

# GOING TO THE DOGS

## THERAPEUTIC PAWS OF CANADA VISITS WITH DOGS TO MAKE LIFE MORE ENJOYABLE

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The fur was flying at Metroland's Halton division recently as staff enjoyed a visit from five four-legged friends.

Therapeutic Paws of Canada (TPOC), with team leaders from Halton communities, brought five dogs and their owners in for some stress relief, and to speak about their program.

TPOC is a non-profit organization of volunteers providing dogs - paws with love to share - for human needs.

Whether it's visiting university students stressed out and needing emotional support at exam time, or seniors in a retirement home, TPOC visitors bring delight to so many people.

They regularly visit hospitals, residences, schools and businesses.

Brian Ferri, team leader in Milton, said the program spreads across the province and all of Canada. Totally volunteer, visiting owners and their dogs use their own time and gas to get to their various visiting spots. Almost all of the volunteers hold full-time jobs as well.

All the handlers are all carefully screened volunteers who work with their

family pet on the therapy visits. The dogs receive certification based on visits with qualified handlers. Once they are through the visits, they can be certified IWC - to interact with children.

Miltonian, and winter Olympian Travis Gerrits is one of the newest members of the team along with his dog Tia, a five-year-old old chocolate Olde English bulldog.

Tia was soaking up the love as more than 30 staffers made the rounds to visit the happy canines. She sat down on her hunches while people cooed and cawed about how cute she was.

Meanwhile Ferri's dog Josie, a big barbet was also a big hit with her long black fur, softened after a grooming session the day prior.

"As handlers, we are here for the people," he said, showing how his dog listens to his commands.

Because they travel to long-term care facilities, he said they could potentially ingest pills that could have fallen on the floor or elsewhere. Josie won't eat anything, even treats that he provides, until Ferri gives her the OK.

He recalled one of his most touching moments was when a young student at a school who suffered from muscular dystrophy placed his hand on Josie's head.

"Every time he felt her fur, he burst into hilarious laughter," Ferri said.

Another time, visiting Allandale Long Term Care

Centre in Milton, Josie was able to destress a resident who was perturbed by ongoing fire alarms.

It just so happened that the third time visiting, a fire alarm sounded. One of the residents got red in the face, upset by the noise. One look at Josie and she calmed right down, laughing and talking to her, almost oblivious to the chaotic sounds of the alarm going off.

Connection with pets helps to calm agitated residents and stimulates conversations.

"I'm lucky," he added, "I've got therapy 24 hours a day."

Georgetown's team leader Brenda Goodlet and her dog Karma, a nine-year-old collie, have been with TPOC for seven years.

She said her most emotional moment was when she was at a senior centre visiting a man who had suffered a stroke eight months prior.

When he saw the dog, he placed his hand on her head and he smiled.

His wife said that was the first time he had smiled since he had his stroke.

"That was very therapeutic," said Goodlet, adding she enjoys hearing the stories the seniors share when they visit old age homes.

"They always have stories about the pets they had, or someone in their family had, and it always makes them happy to share."

Milton resident Frances MacDonald, with Henry, a seven-year-old border collie mix, joined TPOC with her



Graham Paine/Metroland

Brenda Godel brought 'Karma' who was the centre of attention for (from left) Allie Murray, Julie Slack, Brian Roberts and Emily Trotta. (Below) Tim Whitnell got some doggy kisses from Henry.

son so that he could earn his required high school volunteer hours.

Now, a four-year veteran, she was able to bring Henry to visit her Grade 3 students at Joseph Gibbons School in Georgetown between a break during their EQAO testing.

Brenda Lee brought her standard long-haired dachshund Otto, who's four years old.

She said her favourite memory of visiting was when Otto went to ErinOaks children's stroke program.

She said the kids were just amazing, and truly enjoyed taking the dogs for a walk with the leash around the facilities.

There is no fee for TPOC



programs. Volunteers participate to make life better for others.

In Metroland's case, most employees agreed "it was the best day ever at work," with that sentiment being uttered by most staff for the rest of the work day.

Volunteers are always sought. Burlington and

Oakville currently need team leaders, while all programs can use more volunteers to help visit with their pets. Dogs with good manners and a friendly and outgoing temperament will most likely do well, and easily pass an evaluation.

To learn more, go to [www.tpoc.ca](http://www.tpoc.ca).

## Holiday Closure

[haltonhills.ca](http://haltonhills.ca)

### HOLIDAY CLOSURE

**Labour Day – September 3, 2018**

**TOWN HALL** - 905-873-2600

Closed

#### ACTIVAN

ActiVan Service will be available on an after-hours basis.

**CANINE CONTROL** - 905-877-6235

**FIRE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS** - 905-877-1133

Administration is closed.

### TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC WORKS

**Public Works After-Hours Contact**

905-873-2600 – press 2 to connect to the Public Works After-Hours Line and follow the prompts.

**PUBLIC LIBRARY** 905-873-2681

Acton Branch: Closed

Georgetown Branch: Closed

### RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT

**Gellert Community Centre**

Closed for Maintenance September 4 - 23, 2018 (including Labour Day)

- Please check website for customer service hours Monday – Friday

**Georgetown & Acton Indoor Pool**

Closed

**Acton Arena & Community Centre & Mold-Masters SportsPlex**

Closed

**Hillsview Active Living Centre Georgetown & Acton Location**

Closed

**Halton Hills Cultural Centre & Helson Gallery & JET Box office**

Closed

### FOR EMERGENCIES

- FIRE/POLICE/AMBULANCE: DIAL 911



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