



caninefriends
pet therapy
Dogs helping people



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In Memoriam: Eileen Curry, our Founder

Supplied by Vicky Graham, President

This Anzac Day marks the first anniversary of Eileen's passing so I would like to share some special moments and snippets of her Canine Friends journey.

In 1990, Eileen realised dogs visiting rest homes and hospitals would bring comfort to many people, especially those feeling isolated, stressed and afraid. People no longer living in their own home could still benefit from the special bond between animals and humans.

A small group of dog owners participated in trials at four facilities in Wellington and the Hutt Valley with positive results, hence the beginning. In July 1990 those involved attended the inaugural meeting and decided on a name. The minutes of that meeting show the reasoning:

"In recognition of the group's objective of pet therapy, the name denoting the befriending of patients by dog and handler and the warm relationships that would follow..."

After 10 years, Eileen said "we have filled a niche long needed in New Zealand and we are very pleased to have achieved it".

Eileen never allowed age to be a barrier and continued visiting for nearly twenty years. I have a newspaper article in which she said "volunteering is not just about altruism or wanting to give something back, it's more than that. Some days you may not want to go visiting but you know an elderly person is waiting expectantly near the door so you can't not go! It's a commitment".

Through a nationwide network of contacts and dog breeders, Eileen was constantly encouraging and supporting like-minded people to establish Canine Friends in their area.

After 32 years, our members are visiting over 400 rest homes, 19 hospitals and 12 hospices.

Eileen was awarded a Hutt City Civic Award for her service to the community. Other highlights included featuring on the TV One Good



Sorts programme. Along with Haydn Jones, she visited the Masonic Rest Home in Lower Hutt with two Golden Retrievers owned by committee member Sandy Fea. Eileen actually visited this facility 30 years ago with her own Golden.

She also joined the Right Honorable Dame Patsy Reddy on a visit to Te Hopai Rest Home & Hospital.

In 2019, committee member Beverley Jocelyn initiated Founder's Day, a celebration held during the month of May when members can get together and celebrate Eileen's vision. Eileen attended three of these events with our Wellington members. She was looking forward to catching up with them again last May but this wasn't to be.

Thank you Eileen: you have left a wonderful legacy which has touched, and will continue to touch, the hearts of so many people. 🐾



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