



PRINT QUARTERLY

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The Genesis of PAWS NY Capital Region

By Douglas L. Cohn, D.V.M.

One of my closest friends from veterinary school, Steven Cattano, succumbed to AIDS in 1993. At the time he was living in the San Francisco area and was involved with a group called Pets are Wonderful Support (PAWS). This was the first organization in the US to support pet owners living with HIV/AIDS. There was no PAWS-like organization in the Capital Region when I moved here in the late 1990s, although with a burgeoning HIV patient population, it seemed that the need for such an organization would exist here as well.

In late 2001 I introduced myself to Perry Junjulas, who had recently assumed the directorship at the Albany Damien Center and discussed with him the idea of creating a PAWS in our region. He was enthusiastic, and he encouraged me to speak with the folks at the AIDS Treatment Center at Albany Medical Center (AMC). In early 2002, I found a social worker at the Center, Chris Metcalfe, who shared my vision for a PAWS group here, and who talked up the idea with his colleagues at AMC. We assembled a core group of professionals representing a range of disciplines, including social work, veterinary medicine, volunteerism, the faith based community, nursing and health care administration. Pet owners living with HIV/AIDS were among the members of this nascent group. Besides myself, four additional members of that core group are still intimately involved with the program today: George Clifford, Kelly Morrone, Jill Farnham, Richard Hahn. The core group met monthly at AMC to create the foundation of PAWS NY Capital Region.

One of our first directives was to determine in an official manner if there was truly a need for pet support among the HIV population. George Clifford, who was the Director of the AIDS Treatment Center, spear-headed a task force with his AMC staff to create a survey and distribute it to the clients and then tabulate the results. Not surprising, we found that there was a clear need for pet support within the clientele.

Our committee searched for a parent organization to take on the responsibility of our new program. Perry Junjulas had been following the progress of our group,

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and at one point he proposed this adoption to the Board of the Directors of the Albany Damien Center. The Board agreed to take on PAWS as its own program provided that the PAWS Steering Committee continue to oversee the day-to-day operations and that I serve on the Board initially as the liaison to both groups.

Having finally established the program, the PAWS Planning Committee became the PAWS Advisory Committee, but there was still more work to be done. Most importantly, we needed to establish a financial base for the program. In the latter half of 2002, now as a bona fide program of the Albany Damien Center, we applied for and received initial funding through the Community AIDS Partnership of the Capital Region (CAP-CR) through proceeds of the AIDSWalk. Our Brothers' Keepers Foundation also provided us with a significant grant. Libby Post, of Communication Services, created our PAWS logo and donated it to the Albany Damien Center. The stage was now set to hire the first paid coordinator for the program: Larry Steffler. We continued to meet monthly to finalize policies, and by the spring of 2003, the program began in earnest.

PAWS has become a staple in the annual AIDSWalk. Dine for PAWS has become a yearly event, and each year has surpassed the previous in terms of attendance and financial profit.

It is obvious that PAWS NY Capital Region developed through a true grass-roots effort, and many thoughtful and concerned individuals were involved with its birth. As we approach our 5th anniversary I see nothing but a bright future ahead.

Banfield Charitable Trust Donates \$10,000

By David Chico V.M.D.

The Banfield Charitable Trust is a nonprofit public charity that encourages collaborations between Banfield Pet Hospitals and local community-based organizations to provide a better quality of life for pets and their owners. Community grants are given for a variety of purposes including the promotion of preventive healthcare for pets and promotion of the human-animal bond which are integral components of the PAWS program. The PAWS program of the Albany Damien Center was the recipient of a generous \$10,000 grant from the Banfield Charitable Trust in October, 2007. This grant was awarded on a competitive basis and the proposal submitted by PAWS was one of the highest rated applications. The grant application was sponsored and supported by Dr.

Elizabeth Goldman, Banfield's Professional Relations Director for the Northeast.

The grant money will be used to help fund the Wellness Clinic initiative for PAWS clients. Part of the grant will also be used to subsidize this newsletter regarding the PAWS program and its activities. Previously, the Wellness Clinics had depended completely on donations of vaccines and supplies from manufacturers and distributors. This grant will allow for the purchase of supplies and materials that are not donated and it will provide a solid foundation for the Wellness Clinics to continue in the future. The grant will enable PAWS to provide a greater level of service to its clients and to provide assistance to an increased number of individuals in the community.

The Importance of the Small Things

Testimonials from the field

As a service provider, there are certain times when something as simple as a bag of cat food turns out to be a significant turning point. After 11 years of working in the HIV/AIDS field, I continue to be amazed at the power of "those things that are small"

When I first met Marta, she was struggling just to make ends meet. After paying rent, she then had to choose between paying her electric bill, buying food and other personal items and food/ yearly shots for her cat. The stress of this monthly financial problem was definitely affecting her health.

I asked her Case Management (CM) team to discuss and, if Marta was willing, make a referral to PAWS. It took weeks for her to actually agree to meet Michael. She was fearful that when she walked in to the Center, that someone she knew would recognize her. "Well that wasn't so bad." and "I didn't realize how much they could help me and my cat" were two of her comments on the trip back home. She has since received food and a veterinarian visit with transportation provided by a PAWS volunteer.

As one of the Program Supervisors at Catholic Charities, I don't see Marta often but she has taken some significant steps forward since connecting with PAWS. She has begun to call her CM team more,

informing them of on-going issues. She asks for referrals for needed services and is attending more medical appointments.

For Marta, PAWS isn't just a bag of food for her cat and a yearly vaccination. For her, it's that feeling of "if you understand how important my cat is to me, then maybe I can trust you to help me with my medication adherence or other things going on in my life."



If you understand how important my cat is to me, maybe I can trust you to help me...

Pet Wellness Clinics

By David Chico, VMD

The PAWS program began holding Wellness Clinics for program clients in April, 2007. These clinics are provided at no charge to clients and cover annual vaccinations, physical examinations, deworming, and routine diagnostic tests. In addition, clients receive heartworm preventative and flea and tick preventative.

The clinics are not meant to replace the care of a client's regular veterinarian. The goal of the clinics is to provide for the *well care* of pets so that clients can use their annual stipend to cover the cost of sick visits, emergency treatment or more thorough diagnostic evaluations. All supplies, vaccinations, and professional services have been donated and are provided by New York State veterinarians at no cost. In addition to supplies and medical services, clients receive information on important issues such as; how to reduce the risk of disease transmission between pets and people as well as other services such as the New York State sponsored low cost spay-neuter program.

Two clinics have been held and each has been a success. The current plan is to offer these clinics on a quarterly basis. So far, 32 Paws clients and 35 client-owned animals have benefited from the clinics. Fourteen animals received veterinary care for the first time at one of the clinics. The total cost of goods and services provided during the two clinics was over \$4000. Providing free well care not only helps the clients it also allows PAWS to provide services to a larger number of pets.

Recently, PAWS was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Banfield Charitable Trust to help fund the wellness clinics. This money will be used to purchase supplies that are not currently donated and will help ensure that Wellness Clinics will be provided in the future.

PAWS Advisory Committee

Douglas Cohn, DVM - Committee Chair
 David Chico, VMD
 George Clifford, PhD
 Jill Farnham
 Bill Gaul
 Richard Hahn
 Kelly Morrone
 Rob Saba
 Tom Walling
 Michael Broderick – PAWS Coordinator

Lend A Helping Paw

By Michael Broderick

The PAWS (Pets Are Wonderful Support) program cannot do all of the good work for our clients and their pets without the dedication and hard work of our volunteers.

We have a great group of people lending their time and talents to ensure that our client's pets are receiving all of the care and compassion they need.

BUT we are always looking for new folks to join our PAWS family and we are sure to have a volunteer opportunity that will fit your time schedule and talents

- 🐾 **Dog Walkers** - Volunteers on dog walking teams help walk dogs for clients who are bed-bound, homebound or in the hospital.
- 🐾 **Cat Care** - Volunteers feed and water cats once a day and clean cat pans for clients who are unable to clean the pan.
- 🐾 **Pet Transportation** - Our pets need your help to get to their vet or grooming appointments.
- 🐾 **Pet Food Delivery** - The PAWS program delivers donated pet food and supplies to our clients and their pets.
- 🐾 **Pet Food Bank** - Help at the Albany Damien Center by keeping our pet food bank stocked and organized.
- 🐾 **Pet Food Drop Spots** – Identify, visit and maintain locations that may be willing to be a PAWS food drop off location (vets, pet stores, churches, social clubs, etc)
- 🐾 **Pet Clinics** – Help out at our free quarterly pet clinics. Help with registration, greeting clients and pets or providing transportation.

Help us continue the work we do by volunteering or sending a tax deductible contribution to:

PAWS
 c/o The Albany Damien Center, Inc.
 12 South Lake Avenue
 Albany, NY 12203
 Ph. 518.449.7119 ext. 18
www.pawsnycapitalregion.org

A few PAWS Best Friends!



RACHAEL RAY HONORARY CHAIR OF ALBANY'S DINE FOR PAWS GALA

Albany---World famous local icon, Rachael Ray of the FOOD NETWORK and NBC and her dog Isaboo (!) have agreed to be Honorary Chairs for the 5th Anniversary of *Dine For PAWS 2008—Tails of the City*.

Rachael Ray has taped a PSA and 'Welcoming Remarks' for the gala to be held at the historic Washington Park Lake House on June 21, 2008 at 6 p.m. Channel 13 Health Reporter, Benita Zahn will host.

PAWS (Pets Are Wonderful Support) N.Y. Capital Region assists people living with HIV/AIDS in maintaining and caring for their pets. The Albany Damien Center provides individualized support, information, supplies and assistance at no cost to eligible residents of the New York Capital Region.

For sponsorship opportunities or more information call (518) 449-7119 Ext #18.

Why PAWS Is Important To Me By Our PAWS Clients

"Bonnie and Clyde have provided me an overall comfort in dealing with my illness's and disabilities. They may have needed a home, but it was me that was rescued".

"I didn't have the finances to take my pet or dog to the clinic. I never worked with PAWS before and their helpfulness was outstanding with transportation and everything. Thank you for all your help".

"I feel safe knowing PAWS would be there to support me when I needed it the most. The PAWS program has become an invaluable part of my life. The support that the program has given me means more than words can express you have made a big difference in the lives of me and my pets. God Bless you".

"I am very thankful for PAWS. When my dog needed emergency medical treatment, I didn't know what to do - I had no money to pay for the vet. I was very emotionally stressed out by it- someone from PAWS spent time with me, filled out the applications and made an appointment that day for my dog to get seen by the vet. She was back to her old self in a couple of days! They help me with pet food and supplies when I can't afford it. All I can say about the wellness clinic is it is a life-saver! Fantastic!"

"I needed help to get yearly shots so I could save the money for other issues for my cats. PAWS has been very helpful to me since I have 6 cats and the yearly shots can be costly. My oldest cat is almost 21 yrs old so I'm happy to know that help is there for her if and when she needs it. The staff is great- they are always warm and friendly and are as helpful - thank you so much for everything"-

"I found out PAWS is a great program not only for Jasper, but over all a wonderful idea. Recently I was admitted to A.M.C. for a few days and had no one in my apt. building to attend to my dog. That's when Paws came through like an angel at the last minute. I feel that I was discharged because I didn't worry so much about my pet. When I'd seen him he looked GREAT!! Paws again, Thank You Very Very Much".

