

Missing 'Business as Usual'

Written by Mindy Lucas, Staff Writer
Tuesday, 27 October 2020 14:38



Therapy dogs have been sidelined by the pandemic. And just like humans, they miss their jobs!

By Mindy Lucas

Tosh misses her work. So do Jasper and Maggie.

In fact, some days they lie about moping, either in their favorite chair or curled up with a warm blanket. Perhaps they're thinking about the good old days when they had an office to go to and someone friendly to lick.

Yes, you read that right, and we're talking about therapy dogs. What did you think we were talking about?

As it turns out humans aren't the only ones that have been sidelined by the pandemic.

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As Russ and Sandy Dimke with the Beaufort Chapter of Therapy Dogs International (TDI) said recently, these amazing animals have been affected too, and they miss their work.

"We miss it too," said Russ Dimke, who serves as the organization's director.



With more than 30 members in their chapter, TDI handlers and their dogs are used to visiting assisted living centers, rehab facilities, hospitals and other healthcare facilities around the Lowcountry.

They also offer such programs as Tail Waggin' Tutor, an innovative reading program in elementary schools, and provide stress relief to students at USC Beaufort and Technical College of the Lowcountry during midterms and final exams.

But since March, those visits and programs have dried up.

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"Within a week it all changed," he said, recounting what it was like when Covid-19 began to spread across the country, shutting down hospitals and other healthcare facilities to visitors.

And it isn't just the dogs that miss those visits. The residents in these living facilities miss them as well.

"Many had dogs earlier in their lives," said Russ Dimke. "And so if they had a Golden Retriever at one time, they want to pet the Golden Retriever in the group because it reminds them of their dog."

TDI also works with Alzheimer's and dementia patients.

For these patients, sometimes all it takes is the feel of dog fur to elicit a good feeling or memory. It's a tactile experience, but a powerful one, explain the Dimkes.

While the dogs love the attention as well, like any working dog they can be very serious about their work and know how to work a room.

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Why is this important?



On the origin of the virus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says, "We are not sure where the virus came from."

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to think about the future. It's a time when we're looking forward to a time when we can go back to work, to school, to the gym, to the office, to the store, to the park, to the beach, to the mountains, to the city, to the country, to the world. We're looking forward to a time when we can go back to work, to school, to the gym, to the office, to the store, to the park, to the beach, to the mountains, to the city, to the country, to the world.