



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tails of Joy Announces New Animal Assisted Crisis Response Teams

Local Pet Therapy Group Trains and Evaluates Canine Teams for Comfort Response

Manchester, CT: For twenty years Tails of Joy has promoted the benefits of human-animal interactions by training, evaluating, and supporting volunteer animal assisted activity teams in Connecticut. On March 8, 2014, Tails of Joy assessed and approved nine registered volunteer therapy teams as Animal Assisted Crisis Response teams to provide comfort to people affected by traumatic events.

The need for local Animal Assisted Crisis Response Teams (AACRT) became apparent in light of recent tragedies in the state. Tails of Joy AACRT became a reality as a result of working with Rep. Diana Urban (North Stonington) and the State Legislature on HB 6564 to provide animal assisted services to the community. According to Tails of Joy president, Sandra Lok:

"Within days of the tragedy at Sandy Hook, it became clear that CT needed a coordinated statewide animal assisted crisis response effort to provide immediate comfort through the use of well-trained therapy dogs and their handlers to its residents, including its children, who had suffered a tragedy. Meeting with State Representative Diana Urban and key animal assisted therapy advocates in the state provided us the opportunity to be a part of the solution. The work that we have accomplished and the passage of key legislation proposed by Representative Urban and the KID Committee helps to ensure that we will be prepared to respond with immediate, and even long-term, comfort to those in need through the use of our dogs.

We are very pleased to be able to offer the volunteer services of our nine experienced dogs whose handlers have completed training specific to responding to traumatic events, and plan to add more approved teams in the fall."

Tails of Joy has had ample opportunity to put its teams to the test by offering comfort to students who had been affected by tragedies at RHAM and Bolton High Schools. Teams also participated in the May 17, 2014, large- scale Douglas Manor MCI Drill, providing comfort to the "victims," First Responders from several towns and the American Red Cross workers. The Tails of Joy AACRT is prepared to respond in Regions Three and Four of the CT Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection Regional Map of Connecticut and looks forward to its role as an integral part of a growing statewide effort which will allow for immediate responses across the State with organizations such as Tails of Joy responding within other regions.

The recently approved members of the Tails of Joy Animal Assisted Crisis Response Teams are:

Rozelyn Beck and Cadbury
Becky Caldwell and Lily
Michelle Finnegan and Vinny
Sandy Lok – with Ginger and Nutmeg
Karen Noel-Freda and Apollo
Alexis Pariano and Oscar
Laurel Rabschutz – with Iggy and Dooley

About Tails of Joy: Tails of Joy is an Affiliate Organization of Intermountain Therapy Animals and supports individuals interested in pet therapy through monthly meetings, newsletters, training classes, and educational events. More information about Tails of Joy is available at www.tailsofjoy.org.

Organizations may request Tails of Joy Animal Assisted Crisis Response Teams (AACRT) by contacting our Crisis Response Phone Line at (860) 258-4100.

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