



caninefriends
pet therapy
Dogs helping people



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Age is no barrier

Supplied by Leanne Gibson, Secretary

Our members are always telling us how much they enjoy sharing their dog with people in need at rest homes, hospices and hospitals. So we thought we'd take the opportunity to ask one of our youngest members and our most recent recipient of a 20-year Honorary Service award, to tell you why they love being members.



Lauren Harkness, Napier

My love of dogs and community service led me to volunteer for Canine Friends Pet Therapy. My mum Leanne found the website and she quickly became involved. She has been taking my Border Collie-X Sam to visit rest homes over the last two years and is the Liaison Officer for Napier.

During the school holidays I started going with Mum and enjoyed seeing Sam using both the Obedience and Agility training I do with him (I am a junior member of Dogs New Zealand) transferring to visiting residents. He is perfect for the job, just the right height to rest his head on their knee and he loves being patted for hours.

As well as seeing how well-behaved he was at the rest homes, it was cool to see the pleasure he brought to the residents. So many people talk lovingly about their beloved dogs that have either

passed away or are being looked after by family. It makes people happy to remember their pets and to have some time with mine.

The residents I visit are also interested in the training and Agility competitions I do with Sam. They ask after the weekend how he went at competitions and are quick to praise Sam if he did well. Sam and I attend weekly Agility training at Napier Dog Training Club in Meeanee. Sam started puppy school there and we are still involved five years later.

I am one of the youngest members at the club, and everyone is super supportive and encouraging. We have so many experienced Agility members willing to share their knowledge; a lot of them are teachers which means they are good at explaining things. However, it can be stressful with so many 'chiefs' to pack the trailer when we travel away! We have a great group which travels to events, sharing the costs, and we all have a fun time.

For me, home isn't home without a dog so it's sad for many people having to give up their pets to go into a rest home. It is a privilege that I can share Sam with them and he is often asked to show off his tricks — residents are well impressed that he has recently learnt to wave goodbye. A couple of residents have passed away during our time with Canine Friends and Sam has been respectful and thanked at their funerals by the families who knew about his visits.

Our small Foxy-X Toby is now also a Canine Friend dog so we can share the visiting and residents get to enjoy either of the dogs. Sam is a natural and loves people more than dogs. The hardest part about the job is making sure the residents don't feed him too many treats (or their chocolates!) and he is also partial to nice polar fleece blankets so I need to watch he doesn't hop onto their beds before he is asked!

My service to Canine Friends Pet Therapy is also helping me complete my Gold Duke of Edinburgh award. As well as tramping, camping and sporting goals, my service to our school's enviro group and Canine Friends count towards the service section of Duke of Edinburgh awards. This section requires 52 hours of non-paid community service to be completed.

I feel very lucky to own a great dog like Sam and for me the training is just as much fun as the competing. I enjoy seeing him learn and love how hard he tries to please me. He's a super dog and it's awesome that other people, often in vulnerable situations get the pleasure from his visits.



Elizabeth Boyes, Lower Hutt

I was overwhelmed recently to receive my Honorary Member certificate for 20 years of service to Canine Friends Pet Therapy.

I joined Canine Friends in 2003 when I read an article in the *Hutt News* as I was wrapping up my potato peelings! I contacted Eileen Curry, our founder, and began a very happy time with Canine Friends.

Memories include sitting at the table at Eileen's peeling and chopping onions, mountains of them. They were for the hot dogs we were selling as a fundraising exercise. It was a freezing morning and Eileen ended up in hospital! For seven years I picked Eileen up and we went to the Lower Hutt hospital and did our visits. I went to the children's ward and Eileen to Orthopaedics.

Committee meetings were held in Eileen's lounge, and we had outdoor activities including visits to the Remutaka Forest Park and walks at Kaitoke and Upper Hutt. Friends were made for life and the dogs had a great time.

Since moving to the Bob Scott Retirement Village, I have been assessed with my Golden Retriever Tia, and we have done some visiting. Tia is loved by the residents and provides much needed therapy. When she passes through reception there is a traffic jam as people stop to pat her!

I have made many friends at Canine Friends and think it's a wonderful organisation. 🐾

AD/
FILLER

If you and your dog would like to join us, please visit: www.caninefriends.org.nz