



caninefriends
pet therapy
Dogs helping people



Proudly supported by Dogs New Zealand

Liaison Officers, the driving force behind Canine Friends

Supplied by Leanne Gibson, Secretary

On Saturday September 2nd, we held our annual Liaison Officer Day at the Brentwood Hotel in Wellington. This is an important event as it allows our regional Liaison Officers to share ideas, discuss new initiatives and policies and, most importantly, meet each other in person. We have 33 volunteer Liaison Officers located throughout the country. Our Liaison Officers are the driving force behind Canine Friends. Without their skill and commitment our organisation would not exist.

Liaison Officers are responsible for arranging the assessment of new applicants, then assigning the new member to a facility and providing ongoing support and guidance. The Liaison Officer also maintains contact with key staff in the facilities within their region. In bigger regions, the Liaison Officer has a support team consisting of assessors, a placement officer, an event manager and member support. They are passionate about the pet therapy services they help deliver. We asked a few of them to share their favourite pet therapy story:

- *I was showing a new member and their dog around with the Diversional Therapist (DT). We visited the room of a man who had been an alcoholic and was quite morose and uncommunicative. I stood in the doorway and watched while the new member and*

her dog went in. The man's face lit up, he smiled and talked just to the dog. The DT had to leave the room with tears in her eyes as she had never seen him react to anything before. It just showed me the power of what a brief encounter with a dog can make!

- *I visit at a hospice. One of my regular patients had passed but I did not know until arrival at the meeting room. However, they were holding a quiet memorial for her and on the table was a number of pictures of her experiences at the hospice and there were my dogs in separate pictures - centre stage. It was mentioned that pet therapy visits were her most favourite time at the hospice. It just emphasised to me how much impact our dogs have on people lives.*
- *I have visited one person for the last five years. Sadly I watched her deterioration and the loss of her ability to speak. One day when she had not spoken for at least a year I put my dog on her knee. She gave a big smile and managed 'I love you'. Her speech was a surprise for everyone around. It was a magical moment.*

On behalf of our committee and members we wish to thank Dogs New Zealand for continuing to support us and seeing our organisation as part of the Dogs NZ family.



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