

Aspects and Answers: Best Practices in Partnering with Dogs for Children on the Autism Spectrum

Thursday, November 2, 2017
Leir Retreat Center, Ridgefield, CT

WHAT

Increasingly families with children on the autism spectrum, school officials and clinicians are excited by the benefits dogs promise for neuro-atypical children. What can dogs offer and what kind of training do they need? Join us for this interactive exploration of animal-assisted interactions aimed at increasing quality of life for children on the autism spectrum. This one-day symposium explores best practices when pairing children and dogs and will explore precautions and contraindications to ensure a safe and beneficial relationship for all participants.

WHO

We invite families and professionals who have an interest incorporating dogs into the lives of autistic youth. This day is ideal for parents, clinicians, school/program administrators, community-based service providers, dog trainers and anyone who is interested in this topic.

GOALS

- To clarify terminology for dogs supporting children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- To examine the evidence base on animal-assisted interventions (AAI) specifically for improving social behaviors in children with ASD
- To recognize and reduce potential risk factors for people and dogs in programs
- To engage the audience in an interactive educational dialogue on this issue

REGISTER

Space is limited. There is no cost to attend.

Reserve your place before **October 26, 2017** by completing the Registration Form (PDF).

THANKS

This meeting is made possible with generous support provided by Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Foundation.

AGENDA

8:00-8:30 Registration and morning coffee

8:30-8:45 **Welcome/Introduction of Attendees**
Michael Kaufmann – Green Chimneys Farm and Wildlife Director

8:45-9:45 **KEYNOTE**
Suzanne Clothier
In working with animals and children, we enter a territory of sometimes voiceless, sometimes inarticulate beings that need our help, guidance and protection. Our obligation to be humane while asking an animal to help us help a child requires that we learn to ask careful questions and understand the answers that come back to us. We need finely grained tools that help us see and understand the individual animal first as a sovereign being, and then within the specific dynamics of a relationship or interaction, and within specific settings. My assessment tools, RAT™ (Relationship Assessment Tool), and FAT™ (Functional Assessment Tracking), can provide a structured approach that reflects the dog's experience as well as providing a way to track changes across time or settings. Detailed, nuanced understanding of each dog as an individual helps us make the most humane choices for that animal. RAT™ and FAT™ guides the professional's observations in a comprehensive way that also facilitates clear communication between all involved with that dog.

9:45-10:00 Break

10:00-10:45 **Service Dog or Therapy Dog: Is that the right Question? A review of current legal definitions, issues of access and considerations for people and dogs in public spaces – Jane Kopelman**
A mixed breed puppy gets on an airplane with a woman, a man with a dog wearing an official looking vest visits a hospital ward; a dog wearing a harness opens an electronic door for a child in a wheelchair - service dogs or therapy dogs? Who's who? Increasingly public access for dogs is coming under scrutiny in the workplace, in the travel industry and in courts. Individuals seeking support dogs for various reasons are unsure of credentialing bodies, their rights and responsibilities. Access limitations are being considered, questions are being asked by service providers and municipalities; the public is confused. For professionals working with dogs it is especially important to stay current with terminology, emerging legal definitions and canine competencies. This session will define the roles of service dogs and therapy dogs, explains current certification and training standards and will provide an overview of public and private access issues for people and dogs.

10:45-11:30 **The Process of Adopting an Autism Service Dog – Caroline Sandler**
The process for screening families for an autism service dog for their child is extensive. There are many variables to consider both on the human side and the canine side. Gathering as much information as possible via a written application is a necessary first step before a face-to-face meeting with the family can occur. We will discuss what a typical application should include, and what information should be gathered from professionals as well as from the families themselves. The next step involves an extensive home interview to evaluate the role of all family members, the expectations of each, the living environment, the child's abilities, and the likelihood of a successful placement. We will discuss how to critically evaluate each of these to try to maximize the success of any match, as well as the safety of the child and the dog. Particular attention will be paid to identifying red flags that may arise in the course of the application and interview process that would lead to denying service dog placement.

11:30-12:30 Lunch

- 12:30-1:15 **The Monitoring and Treatment of Inappropriate Interactions – Denise Luft, LMHC**
 The positive impact of AAI for children with ASD is well known in the field. A lesser discussed area is the potential for intentional harm. Safety and welfare for the animals in these interactions needs more consideration. The diagnostic criteria for ASD can be potential risk factors for harm. This will be further explained as well as practices for prevention and intervention.
- 1:15-2:00 **The Influences of Dogs on Social Interactions: Current Trends in Research and Effective Interventions – Joanna Becker, PhD**
 While people have long-since noticed the ability of animals to enhance social interactions, clinicians are just beginning to understand how and why human-animal interactions promote social behaviors. With that, clinicians are also beginning to be able to incorporate animals into social skills training in a way that increases the effectiveness of the intervention. This talk will offer a brief overview of the most current research on AAIs, specifically for improving social behaviors in children with ASD. The talk will then provide clinicians with practical strategies for implementing animal-assisted social skills interventions, including ideas for targeting specific behaviors and measuring outcomes.
- 2:00-2:15 Break
- 2:15-2:45 **Closing Remarks/Questions/Answers**

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

JOANNA L. BECKER, PhD is a research associate at the Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys and a school psychologist in the Green Chimneys Residential Treatment Center. Dr. Becker recently published a grant-funded study on the use of AAIs to improve social skills in children with autism. She is a registered PATH riding instructor, and in clinical practice, she uses AAIs with horses and dogs to increase behavioral control, self-regulation and communication in children with emotional disorders. She also holds a master in teaching and she works with school personnel to improve the academic and behavioral functioning of children with special needs in the classroom.

SUZANNE CLOTHIER has been working with animals professionally since 1977. The creator of Relationship Centered Training™, she has a deep background of experience that includes training, behavior, agility, puppy testing, breeding, Search and Rescue. The author of numerous publications, Suzanne's book **Bones Would Rain from the Sky: Deepening Our Relationships With Dogs** has received wide spread praise, including appearing 2x on The Wall Street Journal's list of Top Dog Books. She teaches throughout the US and internationally for groups as varied as ADI-North America, Wolf Park, FEMA, and University of Minnesota's Nature Based Therapeutics "SPEAK!" conference. Her work has been presented in multiple international conferences, including most recently at the 2017 IWDBA conference. Her influence on trainers & various programs is mostly behind the scenes, with the application of her innovative tools: CARAT™ (Clothier Animal Response Assessment Tool), Clothier Puppy Test, Clothier Adult Test, RAT™ (Relationship Assessment Tool), and FAT™ (Functional Assessment Tracking). Thousands of puppies have been reared using her Enriched Puppy Protocol™ since 2007. Her work as a consultant has resulted in significant improvements and restructuring for Guiding Eyes for the Blind, Southeastern Guide Dogs, Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, Assistance Dogs of the West, and Guide Dogs of America. She is passionate about the dog/human relationship, the complexities of connection and communication, and our moral obligation to be humane and ethical in working with animals to help people. The tools that she has developed are aimed squarely at providing finely grained assessments that respect and reflect the individual animal, so that specific information can guide our decisions and actions with and for the animals. She lives on a working farm in upstate New York with husband John Rice, and their considerable animal family.

MICHAEL KAUFMANN is the Farm & Wildlife Director at Green Chimneys and the Director of The Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys, dedicated to research on the human connection to animals and the natural world. He served the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the American Humane Association (AHA) as a key program director in animal-assisted activities/therapy, humane education and animal welfare. He has contributed to defining publications in the field and has served on numerous national boards and

committees. He has lectured internationally on humane education, animal-assisted activities, as well as how the link between child abuse and animal cruelty offers an opportunity for collaboration between various helping professions.

JANE KOPELMAN is a dog trainer and owner of Animals for Adoption. Jane was on the behavior staff at the ASPCA in New York City for five years working on the behavior helpline as well as running volunteer training workshops and classes for the general public. Appointed by the City of New York she has served on the board of ACC (Animal Care and Control) in New York City. She also served on the Board of Directors of Angel on a Leash. She has an extensive background in evaluating and training dogs. For almost twenty years, Jane has been the owner of All About Dogs, a dog training business in New York. She does private training and behavior counseling. She is a certified therapy dog team evaluator for Pet Partners (formerly Delta Society) and teaches therapy dog classes in New York City as well as in upstate New York. She is also an AKC Canine Good Citizen evaluator. She serves as a consultant for Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center's therapy dog program. She has evaluated and trained hundreds of therapy dog teams. Jane has been doing pet therapy with her own dogs for more than twenty years. Two years ago, Jane started a program at Green Chimneys that brings shelter dogs and special needs children together. Jane has lectured nationally on sheltering and community outreach. She is the national director of the Training Wheels® shelter outreach program which was featured on ESPN's Don't Be like Mike video. She has also appeared on "It's Me or the Dog" with Victoria Stillwell.

DENISE LUFT, LMHC is a certified member of the National Counseling Association and a licensed Mental Health Counselor in New York. Ms. Luft has worked with children and families at Green Chimneys Residential Treatment Center for over 16 years. She currently provides child and family therapy and supervises clinicians in the residential program. Ms. Luft is co-chairing a task force committed to allowing children to have safe and appropriate interactions with animals. She has coauthored an Animal Interaction Assessment, which is available through the Green Chimneys website.

CAROLINE SANDLER is the founding director of an autism service dog program that placed 90 dogs with families between 2008 and 2017. In 2017, she founded BluePath Service Dogs, an organization training dogs for children with autism, where she is now the Vice President of Training. She began her career as a guide dog instructor in 1992, and was promoted to Training Supervisor in 2001, where she provided leadership and guidance to junior staff and apprentice instructors. Caroline has presented at professional conferences and industry events throughout the country. She has also been invited to lecture about the impact of autism service dogs at Yale University, Cornell University, University of Pennsylvania, and Rochester Institute of Technology.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

Green Chimneys and The Sam and Myra Ross Institute offer a meaningful introduction to the theoretical and practical principles of incorporating animals, plants and the natural world in the re-education, socialization and treatment of deeply impacted children who have experienced crisis and a lack of success in their lives. The Institute serves to deepen the legacy, vision and impact of Green Chimneys' animal and nature-based programs by demonstrating how purposeful contact with animals and the outdoors can enhance formal therapies and traditional education, and sharing knowledge to bring continued growth and leadership to the field. [Learn more by visiting www.greenchimneys.org/theinstitute.](http://www.greenchimneys.org/theinstitute)

GETTING TO LEIR

Leir Retreat Center · 220 Branchville Road · Ridgefield, CT 06877 · (203) 438-6074

From I-84E

1. Head **southeast** on **I-84 E** entering Connecticut
2. Take exit **3** to merge onto **US-7 S** toward **Norwalk**
3. Turn right onto **CT-35 S/Danbury Rd**
4. Turn left onto **Main St**
5. Turn left onto **Branchville Rd**
6. Turn left onto **CT – 102 E/Branchville Rd**
Destination will be on right.