



Fall 2007 Issue: Director's Chair, May and August 2007 Graduates, Chapter Highlights, Upcoming Events

## Southwest Center Rededicated: The Dean, Gerda and Trixie Koontz Campus

by Linda L. Valliant

**T**rixie, a retired Service dog trained by Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), was adopted by best-selling author Dean Koontz and his wife, Gerda Koontz, in 1998. Beautiful angel that she was, Trixie instantly made her way into her new parents' hearts. Sadly, Trixie Koontz passed away suddenly on June 30, 2007.

In celebration of Trixie's joyful life, the CCI Southwest Regional Training Center was rededicated as the *Dean, Gerda and Trixie Koontz Campus* on August



CCI Advanced Training dogs welcome visitors to the Dean, Gerda and Trixie Koontz Campus.  
Photo by Amber Sliffe

18, 2007. Mr. and Mrs. Koontz attended the rededication ceremony that coincided with the August Graduation. The grounds were originally dedicated as the *Dean and Gerda Koontz Campus* on July 26, 1996, in

recognition of the Koontz' landmark philanthropy that supported construction of the Southwest Region's Residential Training Facility.

In the intervening years between 1996 and 2007, Dean and Gerda continued to generously invest their charitable legacy with CCI Southwest. The other member of their family—

Trixie—followed suit by donating all the royalties from her wildly successful books, "Life is Good!" and "Christmas

*please see Koontz Campus on page 2*

## Director's Chair

by Linda L. Valliant



The phrase “one-in-a-million” took on a whole new meaning at CCI Southwest’s August Graduation. Following the campus rededication (see story on page 1), Dean and Gerda Koontz were invited onstage to present diplomas to the new Graduates. At that time, the Koontz’ placed a check for \$1,000,000

into my quivering hands.

That’s right, one million dollars! It was a stunning moment as the audience rose as one to applaud and hoot and cry with delight. Ten days and a few hours had elapsed since the moment that I heard this jaw-dropping gift would be made. When Dean first disclosed the one million dollar figure, I was standing conversing with him on my cell phone. My knees went weak immediately and then a series of prickly feelings crept up my arms and around the back of my neck—pure euphoria. It was just so deliciously potent to hear that CCI would be the recipient of such a powerful gift that I knew I had to let everyone else feel that same rush.

On the telephone with Dean, I emitted a string of stumbling words—*how wonderful, how fabulous, how amazing!* Every thankful thought in my recall came spilling out in nothing close to an eloquent sequence. By Graduation day, I knew what I wanted to express. It was a humbling experience to hold that check. On behalf of the entire CCI family, I felt great pride that CCI demonstrates a worthy mission, strong program and capable leadership to inspire a million dollar gift. On behalf of the Southwest Region I eagerly accept the responsibility of using it wisely. I know that with the strength of all of us

working together, CCI will justify the Koontz’ faith by continuing to change lives and make miracles happen—one at a time.

*Linda Valliant*

## Koontz Campus

*continued from page 1*

is Good!” to her alma mater, CCI. Additionally, “The Trixie Fund,” financed by Trixie’s mom and dad, provides free catastrophic veterinary care for a number of dogs living with disabled partners.

The Koontz Family are the primary benefactors of the Southwest Region, having contributed a sum of more than \$4 million over the years.

Dean Koontz had this to say about their beloved dog: “[Trixie] changed our lives and made us better people than we otherwise would have been. She was a magical creature—we will continue to work with Canine Companions for Independence and others to make good things happen in Trixie’s name.”

We are immensely proud to have the Koontz Family recognized on the monument sign that is the gateway to our campus. The sign, with its bright yellow and blue with playful paw prints, speaks volumes about what happens on the campus. CCI Southwest is a place of great hope. Thank you, Dean, Gerda and Trixie for helping to make miracles happen for our Graduate Teams.

The touching tribute that Dean posted on his website ([www.DeanKoontz.com](http://www.DeanKoontz.com)) about Trixie’s death contained information about CCI and links to our website for people wanting to make a donation in Trixie’s memory. Many people have done just that! Several thousand dollars have come to CCI from Koontz fans around the country who were touched by Trixie’s story, with donations continuing daily.



Dean and Gerda Koontz visited with CCI Board member and Graduate Tommy Hollenstein and his successor Service dog Hiley after the campus rededication on August 18. Photo by Ken Sergi

**May Graduates**



**Kyler Faulkner**  
with Facilitators Joe & Angela Roberson  
Skilled Companion Dog Keo  
Abilene, TX  
*Esther & Milo Molina*  
Santa Rosa, CA



**Edgar J. Jimenez, Jr.**  
with Service Dog Rowdy III  
Portland, TX  
*Robyn Weil*  
Pflugerville, TX



**Lorri Kain**  
with Facilitators Karen Fink & Denni Hamilton-Levonian  
Skilled Companion Dog Nicolette II  
Thousand Oaks, CA  
*Rebecca & Michael Stanford*  
Ogden, UT



**Emilee Landon**  
with Facilitators George & Denise Landon  
Skilled Companion Dog Frances II  
Hesperia, CA  
*Karen & Gordon Eiland*  
Whitehouse, TX



**Anthony Scott Lynch**  
with Service Dog Kohana  
San Diego, CA  
*Mary DeRose*  
Oceanside, CA



**Kelsy Page**  
with Facilitators Michell & Glen Morgan  
Skilled Companion Dog Sandy V  
Imperial, CA  
*Ellen & Blake Peterson*  
Boulder, CO

**May Graduates**



**Lynn Schumacher & Robin Hooper**  
with Facility Dog Laiker  
Vista, CA  
*Patricia Urie & Family*  
Santee, CA



**Belinda Shantz**  
with Service Dog Keeley  
Kingsburg, CA  
*Barbara Hopp*  
Santa Rosa, CA



**Margaret "Peggy" Soto**  
with Service Dog Gambit  
Thousand Palms, CA  
*Sara J. Igo of Denver, CO & Ann K. Wildgen of Littleton, CO*



**Christina Webster**  
with Facility Dog Lando II  
Upland, CA  
*Jeanette Lubenau*  
Lubbock, TX



**Ryan Wilson**  
with Facilitator Teresa Gates Wilson  
Skilled Companion Dog Prado II  
Encinitas, CA  
*Katie, Tiffani & Ed Brown*  
Santee, CA



**Wyatt Due**  
with Facilitator Joanna Due  
Skilled Companion Dog Karis  
Broken Arrow, OK  
*Megan Maloney & Gary Baty*  
Orange, CA

**August Graduates**



**Rachel Hagen**  
with Facilitator Michelle Hagen  
Skilled Companion Dog Gerda II  
Salt Lake City, UT  
*Bonnie Sposato*  
Scottsdale, AZ



**Ashley Longo**  
with Facilitator Cathy Longo  
Skilled Companion Dog Hamlin  
Pacific Palisades, CA  
*Jill Winckler*  
Littleton, CO



**Maureen Quinn**  
with Facility Dog Boulder  
San Marcos, CA  
*Sean & Stacy Napoles*  
Plano, TX



**Raeanna Piller**  
with Facilitator Donna Piller  
Skilled Companion Dog Gladys II  
Denver, CO  
*Karen & Stan Reaves*  
El Toro, CA



**Courtney Smith**  
with Facilitator Christina Smith  
Skilled Companion Dog Michaela II  
San Clemente, CA  
*Robert Melikian & Julia Files*  
Scottsdale, AZ



**Virginia Ward**  
with Facilitator George Enter  
Successor Skilled Companion Dog Elsey  
Chula Vista, CA  
*Lynn & Fred Chavez*  
Alpine, CA

\*Also graduated (7/13/07—no photo available): **Matthew Rogers** with Facilitator Karen Brown/Skilled Companion Dog Rhetta III/Dallas, TX *Kathy & Robert Love, Mission Viejo, CA*

# Volunteer Highlights

## San Diego Champions

by Robin Galen Kilrain

As volunteers, we don't often have the privilege of getting to know CCI's human Graduates, apart from what they share in the videotaped messages presented at Graduation ceremonies. At the June Champions meeting, however, we were offered a glimpse inside the lives of two of these Graduates, David Gruca and Lance Weir. When these men were in their early twenties, accidents drastically



Rhonda Holden, David Gruca and Lance Weir speak at the June Champions meeting.

Photo by Jade Holden

*Come One,  
Come All, to the Annual*  
**CCI Champions  
Holiday Party!**

*All CCI volunteers, CCI Puppies-in-Training  
and Graduate Dogs are welcome!*

**When:** Saturday, December 8, 10:30 to noon

**Where:** CCI Oceanside (in the Great Room)

**What to Bring:** A Pot Luck Dish & A Gift of under \$15 for the Gift Exchange

*(Be sure that each person who comes with  
you brings a gift so all can join in the fun!)*

Questions? Contact Sondra Thiederman,  
STPhD@Thiederman.com / 619-583-1595

changed their lives, causing both to keenly feel a loss of independence. Years later, when David and Lance received their service dogs (Loma, in 2003; Satine, in 2004, respectively), their futures were once again radically altered—this time, for the better.

Of the myriad commands Loma obeys in order to help David through each day, 'Get' is perhaps the most useful, whether this leads to retrieving pens and papers from the floor in David's office, or keys from the floor of his van. In public, Loma serves as a "cultural anthropologist," aiding David and his life partner, Rhonda Holden, in their research of accessibility issues.

Lance, Volunteer Coordinator for the Southwest Region, concurs that 'Get' is of paramount importance. Satine aids Lance by picking up numerous items, both in his office at CCI and at his home. "That [task] may sound very minute, but that is huge whenever . . . it's you that has to ask all day long for help." In the broader picture, Lance swears he never would have made the move out to California to take the job with CCI without knowing Satine was by his side.

The informative and entertaining accounts shared by the panelists reminded us of the tremendous goal each hour we volunteer goes toward: greater independence.

## Arizona Chapter

by Pat Lawson

The Valley of the Sun has had a busy summer and fall! July 29 was Service Dog Awareness Night with the Arizona Diamondbacks. Graduate Linden Aitken and her Service dog Capri threw out the first pitch. It was a perfect strike that the Diamondbacks catcher missed. No worries! Capri raced to home plate and returned the ball to Linden to the enormous cheers of more than 20,000 fans. In addition, Arizona volunteers passed out CCI literature at a booth located in the concourse area of Chase Field. A few weeks later, on August 11, the Arizona Chapter was featured at the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury basketball



Graduate Linden Aitkin and Service dog Capri delivered a home-run performance for CCI!

game. Ten Chapter members' kids and puppies were on the floor prior to the game to receive game balls as the players were introduced. The Arizona team broke the all-time arena record for 50/50 raffle ticket sales and earned CCI a check for \$2,000 in just an hour and a half! Next up was the Southwest Region Graduation that saw two Valley dogs placed as Skilled Companions, one sent to Hearing dog training and one chosen as a Breeder. Way to go, Valley of the Sun!

## Arizona Golf Classic Breaks Record



The 4th Annual Dog Days of Summer Golf Classic was held in Chandler, Arizona on September 21. The tournament was sold out again this year, with 144 golfers and a record-breaking net profit of over \$58,000! Congratulations to the Valley of the Sun Volunteers who made this happen, and a hearty thanks to all the sponsors and participants.

Photo by Jan Newman

## Colorado

by Lynda Miller

CCI Colorado is very proud of our partnership with the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association Auxiliary. The wonderful people at this organization, which has sponsored a CCI Graduate Team every year since 1996, offered their support once again as they handed a \$10,000 check to CCI Colorado Director Paul O'Brien during the September CVMA convention in Copper Mountain, CO.

This year's recipients of the Team Sponsorship were Micah and Mark Weishaar with Skilled Companion dog Rama. Micah was especially thrilled to receive Louie the Bear XXIII, who is a very special bear, indeed!

For the past 23 years, Dr. Susan Bloss has been making stuffed bears to donate to the CVMA Auxiliary for their main fundraiser, the Shirley Clark Projects Auction. The late Dr. Louie Pavetti (who was very active in the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association until his death in 2000) purchased the very first bear, and in his honor the bear has been named "Louie" ever since. It has become a tradition for Louie to be given to the recipient of the CCI Team Sponsorship.

What makes Louie the Bear XXIII even more special is that, through generous donations made by Nancy Pavetti Fallis (in memory of her father and her mother Josephine—an active member of the CVMA Auxiliary until she passed away this year), several members of the Pavetti Family and Drs. Mark Ryan and Chris Morris, Louie brought in a record amount of \$6,000!

## Oklahoma

by Dawn Ramsey

The Red Earth Volunteers kept busy gearing up for the Snoopy 10km Challenge and Crooked Horn Bike Tour that was held in Sulphur, OK on October 13. USA Track & Field has certified our course, which is in contention to host a Championship race in 2008. Also in October, we took



CCI puppy Delores III and two girls enjoy the *Night in Ole New Orleans* activities.

part in the Challenge Air Fly Day in Oklahoma City, as well as the Boo on Bell Street Fall Festival.

In other news, we are excited to have two new Graduates in our area. Chad Beard graduated from the Southeast Regional Center with his Skilled Companion dog Ceylon, who was raised in the Florida Prison Program. Chad and Ceylon live in Shawnee, OK and they will soon begin assisting in the Chapter's fundraising events. Our second new Graduate is from the Tulsa area. His name is Wyatt Due and he graduated with Skilled Companion dog Karis from the Southwest Regional Center. We welcome both new teams and look forward to seeing them often.

Plans are in the works for participation in the Shawnee Christmas Parade and possibly a holiday Mutt Strut event at the mall.

## Utah

by Melanie Dutcher

"Life Elevated" is Utah's new slogan, and up is where our CCI numbers have gone this year! Eight puppies will have arrived in the homes of Utah puppy raisers by the end of 2007 and two of our nine puppy raising families are first-timers. Two puppies graduated as Skilled Companions,

four will have matriculated and a peak of eleven puppies in training was achieved in September. In addition, a Salt Lake family received a Skilled Companion. With these numbers, Utah is well positioned to form an official chapter in 2008.

When the CCI Southwest staff brought their amazing workshop to Salt Lake in June, all Utah puppies-in-program participated as well as two Service teams and one Skilled Companion team. The crowd of thirty-two attendees illustrated how much CCI's presence in Utah has grown in just two years.

Representatives from the Utah CCI group were also guests at the IRS Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) kick-off celebration. More than 1,500 employees attended the two-day event, where they learned about CCI's mission and programs. The employees now have the opportunity to select CCI as the recipient of their CFC donations and many expressed interest in becoming puppy raisers. It was a wonderful opportunity to educate an impressive number of people about our great organization, thanks to IRS retiree and CCI puppy raiser, Linda Weiskopf!

Canine Companions for Independence has also been invited to the Wild Bird Center in Layton on Saturday, November 3 to introduce its patrons to CCI. Local media will cover the event. Also, we will once again be fundraising this holiday season by gift wrapping for donations at Barnes & Noble.



Puppy raiser Linda Weiskopf and CCI puppy Fairfax visit with a friend at the IRS event.

# Ideas Abound at Annual Graduate Workshop

by Becky Hein



Graduates and friends Emilee Landon (left) and Kelsy Page (right) share smiles and catch up during a break.

There was a great turnout at this year's Graduate Workshop, held at the CCI Southwest Regional Center on July 28. More than 40 teams were in attendance, many from out of state. Several Board members and Graduates spoke on such pertinent topics as: The Aging Canine, Retirement and IAADP (International Association of Assistance Dog Partners) Membership. Open forums were also hosted for the exchange of ideas. In the afternoon there were games, one-on-one appointments with staff and a great presentation on police dog training. Many thanks to all who attended—see you next year!

## CCI Entrepreneurs

Southwest Graduate Ashley Longo and her Skilled Companion dog Hamlin recently stirred up some fun and funds for CCI. With help from family and friends, the enterprising team set up a neighborhood lemonade and baked goods stand that raised more than \$200 for CCI! Way to go, Ashley and Hamlin!



Ashley Longo and Hamlin take a break to pose with helpers and friends Hannah Stelzner and McKenna Bass.

## 2008 CCI Calendars— On Sale Now!

CCI Southwest Graduate Teams Muffy Davis and Leibe, Mike Bloker and Terren (a.k.a. Mr. T), Doug Smith and Jethro III and Paul Ogden and Bree III are featured in the 2008 CCI Calendar. Muffy and Leibe's action shot was even chosen to grace the cover, so congrats to all our featured Southwest Grads and our new Cover Girl and Cover Companion! This year's calendar is chock-full of stories about amazing Graduates, devoted puppy raisers and—of course—adorable dogs from across the country that are sure to warm the heart year-round. Visit the Southwest CCI Gift Shop or online store to pick up your copy today!

Photo by Kim Bachman, Right Side Photography



# New Leaders of the Southwest Program Department!

**V**eteran Southwest Region Instructors Simi Balter and Todd Young were promoted to key leadership roles in the Program Department in August. Simi Balter joined CCI in 2002 and earned the rank of Instructor in 2005. Simi is a natural leader who has excelled in all her duties, including mentoring apprentices and serving as the Southwest Region's Graduate Coordinator. Simi has been promoted to the role of Program Manager with oversight of all program functions and primary responsibility for the Participant Departments. Todd Young has been with CCI since 2000 and has been a full Instructor since 2004. Todd has a gift for all the intricacies of training (dogs and people) and has led apprentice classes at Southwest. Todd now assumes the role of Southwest Training Manager.



The combined experience, talent, dedication and enthusiasm of Simi and Todd positions the Southwest Program Department for continued success.



## Take Me Out to the Ball Game...

**W**ith help from Cathy, Jim and Graduate Danny Gott (pictured), CCI Night at Dodger Stadium was a big hit! CCI Graduate Teams, puppy raisers and supporters opened the baseball game with an on-field parade and a showing of the new PSAs on the Jumbotron, and then filled the stands to cheer on the exciting Dodgers-Padres action. Many thanks to the Gotts and all who participated! Photo by Ted Rogahn

## Wish List

- Dish towels (good condition)
- Treadmill
- Bean bag chairs
- Classical music CDs
- Hand dremels for dogs' nails
- Cordless vacuum cleaner
- Wireless tower for north hall internet access
- VCR/DVD combos for dorm rooms
- Photo paper
- Tool set

## Upcoming Events

**November 1**

Public Tour

**November 3**

New Volunteer Orientation

**November 3**

Hands on CCI

**November 3**

Developmental Services

Continuum Sit-A-Thon

San Diego, CA

**November 5-16**

Team Training

**November 17**

Graduation

**December 1-2**

AKC/Eukanuba National

Championship—featuring CCI as

Charity of Choice

Long Beach, CA

**December 2**

La Jolla Christmas Parade

**December 6**

Public Tour

**December 8**

Champions Holiday Party

**January 26-27**

Festival of Human Abilities

Aquarium of the Pacific

Long Beach, CA

**February 23**

Graduation

**April 12**

Woofstock

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



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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.*

## Mark Your Calendar...

**W**oofstock 2008 is just around the corner! On Saturday, **April 12**, CCI Southwest will once again host this exciting event in San Diego's Balboa Park. We are hoping for another record turnout so get ready to break out your bell-bottoms and groove on over to Woofstock!

