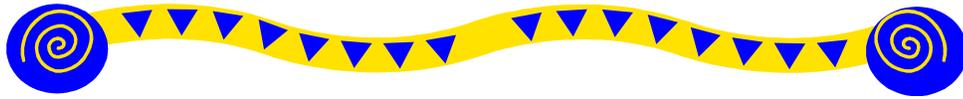




PET PARTNER'S NEWS LETTER



Humane Society of Southern Arizona

June 2007

Many of you will remember Kris and Tyler who talked to us during your class and assisted during the Mock Visit class. It is with great sadness to report that Tyler is no longer with us. Tyler, although young in years and old in soul, passed away due to aggressive cancer. Kris and Tyler have been instrumental in the program and our hearts and prayers go out to both. This news letter is a tribute to this team and the special bond they held with each other and many children and patients and people in and around Tucson.



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From an Unwanted Dog to Tucson's Dog

The second time my neighbor met Tyler, she said, "It's a good thing you got rid of that awful dog because this one is awesome!" She didn't realize she was referring to the same dog.

Tyler had just turned three when I became her fourth home. She had been living with 13 dogs and cats and was running along Irvington near Kolb every day with her mate and their puppy. The lock on their backyard gate was broken. A neighbor kept threatening to shoot the dogs, so the owner put an ad in the paper to sell the three Golden Retrievers. Having just lost my rescued 13-year-old Golden, I was thrilled to find another one who needed a home.

Unfortunately, we got off to a very rocky start. Tyler had separation anxiety and did thousands of dollars of damage to my home and my possessions within the first week. I was totally unprepared for this (and had never really believed there was such a thing or understood why people put their dogs on Prozac). I consulted with our vet, behaviorists, researchers at the U, and trainers and found a school for her right away. In addition, we spent as much time together as possible. She accompanied me to my friends' homes, to board meetings, the hardware store – wherever dogs were allowed. One of my friends, however, provided the most effective remedy. He had just lost his job under despicable circumstances and needed a buddy, so he offered to babysit Tyler while I was at work. So, for three-and-a-half months, she was dropped off at his house every morning and picked up after work every night. Tyler finally figured things out – thank goodness!



My neighbors had welcomed Tyler into their homes and had visited with her at mine. Since many of them were elderly and were starting to have medical problems, I wanted to be sure we had access to rehab facilities, etc. because I realized how important contact with Tyler was for them and how much she enjoyed the attention. One of my friends, who volunteers at the Humane Society, told me that she had signed her Golden up for the Pet VIP program and suggested we do the same. It was our ticket!

Tyler breezed through the program and began visiting at a nearby nursing home every week. She just seemed to know how to sidle up to a wheelchair and sit calmly. It was amazing how she was able to even reach folks with Alzheimers and engage the residents in stories, especially about their pets. So many would say that she looked just like their dog....except theirs was a Chihuahua or a Poodle or a mix!?!

Within a few a months of being certified, my neighbors' health declined. Tyler visited at hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, rehab centers, and even a psych ward. Some days, we visited at several facilities because it meant so much not only to my neighbors and their families, but to the folks we met in the hallways, or in the next room. The staff always made a fuss over Tyler and she seemed to be a real stress reliever wherever she went. Although it seemed a bit unusual, Tyler was even invited to and attended memorial services.

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Tyler literally made thousands of new friends. She kept busy with community events like Dine Out for Safety, the Boys and Girls Club fairs, Make a Difference Day, the United Way Day of Caring, Race for the Cure, and her favorite, Drexel Preschool, where the children would sing and read to her. Tyler became friends with Rural Metro and Northwest Fire personnel while attending CERT training and was buddies with the Sheriff's Deputies in our Neighborhood Watch. She chaperoned sorority parties for five years and 'campaigned' for political candidates. Mayor Walkup even has a picture of Tyler in his home.

Through the Humane Society, Tyler had SO many opportunities. She was asked to visit at school events, educational sessions with the mentally challenged, and a blessing of the animals. She loved representing the Humane Society at the Broadway productions of Annie, Dr. Doolittle, and The Lion King.

Last summer, Tyler appeared in the Arizona Daily Star with two of her best friends at Devon Gables whom we met through the Pet VIP program. For two-and-a-half years, we visited there and it was extremely difficult to tell them that this amazing eight-year-old dog wasn't going to be around much longer. Her vet had found a teensy bump on the elbow of her front left leg in December. It wasn't until January that I could even find it. By February, it had changed and was about the size of a tiny pea. Our vet recommended that we take care of it right away, so Tyler had surgery in March. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to remove it all because the source of the growth was within the joint.

The pathology report concluded that it was histiocytic sarcoma, a very unpredictable, aggressive cancer common in flat-coated retrievers that occurs when the dogs are about eight. There is no cure. Tyler was evaluated by a wonderful oncologist who consulted with our vet. They told me the options were amputation, radiation and chemo, although none of these would buy us much time. In addition to this, Tyler had hip dysplasia and arthritis in her back legs, so she suddenly

became Barbaro – a one-legged animal. While I was trying to get my head on straight, Tyler was on two different pain killers. Our caring vet had given Tyler a ten-day supply, and I interpreted that as his way of telling me not to wait.



The Humane Society and the Pet VIP staff were extremely supportive! I suspect they have all 'been there' with this type of sadness, and they overwhelmed me with their kindness and understanding. One of them put me in touch with a friend of hers in Chicago who had just lost her Golden to this same cancer. Talking with this 'stranger' and listening to her experience and advice was so powerful and helped me realize that my active, happy pooch was critically ill and suffering.

I did ask our vet for additional painkillers so that Tyler's final visit to his office could be on a weekend, but in that short time, there was already a lumpy mass on the elbow where she had the surgery.

So, before the cancer ate through her joint and it shattered, we said our goodbyes.

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That Saturday in May, we stopped at the post office to mail our weekly packages to some of Tyler's 'buddies' in Iraq. (Her picture is everywhere!) The fellows at the counter asked how she was and I told them we were on our way to the vet. The one postal worker replied, "Oh good" but I shook my head and told him that wasn't the case. Both of the guys came from behind the counter and gave Tyler hugs and treats.

The last thing I wanted to do was upset any of the folks we visit at the various facilities. They have so many challenges and don't need sadness in their lives. Tyler made her last visits a day-and-a-half before she died and no one suspected she was ill. Our dear friends at Devon Gables had to be told, because we are so close. Hearing the news hurt them and their families deeply.

Because every day since March had been an emotional rollercoaster (our vet's words), I applied for another rescue Golden. Bailey arrived the day after I lost Tyler, sight unseen. He is 19-months-old and is a 67-pound exuberant puppy who is into everything. Bailey was abused, but is SO affectionate and has a heart of gold. As soon as he finishes training at the Humane Society and matures a bit, we'll work on our certification for the Pet VIP program. Bailey has already visited the post office, the bank, and stores, and was invited to connect with our friends at Devon Gables. The smiles he has put on everyone's faces are priceless. He has such a fantastic spirit and has helped me and my friends through a heartbreaking time. Bailey is going to be everyone's best buddy very soon!

Thank you HSSA and Pet VIP! You're the best!



Tyler

Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened. ~Theodor Seuss Geisel

PET PARTNER'S NEWS LETTER



Rainbow Bridge

Just this side of Heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge. When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water and sunshine and our friends are warm and comfortable.

All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor; those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by. The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing: they each miss someone very special, someone who was left behind.

They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent; his eager body begins to quiver. Suddenly, he breaks from the group, flying over the green grass, faster and faster. You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into those trusting eyes, so long gone from your life, but never absent from your heart. Then you cross the Rainbow Bridge together...

"Author Unknown"

The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be the beginning.

~Ivy Baker Priest



We all are looking forward in sharing the joys that Bailey will bring. New beginnings and new experiences and old friends to enjoy. Thank you, Kris and Tyler, for sharing . We all will be with you along your new path.

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There is a new class of partners starting on June 24th. Orientation will start at 4pm and classes will be weekly as usual. We welcome anyone to the meetings that would like to share their stories and words of wisdom. Personal experiences always go farther than “lectures”. It will be a good way to introduce yourselves to the possible teams and for them to know someone to mentor them if needed.

I have been told that the PET VIP teams have contributed approximately 286 hours is a wonderful we hope to increase future. Thank you all for



in this past year. This accomplishment and those hours in the all that you do.



Please submit any News Letter information that you would like to share or have shared. If anyone out there would be interested in taking on the duties of News Letter editor, we would greatly appreciate your help!!