

Therapy Animals of Utah Recent Accomplishments

In June 2013 the Board of Directors conducted a major assessment of the organization to determine how we might better address the community's need for our services and meet the growing demand. In 2013 TAU teams served 25,009 clients, which included 24,879 volunteer hours. However, the demand for services has continued to be so great that for every facility visit that occurred, many more facilities are wait listed. To meet the increased requests, TAU determined that it must add more trained animal/handler teams in the field. Our goal for 2014 was to increase the number of teams from 66 to 80, which necessitated adding three additional evaluators, and increasing the number of yearly training classes to six. As of August 2014, we have added two new evaluators, had 24 scheduled team evaluation sessions including 5 in Ogden (testing up to 6 teams per session), and increased our 8-hour trainings, meeting our goal of increasing the number of trainings to six per year, including once yearly in Ogden. Also, as of June 2014, we have increased animal/handler teams to 70 and are optimistic that we will reach our goal of 80 by the end of the year.

In addition, after many years as a TAU evaluator, trainer and volunteer, Deborah Carr was hired by TAU as full-time executive director for the organization. The Board also contracted with a seasoned grant writer/development specialist who has been successful in increasing our financial support through grant writing efforts. We have received new grant support from many foundations in the past year as well as continued and increased support from those who have been long-standing contributors.

To better understand our responsibility and execute our role in the nonprofit world, we felt it was necessary to expand our knowledge base in several important areas. To that end, Deborah was accepted into the University of Utah Non-Profit Academy for Excellence and received a half-tuition scholarship. She has completed classes in Marketing Essentials for Non-Profits, Creating Excellence in Non-Profit Boards, Foundations of the Non-Profit Sector, Writing for the Workplace, Collaborative Leadership, Strategic Planning for Organizations, and Volunteer Management, finishing her certificate in Nonprofit Management. She also attended the 2013 Utah Conference on Service, the 2013 and 2014 UNA Conferences, the 2013 Institute for the Human-Animal Connection at Green Chimneys (NY), the 2014 Institute for the Human-Animal Connection Practitioners Conference: Transforming Trauma (Denver), and IRS Training for Exempt Organizations. No TAU funds were used for any of this training.

Other accomplishments during the past year included:

- Conducted site assessments for 12 facilities from Tremonton to Springville, adding three new facilities in Northern Utah, and strengthening programs we already have in place in the Salt Lake and Utah County.
- Began a groundbreaking program at the Salt Lake City Airport utilizing our animal/handlers in helping travelers reduce stress during long waiting periods.
- Completed formal staff trainings at two adolescent mental health treatment centers and have two more scheduled this summer at a mental health treatment center and an Ogden school.

- Participated in the U of U College of Social Work's graduate animal-assisted therapy class for three semesters.
- Added 23 new members this year, up from 47 the previous year, increasing both income and commitment from the community.
- Increased our Board from only three members last year to a vibrant and involved nine-member board.
- Completed our first full 990 tax return (990 EZ in the past) and have all the required policies and procedures in place.
- Partnered with the U of U MPA department to improve our Board of Directors. Each Board meeting now includes a dedicated amount of time devoted to board training.
- Partnered with the Utah State Prison in distributing the greeting cards and crafts of the prisoners to residents in the nursing homes we serve.
- Partnered with the Utah Humane Society in their open house and other events; partnered with two local animal trainers to assist with referrals for therapy and service animal training. This is an important resource for the community in helping to locate appropriate, qualified trainers, especially for individuals with disabilities who need service dogs.
- Continued or began community service and education events at Camp Hobe, the U of U College of Social Work and Counseling Center, Weber State University, Brigham Young University, Salt Lake Farmers Market, Ogden Farmers Market, and Strut Your Mutt.
- Held our first annual Wags & Kisses Picnic fundraiser at Wheeler Farms, which was attended by more than 200 people and generated a 72% net profit. This event celebrated our extraordinary volunteers and gave the public the opportunity to see first hand what we do by meeting our animal/handler teams and hearing their remarkable healing stories. This event, along with our first Annual Appeal, photo event and dog wash fundraiser added to our income this year.
- Participated in the 2014 Pet Partners Evaluator Symposium, planning the future of the Pet Partners evaluation procedure for the coming years.
- Participated in a nationally available webinar on therapy cat teams, with our own local "cat whisperer" and Team Evaluator, Dion Dostaler, helping answer questions.