

President's Report AGM 2019

It is my privilege and a pleasure to present my report for the past year as any president would be.

All members of Canine Friends Pet Therapy should stand up and take a bow and pat themselves on the back as you, all are fantastic ambassadors of this wonderful organisation. To consider that Canine Friends Pet Therapy is now in its 30th year with a membership expanding daily (reaching at my last look 700 financial members) which changes daily with at least a new applicant every day and it all just started on an mere idea or a vision of Eileen Curry – a very good one at that- you can only be proud to wear the red scarf and badge out there to be seen.

Our Mission Statement of 'We share our dogs with people in need' is oh so true as we have expanded our visiting over all spheres. This year we are up 75% on rest homes visited with now visiting 317 rest homes and a 50% increase in Hospital and Hospice visiting with 14 hospitals and 9 hospices being visited. These are and always will form our core focus. It has been a real bonus thanks to Zivi funding to be able to send our quarterly newsletter to all facilities we visit (which they do appreciate). I guess it goes down to our unique ability of being able to share our much-loved family pet with others on a strictly volunteering basis. We must be the only organisation that consists and survives on a uniquely volunteer orientated status from the top to the bottom as to say and we always do this very willingly. Yes we do lose members and we do lose dogs, some have new commitments, some have ill health but those leaving to those coming through keeps us on track and our new member coordinator (Annette) very busy indeed.

But of course when you are doing so well, there are always going to be others interested in your services. I thank you all for your support in visiting over the year no matter whether on weekly, fortnightly or monthly visits, amongst the million other things you fit in your day, your ability to do this is outstanding and we of course cannot do without you as members and each and every one of you is very important to Canine Friends Pet Therapy. I would also like to thank our two Field Officers Chris and Carol who are our link between the committee and the liaison officers (with their tabled report each month). They also act as the committees arm and can deal with non-committee happenings as well and are always at hand for support. Your committee also knows more about the regions through this and our liaison officers often used to feel alone but with regular communication we are hoping we are bridging this gap. This is one of our most important positions.

I have been lucky enough over the last few years to have personally met all our liaison officers. Liaison Officers are our very valuable tool who meet our new members and settle them into facilities as well as communicating with the facilities.

When I first became a Liaison Officer I had no-one as support except of course Eileen who always had the answers for me. I can remember Eileen asking me to assess some of our applicants as there was no one in my area to do so and then just before the AGM I was asked for a report. I rang Eileen up and she said with a grin "Ann didn't you realise that was what you were doing and you have done it okay haven't you, enjoyed it haven't you? How could I say I hadn't. So she said just write it on a piece of a paper and send it to me. Wow I became an official Liaison Officer in status overnight!! That does make me old! Eileen was there at the end of the phone for a lot of our early members, building their confidence and encouraging them to do well.

I guess as things have certainly gone forward with now 47 Liaison Officers and Assessors around the country

but it still remains the same principal. If we don't have good Liaison officers it just doesn't work and we never can have enough Liaison Officers /Assessors/ Placement Officers, etc as in some areas, distance is quite large. Many of our Liaison Officers do travel considerable kms to meet new applicants so if anyone is keen to help in some way please let us know. If we didn't have our Liaison officers we would not be able to do what we are doing. We have areas where there are only a few members and then others with large memberships but each one is very vital to our organisation. In days gone by there was one person who did everything but with the growth of Canine Friends members we certainly look at splitting the workload where possible. When you consider that memberships in Auckland and Christchurch feature in the 130 member range and others well into the 50's it is no mean feat to manage. But we do it because we enjoy it.

Unfortunately over the year we have lost 2 Liaison Officers. Marie Lockie passed away on 26 November. Marie had been our Liaison Officer for Invercargill for many years and as I have said Paul Alcock a long standing Liaison officer for Upper Hutt has also passed on. Canine Friends is indebted to both these people as both were until of late both still visiting and during their time as members did our organisation proud. Many dogs have passed over the rainbow bridge and our committee appreciates their loving service to the organisation by sending them sympathy thankyou cards

Thanks to Leanne's skills we now have a policy handbook available to Liaison Officers on the website for any help you need and the Liaison Officers Reports that come through from our Field officers are also there to be read. Carolyn also writes after each meeting a resume of interesting points of the meeting which is sent out.

Her Right Honourable Dame Patsy Reddy (our Governor General) as you all know is our Patron. We finally managed to coordinate a visit to a rest home with Dame Patsy and her husband Sir David Gaiscoigne amongst their very busy schedules. Te Hopai Home and Hospital were delighted to be chosen for the visit organised by Margaret Ranum our Liaison Officer for Wellington who went along with 6 members and their dogs. Eileen with the help of Beverley also enjoyed the morning and was delighted in meeting Dame Patsy in person.

Our dog teams are also involved as Reading Buddies in libraries and schools, many invitations have come in from Universities and Colleges to attend study week with the purpose of relieving stress in their students and even Corporate Organisations have sprung on this stress relieving miracle our dogs can perform for their staff.

We have had many articles being written about us in local newspapers and magazines. We have appeared on television. Canine Friends Pet Therapy was awarded a Certificate of Achievement at the Kiwibank NZer of the Year Award for community organisations. We have received a special plaque and letter from Lotto NZ. Bay of Plenty Canine Friends were judged a finalist in their local region Trustpower Community Awards. Rick Mudgeway and his dog Oxford were nominated for a volunteer award by Capital and Coast District Health Board. Codi Taute was awarded "the PriceWaterhouseCoopers Foundation Volunteer Award" and Canine Friend Willow was voted as "NZ Top Dog With a Job Award". I keep hearing also these days that many businesses encourage their employees to do volunteer work and will give them time off to do so and we are lucky to have some in our midst.

Many of our members (generally with their dog) have enjoyed speaking engagements to different organisations which further encourages the public to understand what we do. We now have another banner and footpath signs available thanks to Zivi and the committee is preparing kits including large photos to be displayed at these and other occasions



Exciting news also was our new website finally launched live in January 2019. Thanks to the many hours that Leanne put into this and it is now such an asset to the organisation.

Members have enjoyed participating in Pet Expos, Health and Wellbeing Expos and not to miss out Dogs in Togs events.

We have been present at the Blackhawk National Dog Show this year and hope to once again participate in the next one in Blenheim. Our association with DogsNZ (formerly New Zealand Kennel Club) goes back to the nineties when Canine Friends was formed and we value their support and contribution. Carolyn continues to write her wonderful amazing articles for the Dogworld Magazine every month so thank you to DogsNZ and of course Carolyn.

Thanks to the support from DogsNZ we once again held a National Liaison Officers Day in Wellington where all Liaison Officers from around the country were flown into a rather wild and windy Wellington day or drove to Miramar Golf Links Conference Centre where they could meet each other, share and learn about others' experiences, tell many inspiring stories, ask many questions and enjoy listening to our speaker Kirsty Grant Training and Safety Manager for the SPCA. Seventy percent, who attended, rated the day very good to excellent as they did with the organisational part of it. It was certainly no mean feat to arrange flights from Auckland to Invercargill to arrive around 9am and leave nearer the end of the day. I wish to thank the subcommittee who planned the day Chris, David, Annette, Anne and myself as not an easy job to gel everything together on the day. Some of the most interesting comments from the day was in "the diverse group of committed people we have working for Canine Friends, the wealth of experience, knowledge and skills available and the oh such passion, an atmosphere of friendship and support. It also created a more human and united feeling within the organisation which is an important skill." We thank DogsNZ very much for making our Liaison Officers day happen as is an important training tool for our members. Interesting enough over the last three years of sponsorship from DogsNZ we have held 2 Liaison Officers days in Wellington and have used the money on the other year to personally visit all the South Island Liaison Officers in their areas plus also meeting several of their members. It was extremely appreciated by them as had often felt quite alone in doing their work.

As we had done in the previous year we once again sent out a member survey to all members to find out their thoughts and views on our organisation. 85% of members who filled in the survey were very satisfied or satisfied with being a member of Canine Friends which was an increase from 2017 survey. The top five suggestions were to meet members and have social get togethers, have more contact with their Liaison Officer, to have a buddy, more training and support especially for new members and to have written guidelines. Members also wanted to be more involved in schools and in events, scarf suggestions, personalised badges and more recognition in what they do.

We listened to these and in May we held our first National Founders Day Celebration throughout the whole country. Liaison Officers arranged for a get together for all members in their areas, some had a luncheon, others afternoon tea, some played games and some had cake. We also presented appreciation certificates to our members who had completed 1year, 3year, 5year and over 10 years in memberships. Eileen went to her local area Lower Hutt and joined in their celebrations and presented the certificates. Of all the Liaison Officers throughout the country the response to organise this was wonderful with only maybe 2 areas not participating. Some joined areas together but every member was invited to attend. These are to be held every year. Well done to our subcommittee of Beverley, David, Leanne and Vicky for all your organising and getting it working so successfully at such short notice as well.

Of course we have, as is normal in everyday life we had a couple of blips in the system. It came to our

attention in the light of gang wars in some areas that our red scarf was deemed gang related because of its red colour. As we value the safety of all members and their dogs as paramount we have overcome this by in these situations that a scarf, if deemed a dangerous situation then the team is to wear the badge only. Frightened teams did have to deal with gang affiliations especially in Hastings and Whanganui but they continued visiting as they wished to. I did approach the police with my concerns but thought we were over reacting and if in a situation like this just dial 111 which was disappointing. These situations have settled but will certainly most likely flair up in the future.

Another was the issue of traffic light bandanas which told people that with wearing a red scarf they were potentially dangerous to approach. Several articles were written including the Waikato Times and the National Veterinary Magazine and these bandanas are available for sale in vet clinics around the country. This was very disturbing to many members. We talked to several organisations concerning this but nothing was able to discontinue the sales of them which also now include leads. A formal statement about our perspective of this matter went to all members, other interested parties and also on our website.

I wish to thank all my committee who meet every month throughout the year either in person in Lower Hutt or by Zoom. Our Zoom connection helps us to spread our members over the country and of course gives us a better representation for your committee. Today we see how we can stretch to all parts of the country using this technology.

I wish to thank Vicky for her wonderful job in Sponsorship with Ziwi, DogsNZ, the Lotteries Commission as we very much appreciate all their support for our growing organisation. She also tackled the distribution of our Ziwi branded scarves to all members. As my Vice President she has stepped into acting Liaison Officer roles in the Waikato and Northland and getting them going with assessors when no Liaison Officer was available and of course for helping me at times when things got too busy and a person to share thoughts with.

Leanne as secretary, thank you for your help and guidance at times but for your huge time commitment you have given to Canine Friends bringing it into today's world. The number of hours spent on the new website, the database, the many emails you receive and answer or forward plus phonecalls etc is mammoth.

Carolyn has done a wonderful job getting our communication material to look professional and smart which isn't an easy task making sure the wording is correct. She as I have said before, continues her with monthly stories for the Dogworld as well.

Beverley continues to roll out a fabulous and informative newsletter which way back started as a page of writing and now comes in glossy colour including great photos of your dogs and stories. Beverley also for your organisational skills in getting our inaugural Founders Day up and running.

Annette continues to handle all the new applications with a breeze, distributing applications to their area Liaison officer and then in getting all our members kitted up and looking oh so smart and ready to visit including making the tiny scarves for our tiny dogs. I have received through facebook so many photos of new excited dogs wearing their new scarf.

A thankyou to Ziwi for producing our scarves and distribution.

Victoria as our treasurer has brought our finances into modern day time, very professional and easy to understand and process. Victoria is unfortunately not standing for re-election so I wish her successor the best and also Victoria in her new job.



Thanks also to David and Anne who have stood on subcommittees and always willing to help and to Chris as our North Island Field Officer who also found time to travel with me to Christchurch to assess a backlog of applicants over a few days and Rachel who looks after our biggest membership area.

I have been the administrator of the Facebook page which has grown to at least if not more than one notification every day instead of once a year so plus is also a very good communication tool. I have also been your clothing coordinator for several years with twice yearly orders of shirts, vest and jackets at very reasonable prices with our logo on and am very pleased to say they really look smart and professional on those who wear them.

As you all know I am not seeking re-election as president or committee so I do sincerely wish the incoming committee great success for the coming year and forward as I go back to my Joint Liaison Officer position and Events Coordinator in the Manawatu.

To our members your passion and support for Canine Friends is overwhelming and do not ever underestimate yourself in what you do as you are definitely "Making a Difference". Keep enjoying what you do with your natural flair and ability of putting smiles on people's faces.

Thank you

Ann Evans
President