Joshua Tree, CA  
Linda & David Weiskopf  
Ogden, UT



**Mary Jacobs**  
Service Dog Vinn  
San Diego, CA  
Aimee & Kimiko Yokota  
Fountain Valley, CA



**Tricia Lowe**  
Successor Service Dog Patty V  
Bakersfield, CA  
Peggy, Jennifer & Jeffery Solis  
Oceanside, CA



**Joseph Olson**  
Service Dog Rosner  
Ephraim, UT  
Denae Athay  
Oklahoma City, OK



**Dawn Truby**  
Facility Dog Ascot II  
Midwest City, OK  
Donna, Kevin & Shannon Foster  
Jamul, CA



**Stephanie Welch**  
Facility Dog Bhadra  
Oklahoma City, OK  
Regina & David Glabe  
Westminster, CO

*Exceptional Dogs for Exceptional Seniors*



Thanks to a grant from the Gary and Mary West Foundation of Carlsbad, California, the Southwest Region established the Senior Initiative to increase assistance dog placements with seniors and senior-serving organizations. Toward that goal, a series of short videos on senior graduates was produced. Skilled Companion Team Virginia Ward, George Enter & Elsey (left) and Facility Team Val Valentine & Shirley IV (right) are subjects of two of the videos. Our deepest gratitude is extended to all of the teams who participated and allowed the camera into their private lives, and also to composers FM Watson and Rob Gironda, who donated their music for the soundtracks.



The first video was debuted at a special open-house for employees of senior-serving facilities. Guests included recreational therapists, activity directors and social workers. All enjoyed campus tours, training demonstrations and the opportunity to meet CCI graduates and puppy raisers.



## Colorado Satellite Office

by Kelly Gorman

On June 15, the 12th Annual *Glen and Lynn Ann Balenseifen Memorial Golf Tournament* was played at the beautiful Rolling Hills Country Club. A great big *Thank You!* goes out to the committee that organized this successful event and to the staff of the Colorado Wyoming Petroleum Marketers Association. We appreciate your hard work and support!

We're looking forward to the *Good Times Car Show* on August 16 in Old Colorado City. This annual event is always a fun summer activity, filled with impressive cars, friendly people and, best of all, it benefits our wonderful organization! On August 17, we will celebrate at the annual *Journey to Independence* event at the Timber Hearth Grille at Cordillera. This inspiring evening will include an auction and graduate presentation. Finally, on September 19 we will host a *Puppy Raising Workshop* in Denver. It will be a great opportunity for volunteer puppy raisers to get the latest CCI news, ask staff questions and share stories with other volunteers.

Last but not least, we'd like to invite everyone to visit [www.joeturcotte.com](http://www.joeturcotte.com). Joe Turcotte is a great athlete and an even greater supporter of CCI. This year, Joe will compete in a series of events he calls *Iron Puppy 2009* to raise funds for CCI. His endeavors will include such feats as ascending Mt. Evans, two triathlons, one marathon and a bike ride called *The Triple Bypass!* Impressed? Listen to this: *Iron Puppy 2009* will end with two Iron Man competitions, including the *World Championship Iron Man Competition* in Kona, Hawaii! Go Iron Joe!

## Ongoing Support

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comfort patients as they undergo painful therapies while lying down.

In addition to follow-up phone calls, graduates and instructors keep in touch through annual group workshops, monthly progress reports (required for the first few months), and discussion in a Yahoo group for graduates. "The yearly graduate workshop is especially useful," Balter explains, "because it is an opportunity for new graduates to problem solve with more experienced teams and also offers a variety of educational seminars on topics ranging from canine dental care to public speaking."

Outside of scheduled follow-up, graduates are invited to call or email CCI instructors for assistance with any handling, behavioral or health questions. The graduate department has a dedicated phone line and email address that are checked and responded to on a daily basis. When needed, CCI schedules individual appointments with graduates and will conduct home visits when appropriate.

Balter explains, "Not only is it fundamental to CCI's mission to offer ongoing support to our graduates, but it is also personally gratifying for our instructors to maintain close contact with them. Instructors put a lot of time, energy and dedication into training our dogs and teaching our clients how to handle them. Seeing graduate dogs in their everyday lives, helping their human partners...that is why we do what we do!"

For many applicants, our follow-up services are the deciding factor as they research different assistance dog organizations. Hearing Graduate Dennis Sproule explained, "I found a couple of different organizations that train hearing dogs. The reason that Canine Companions came to the top of the list was because of the support that they provide to clients after graduation. I felt like I needed that support...if I ran into a problem, knowing that they would be there to help me through it."

# Volunteers are CCI's Superheroes!

by Amber Sliffe

In February, we opened our campus doors to welcome and thank our superheroes—CCI volunteers! The annual *Volunteer Appreciation Party* kicked off with a catered meal, supplemented by delicious salads prepared by staff members.

Volunteers dined in the Great Room, which was transformed into a superhero's lair complete with hero emblems hanging from the walls and music from classic superhero cartoons. Prizes were awarded to the holders of lucky tickets. Then, several outstanding volunteers were recognized for their dedication and service to CCI. Celeste Kennedy, Valerie Valentine, Theresa Barnes, Marilyn Michaels, Dorene Robertson and Janice Flynn each received an engraved award thanking them for their countless contributions.

We hope all of our volunteers felt appreciated and cherished by their CCI family. CCI consistently relies on the support of volunteers to carry forth the mission and we are truly grateful for each of their contributions. *Thank you!*



Volunteer puppy raiser, Bonnie Mueller, challenged puppy in program, Andy V, to a game of "doggie downs" at the 2009 *Volunteer Appreciation Party*.

Photo by Becky Miller

# CCI Salutes Military Veterans at Second Annual Open-House Event

The nation will celebrate Independence Day on July 4, but CCI will celebrate our own brand of independence on July 11! Join us in Oceanside, California for our Second annual CCI Salutes Independence open-house

for military veterans, active-duty service members, their families and friends on Saturday, July 11, 2009. This community event honoring the U.S. Armed Forces is open to the public with free admission!

CCI Salutes Independence will highlight

CCI's Veterans Initiative, a targeted campaign to increase placements of assistance dogs with disabled veterans who have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. Guests will enjoy campus tours, live entertainment, training demonstrations by CCI instructors, graduate team presentations, and opportunities to meet CCI puppies.

As a result of last year's event, CCI proudly placed Facility Dogs at the Wounded Warrior Battalion West on Camp Pendleton and with the Challenged Athletes Foundation's Project Rebound, which helps injured troops regain an active lifestyle. Many individuals also began the application process and are progressing towards placement. We hope even more veterans' lives will be touched as a result of CCI Salutes Independence 2009!

If you are interested in volunteering at the event, please call (760) 901-4300.



## Southwest Staff Update



Katie Kniest (left) and Julia Simolon (right) have made great accomplishments in their careers at CCI. Katie recently advanced from Instructor Assistant to Apprentice Instructor I. Julia completed her apprenticeship and is now a full certified Instructor. Congratulations!



Katie Dahlerbruch, pictured on the right, designated her Mitzvah project to benefit CCI. She made dog tag necklaces inscribed, "Dogs change lives everyday... everywhere..." Her whole family accompanied the creative and charitable Katie when she delivered the proceeds of her efforts to CCI. Pictured (from left): CCI Skilled Companion Dog Calista, dad Tony, brother Max, mom Michelle and Katie. Our thank you to Katie included an autographed copy of *Bliss To You!*

## Upcoming Events

### July 11

CCI Salutes Independence  
Dean, Gerda & Trixie Koontz  
Campus  
Oceanside, CA

### July 24

Enchanted Canines Golf Classic  
The Desert Greens Golf Course  
Albuquerque, NM

### August 17

Journey to Independence  
The Timber Hearth Grille  
Cordillera, CO

### August 22

CCI Graduation  
Mission San Luis Rey  
Oceanside, CA

### August 28

Celebrity Waiter Gala  
Shawnee Expo Center  
Shawnee, OK

### September 25

Dog Days of Summer Golf  
Tournament  
Ocotillo Golf Resort  
Chandler, AZ

### October 16

Canine Companions Invitational  
The Crossings at Carlsbad  
Carlsbad, CA

For more information about these events,  
please call (760) 901-4300.

## Wish List

- Easels for posters
- BBQ tool set with spatula, long-handled brush and forks
- Gift cards for volunteer recognition—movie theaters, restaurants, etc.
- Plastic play set with slide (large, for ages 3+)
- Tennis balls
- Two-story rabbit hutch
- Everest & Jennings Rehab Shower Commode Chairs
- Sound machines
- Nautical-themed décor/wall hangings

Thanks to all those who granted our wishes from the last newsletter! Jason Gronwall, Hank Mahan, Sue Matloff, Michele Sigler, Susan Spicer, and Paul and Cindy Wannarka all generously donated.

# A Festival for Dogs & People Packed the Park!

**W**OOFSTOCK 2009 was a howling good time!

1,800 dog lovers packed the park with their four-legged friends to enjoy demonstrations by some of the most talented dogs in the world. CCI graduates were the stars of the show as Service Team Belinda Shantz and Keeley; Skilled Companion Team Rosemary McDonnell-Horita, Margie McDonnell and Eureka II; and Service Team Jen McCallson and Sudo all gave testimonials on stage. Attendees also enjoyed flyball and disc dog demonstrations, canine freestylers, search and rescue dogs and more! Guests were thrilled to meet Jon Provost, who played Timmy in the classic TV series, *Lassie*.

WOOFSTOCK raised a whopping \$16,000 for CCI! Special thanks to Tessa



Skilled Companion Team Rosemary McDonnell-Horita, Margie McDonnell and Eureka II enjoyed the festivities while they volunteered at the event. Rosemary's brother, Ray, also lent a hand.



The Disc Dogs of Southern California captivated the audience with their awe-inspiring tricks.

Photo provided by Stacey Webb

Rocker, Celeste Kennedy and Vickie Stone for being WOOFSTOCK's top dog fundraisers. The festival also had a record number of vendors and record attendance. Far out!

Thank you also to the sponsors, including The Walrus 105.7 FM, PETCO and the PETCO Foundation, The Honest Kitchen, Holiday Pet Hotel, Animal Magazine of San Diego, Clif Bar, Hornblower Cruises & Events, Mudpuppy Photography, O'Byrne Fine Art and The OC Dog.

Finally, a great big thank you to our tireless and dedicated WOOFSTOCK Volunteer Committee led by Cheryl Crawford, Committee Chairperson. Members include Karyl Carmignani, Lyn Comunale, Willie Crawford, Davi Huffman, Candy Kieley and Deb Mines. They are an extraordinary group!

Save the date for WOOFSTOCK 2010 on April 10!



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**Mission statement:** CCI is a nonprofit organization that enhances the lives of people with disabilities by providing highly trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure quality partnerships.

# Canine Companions Invitational

  
**THE CROSSINGS**  
AT CARLSBAD

Friday, October 16, 2009  
Carlsbad, CA

*Enjoy Southern California golf at its finest* on a world-class course to benefit CCI! Registration includes golf, practice tee, tournament golf shirt, golfer gift bag and more! After the tournament, golfers and other CCI supporters will gather in the clubhouse for dinner, a silent auction, a raffle and prize presentations.

Register now at  
[www.cci-golf.org](http://www.cci-golf.org). Sponsorship opportunities are available by calling Chuck Contreras at (760) 901-4305.

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