



# Wagging Tails

IRISH THERAPY DOGS NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010

*Irish Therapy Dogs is very thankful to all our Volunteer Visiting Teams for their steadfast commitment to their hour-long weekly visits. The time spent in making this commitment is nothing when compared to the joyful welcome, smiling faces, eyes that light up and all the friends made in the course of the*

*visits. The weekly commitment is of the utmost importance. You may sometimes wonder if your busy or changed lifestyle is limiting your time to carry out your visits. Just think of the smiling faces that are expecting you and that are always glad to see you and your canine friend. Can you really not afford*

*this hour of rewarding work? We do not think so. Is it not high on your weekly priority list? We are sure it is. Thank you all most sincerely.*

*We also thank all our friends in the Care Centres for their welcome and commitment to our visiting programme.*

## Capture The Spirit of Volunteering

**I**rish Therapy Dogs won first prize in the 2010 "Capture Spirit of Volunteering" photographic competition run by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Volunteer Centre in conjunction with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

The competition invited amateur photographers to enter photographs of volunteers in action from any voluntary or community group in the county. The winning photograph, which will feature in the Volunteer Centre's 2011 calendar, shows Visiting Team Sally McCaffrey and Shako along with junior members Sarah and Tom visiting Glebe House Nursing Home.



*Visiting Team Sally McCaffrey and Shako along with junior members Sarah and Tom visiting Glebe House. Photograph courtesy of Steve Whiteside.*

## Dual Role for Pauliina and Koiru

**P**auliina Kauppila, who hails from Finland and her Irish Therapy Dog, Koiru (that translates as "dog")

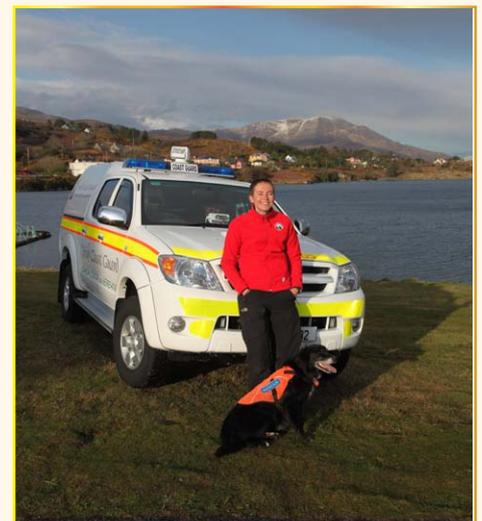
in Finnish but sounds very exotic in Ireland!) visit Co-action care centre in Castletownbere, West Cork bringing great joy and comfort to the children and adults there.

However, Pauliina is also an active member of the local Coast Guard Unit. Last March Koiru qualified as a Search and Rescue Dog and with Pauliina has been on several callouts in the local mountainous area searching for lost hillwalkers.

Congratulations to this wonderful multitask team.



*Pauliina and Koiru in their role as Irish Therapy Dogs Visiting Team*



*Pauliina and Koiru on their qualification day as a Search and Rescue Team. Photo courtesy of John Eagle*

*To all the participants in the Dublin and Cork ladies mini marathons and the Cork marathon who ran to support Irish Therapy Dogs we say "thank you" and hope they will continue to support us in the coming years.*

# Romeo

*Irish Therapy Dogs is sincerely grateful to Jacqui and Tom Stein for sharing this very personal, sad yet wonderful story.*

**T**his is the story of a little dog's service to his young master and how he came to be an Irish Therapy Dog.

Our son Richard was only 19 when he was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma, one of the most deadly cancers to hit young children and teenagers. He underwent 6 gruelling months of the sort of chemotherapy that in his consultant's words was "strong enough to almost kill you but not quite". After completing this, his scan showed positive results and Richard began to plan his future and look forward to getting on with his life again.

One day we were having our evening meal together and he told us he wanted to get a puppy. As we have Leonbergers, we very much love dogs, but Richard didn't want his own Leo, he wanted "a little dog that will sit and cuddle with me". He was most insistent and had even located the puppy that he wanted, a little black and white Papillion, that was 10 weeks old. So after phoning the breeder, we set off to Kildare the following day to see him. We were greeted with the tiniest, waggiest little puppy and Richard bought him and home he came. From the outset it became obvious that they shared a special bond and Romeo, as he was called, went everywhere that Richard did. Well, apart from hospital and holidays that is. Having care dogs is special but having one so close to a family member has shown us what they really mean to patients.

Richard had planned a holiday to



Egypt, with his brother and wife, but the volcanic ash cloud postponed it. Eventually Richard decided to go on the train, catch a ferry to the UK and coach to London and fly on from there. He made it to Egypt, but sadly in the second week of his holiday the excruciating pain returned and he and us were told the cancer had returned and his tumour was bigger than before. His consultants said they would do radiotherapy. It had good results and they would look at more chemo for him. We were devastated to learn from another scan a month later that the cancer had spread all through him to every bone and organ. He was in immense pain and was taken to St Francis Hospice in Raheny to get his awful pain under control. As the hospice allow pets, we happily took Romeo to visit, and we saw that he immediately became very sure and confident, trotting rapidly up the corridors to his masters room with us behind him. He would then sit outside the door waiting for us to catch up. He made friends with many of the staff there and was always bringing smiles to his master and other patients with his kisses and obvious happy nature.

Richard spent 2 weeks at the hospice and Romeo was there with him every day, lying beside him quietly on the bed. Richard didn't want to stay there and wanted to come home to die. Richard and Romeo spent the last two weeks of his life together, and even when he was too ill to look after him, Romeo still wanted to go up to see him several times a day.

The night Richard died, July 23rd 2010, all the family were with him. Romeo came up and walked up his body, kissed his cheeks and face, then went and lay right across his chest, putting his head down, and sighed deeply. He knew Richard had gone and he grieved deeply with the rest of us.

We knew that it was Richard's wish that Romeo become an Irish Therapy Dog and as we had our Leonberger bitch Skye already qualified, we asked that Romeo be assessed, along with two of our other Leonbergers. They all passed with flying colours.

Romeo now visits Laurel Lodge Nursing Home in Longford and is a great hit with staff and patients alike. In Romeo, Richard lives on, and it is a pleasure to be able to take him to visit people and to see the joy he brings.

*The reward of owning a well behaved, loving and intelligent dog is beyond measure. Those who have owned such a dog are truly blessed*

# Knightsbridge Village welcomes Irish Therapy Dogs to Trim

Residents and staff at Knightsbridge Nursing Home, Trim, have a very welcome new addition to their home with the recent arrival of the Irish Therapy Dog visiting team of Bernie Ladd and her 8 year old Japanese Shih Tzu 'Oh No'. Bernie and 'Oh No' visit Knightsbridge Nursing Home on Monday afternoons and they have made many new friends amongst both residents and staff in the short time since their first visit at the end of August.

With over 70 residents in Knightsbridge Nursing Home, Bernie and 'Oh No' visit different people each week and this facilitates a quality visiting experience, which helps residents and the visiting team time to get to know each other. Each visit lasts approximately one hour and includes a mix of group sessions and individual room visits.



Phyllis Gogarty enjoys the company of 'Oh No'.

Mark Hennessy, Marketing Manager at Knightsbridge Village explains how the Irish Therapy Dog visits came about and the positive effects that the visits have had in the home and on the residents thus far.

"We had been trying for quite some time to arrange dog visits to Knightsbridge but without success. It wasn't simply a case of inviting any dog and their owner to visit as we needed to be sure of the suitability of both dog and owner.

Thankfully, I came across the Irish Therapy Dogs Website, which provided a really useful insight into the service. We made contact with Brenda Rickard, who was most enthusiastic and encouraging about the prospect of a visiting team coming to Knightsbridge. Brenda kept in contact with us as she set about finding a visiting team in our area. True to her word, Brenda came back to tell us the great news that she had found a new visiting team, Bernie Ladd and her dog 'Oh No'.

Before the visits could start, Brenda and Brian along with Bernie and 'Oh No' came out to Knightsbridge to meet with us and to see the home and to discuss our expectations and the requirements of Irish Therapy Dogs and the visiting team. This was very important for us and demonstrated a professional outlook with the best interests of both visiting team and visitors at the forefront.

Bernie and 'Oh No' have been a pleasure to meet each week and are hugely popular



Bernie Ladd and therapy dog "Oh No"

with residents and staff alike. Their visits every Monday are eagerly anticipated. Our residents love having them around and 'Oh No' is perfectly suited to the visits.

Their visits strike up many a conversation about the pets that our residents have had over the years and often residents just love to pet, hold and talk to 'Oh No'. Bernie's input is also crucial as she introduces 'Oh No' to the residents and helps them to relate to the dog. The positive effect that the visiting team has had is especially evident amongst residents with dementia. Many residents are visibly more relaxed and engage in conversation more freely when Bernie and 'Oh No' visit.

We look forward to many more visits and would like to thank all involved in Irish Therapy Dogs for helping to enrich the lives of our residents and staff through the visits".

## Unusual Therapy Dog Activity

### Knitted Blankets for Abandoned Greyhounds.

When two charities made an appeal for warm covers for



abandoned greyhounds for the winter, some pupils and staff in Sallins National School and some of the ladies in the two nursing homes visited by Irish Therapy Dog, Setanta, a deerhound, got involved by knitting rectangles which were sewn together by hand and then machine sewn to a fleece backing.

The resulting blankets are very colourful and warm. The pictures show



the ladies who did the knitting with the finished blankets and Setanta who motivated them!

## Juniors



**C**ongratulations to Junior members Lucy, Sarah, Thomas, Ian and Tom who were recently presented with their Pawpoint certificates.

Pawpoints are awarded to Juniors for various activities they carry out on behalf of Irish Therapy Dogs such as accompanying a Visiting Team on a Care Centre visit, assisting at events and generally promoting our organisation. There are three levels of awards, Certificate, Pin and Stripe.



*Some of the Junior members who were such a great help at PetExpo 2010*



*Irish Therapy Dog Lucy gets lots of attention from Junior Members Isobel and Juliette at the Annual Blessing of Pets at St. Joseph's Church, Glashule, Co. Dublin on October 3rd.*

## Mitzie's Photo Gallery



**R**esidents at St. Fintan's Hospital, Portlaoise are so delighted with visits from Irish Therapy Dogs Visiting Team Joe Kelly and Mitzie that they had a bone shaped photo gallery made to hold all the happy photos of Mitzie and the residents.



*Joe and Mitzie*

## Dublin Sponsored Walk



*Participants in the Sponsored Walk on Sandymount Promenade*

**I**rish Therapy Dogs had a very successful sponsored walk on September 12th in beautiful warm autumnal weather. Members of the public walking on the Sandymount promenade, where part of the walk took place, contributed generously and remarked on how happy and joyful all the participants were.

A most memorable and enjoyable day concluded with a magnificent Birthday Cake to celebrate Irish Therapy Dogs second birthday.



*Junior member Emily with Irish Therapy Dog Willow decorated with balloons for the occasion*