

TAIL TALES – A few short stories from a few Faithful Paws therapy visits. We love to share our “warm fuzzy” moments, with our group and with others. (edited as of 8-10-2015)

1) Today Konner lead a little boy down the hall using his tail. The patient was in a harness and held Konner's tail the whole way. So sweet!!! Lisa O. 9-22-2011

2) I just have to say that the event today at Lighthouse for the Blind (Beeping Easter Egg Hunt) was so moving and worthwhile. I hope we get to go back there again. We loved it. I had my most amazing experience to date today. Still makes me emotional to think about it. I took the hand of a young girl and led it through Teddy's (Gt. Pyrenees) fur. Her little hand was so relaxed in my hand and there was truly a special feeling there as we petted him together. This went on for a pretty long time, very gently, just letting me lead her hand down Teddy's long body over and over. I was stunned when her Mom and Dad looked on with amazement and told me that she does not like to touch or be touched. There were clearly moved, and so was I. Linda W. 3-25-2012

3) I have been visiting a personal care home in Richmond for over 3 years with Chrissy... not as a Faithful Paws member, but as a friend to one of the residents, who is now 99 years old. "Elizabeth" was originally a hospice patient assigned to me (as a volunteer), but she beat the odds and was signed off the service. We developed such a close relationship during those initial 6 months, I've continued to go see her every Sunday afternoon, and with the home owner's permission, Chrissy has accompanied me. While that is a warm/fuzzy story enough, there is more. There is a resident there with Alzheimer's disease. I would say she has been there now 6 months. With every visit, the woman is sitting in the living area when we arrive, and at first she just wanted to know was what the dog's name was and what kind she was. Repeatedly each week, I would say..."Her name is Chrissy, and she is a golden retriever." As her memory gets worse and worse, as it goes with Alzheimer's patients, she can't remember anyone's name ... from the staff... to the other residents ... from day to day. But every Sunday afternoon, when Chrissy and I walk in the door, this sweet lady, gets up out of her chair... she walks towards Chrissy and says... "This is Chrissy, and she is a golden retriever, right?" It just brings tears to everyone's eyes, as this is really all she remembers. I know the day will come when she won't remember Chrissy anymore, but Chrissy will remember her, and will be there for her to pet and hug on. Ann J. 1-6-2013

4) We strolled past the nurses' station where a man was sitting in a wheelchair. Angel pulled me toward the man who was sitting with his head in his hands. She made her way over to his feet and lay down upon his shoes. When he saw her, he looked up with the biggest smile and he said to me "I am embarrassed to talk. I have a tumor on my throat." I replied "You don't have to talk to me ... you can just sit here with Angel if you'd like." So I kind of moved away from him a little and left him petting her as she sat calmly on his feet and he began to talk to Angel for about 15 minutes. He wasn't afraid to talk to her ...He wasn't embarrassed to talk to Angel. Trish H. 1-7-2013

[NOTE: Angel was named the "Official Therapy Dog of Houston" by Mayor Annise Parker and Councilman David Robinson at a ceremony at City Hall on July 21, 2015.]

5) We entered a room where a young woman had been amputated from the knee down from cancer ...it wasn't her first rodeo with cancer ...she was 21 years oldwhen she saw Angel with three legs, she exclaimed, "Soul Sister!" And she made everyone laugh and believe me, we didn't want to laugh...but this young woman and three legged dog had amazing spirit. Trish H. 1-7-2013

6) We entered a room where a man was lying in his bed and he looked very sad. He saw Angel and he asked about her three-legs and I said she just likes to have fun. He said "she inspires me...I think I can probably walk on my foot now after seeing her so happy". Trish H. 1-7-2013

7) I've recently seen a couple stories from other members and it inspired me to share mine. Sorry it's such a long read...

Several months ago we (with my sweet little girl Tara) started visiting an assisted living facility that has a memory loss, lock down wing.

The first time we went, a woman was sitting at a table by herself with a distant stare in her eyes.

I introduced myself and Tara as I approached with Tara in my arms. She didn't acknowledge that we were there, just continued to stare. I kept talking, telling her how much Tara loved to be petted, how soft she was, and that she could pet her if she liked. After a minute or two she finally looked at Tara for the first time, so I kept talking, telling her she is a miniature schnauzer and is a little over a year old.

I talked for another minute or so and was just about to go to a different resident, when she ever so slowly started raising her arm off of the chair. She extended just her index finger and gently stroked Tara's back a couple times! Next she extended all her fingers and continued petting, but her expression never changed. To my surprise she reached up with her other hand and slowly grabbed Tara's head and leaned forward and kissed her!!! I stood holding Tara with tears in my eyes, letting her continue until she stopped and leaned back in her chair. Wow! That was powerful stuff...

I had to miss the next couple visits, but thought about my experience several times. When I was able to return, I wondered if she would remember our last visit. This time she was at a table with several others, so we visited our way around the table and when it was her turn she had a smile and was following Tara with her eyes the entire time. I sat in a chair next to her and she petted and smiled, while I carried on a one-sided conversation. I asked her several questions such as, have you ever had a dog and so on but got no response other than her smile!!! That smile made my day...

Well, I went there again last week and was looking for her but she wasn't in the day room like before. I was disappointed to not see her, but continued with my visit. I was standing talking to a resident that was petting Tara when I felt someone tap me on the shoulder. I turned around and it was her! She motioned for me to follow her as she walked toward the day room. I explained that I would be with her in a few minutes. As I approached she looked at Tara and smiled big! I helped her hold Tara in her lap as she petted her. Once again I began talking to her, repeating all the things I'd said before. But, this time when I asked her if she ever had any dogs she slowly shook her head up and down! I asked if it was big or little and she very quietly said big! That's all, just one word! Ah, but that smile, that smile said it all...

I am SO grateful to have found this organization and all the great people involved!!! My very big thanks go to Connie, Kathy, all the team leaders, all the caring, giving owners and all the sweet animals that give away their unconditional love... Thanks, Robyne G. and Tara 8-4-14

8) I am a friend of Danna B.'s and I have a 3 year old sweetie peetie Golden named Dessie. I was visiting a friend at Methodist last week, when the Faithful Paws arrived. You cannot imagine how the whole atmosphere changed. Patients lit up and smiled and related to one another, asking about the other's dogs, pets. We were there with Bella, Cole, Ruby and Max, plus a few others. It brought a little bit of "home" to the patients who were missing home so much. Thank you for being part of such an amazing ministry that touches more people than you all may know.

I am trying to see what my fall looks like, as I would love to be part of Faithful Paws with my friend, Danna and her Cooper. Thanks again for blessing others through your time and ministry.

Sincerely, Lisa W. and Dessie 8-11-2014 (now an active Faithful Paws team)

9) Today at Houston Hospice there was a man, who according to his family has been unresponsive for a "very long time" opened his eyes after I put Emmalea in his bed. There were several family members, including his wife of 48 yrs in the room and they were amazed and just full of gratitude. The man opened his eyes several times while Emmalea lay in his bed. I was so proud of this sweet girl and what she was able to bring for this family. Debbie B. 9-12-14

10) {After our first trial visit at a breast cancer clinic. The clinic director was impressed by one dog with a scared first-time patient and sent a note to our director. This is the “mom’s” response.}

Kathy, that was Logan. I almost cried. I asked her if she would like a visit from a therapy dog and she said no. She mentioned this was her first time in the clinic and she was scared. I talked with her briefly and while we talked Logan put his paws on her chair and laid his head in her lap. He had not done that with any of the other patients. I didn't say anything. She just started petting him and seemed to relax a little. He stayed there for a while. When we finally left she thanked us and especially Logan. I wished her "God Bless" and a Wonderful Holiday...every once in a while something like this happens and I truly understand the impact our wonderful pets have on those in distress. They are truly a gift from God and I'm so happy to be able to share him. Melody B. 12-19-14

11a) Hi, The visit went well this morning. The nurse who let me in was concerned that (the Hospice patient) might start screaming when I came in. But, the opposite happened. She was smiling and laughing and the nurse was amazed and said she had never seen her so happy. I stayed about 20 minutes. She liked to have Ike lay with her and the nurse helped her pet him. She also loved for me to hold Ike up to her face so she could give him kisses. Elizabeth S. 8-5-15

11b) I forwarded Elizabeth’s note to the Hospice team. This brings them GREAT, GREAT JOY! Thank you for not only being a healing presence to the patient, but bringing joy and inspiration to the hospice team as well. Ordinary Miracles abound! Rev.Deb. (Hospice Chaplain) 8-5-15

11c) Hi all, Graci and I had a wonderful visit with the Hospice patient. She seemed very happy to have a small dog to pet. Graci lay down quietly on the bed and the lady was thrilled. ... I am glad we can give a little happiness to this sweet lady. Patty S. 8-6-15

11d) Tears in my eyes too... These quiet miracles so affect people – and not just the patient. Feeling and smelling fur – such sensory gifts often ignored or at least undervalued. The world values differently and it is easy to revert to the world lens... but it is so distorted. Thank you so very very much... Rev.Deb 8-10-15