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This five part special edition of the Creature Comfort newsletter will focus on The Living Legacy Gala, along with the history behind Creature Comfort. In celebration of our co-founders Joan Baer and Annie Murphy, you will get an inside look into how Creature Comfort was started! You will also meet members of our founding board and you will get a chance to meet some of our sponsors, who are helping to make The Living Legacy Gala a huge success! We hope you enjoy these special walks down legacy lane and become inspired to help us at this year's gala. We will continue to achieve our mission of enhancing people's lives through therapeutic visits with caring volunteers and their pets!

*Mary Beth Cooney*

Mary Beth Cooney  
Executive Director

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**Oct.  
24  
2024**

# THE LIVING LEGACY GALA

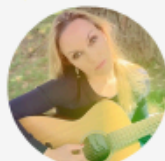
6:00-10:00 pm  
Madison Hotel,  
Morristown, NJ

Event Co-Host



Terrie Carr  
WDHA Program Director

Live Music



Rachel Schaffer

**Live music**  
**Meet and greet with**  
**therapy animals**  
**Raffle**  
**Wine pull**  
**50/50**  
**Inspiring stories and**  
**presentations**  
**Special guest**  
**appearance**

## Meet the Board



### Get to know our Board Member!

Joe Caruso  
Board Chair

I have had the honor of serving CCPT as Board Chair since our founding in 2011. I was nominated to my current role by our Co-Founders, Annie Murphy and Joan Baer and was a Founding Member of CCPT when we agreed to incorporate CCPT into a non-profit. I informed the Board that I will be retiring as Chairman of CCPT at the end of this year. It is time for a new generation of leaders to help guide CCPT to the next level of possibilities.

I am also a volunteer with our current dog, Bear and was previously certified with our last dog, Willy. So, you could say that I have been a volunteer with CCPT since the beginning.

My primary responsibilities as Board Chair are serving as the immediate supervisor of CCPT's Executive Director, who is responsible for the day-to-day running of our organization, and to lead the board by engaging individual board members to work as a unit. This involves facilitating board meetings, showing strong leadership, making sure we are executing on our strategy and objectives, and ensuring that we have the financial strength to undertake what we agree is in the best interest of CCPT and its clients, all while following best governance practices.

### What inspired you to become part of CCPT?

I became involved with another pet therapy organization through my late wife, Judy. She trained our Golden Retriever, Willy, to become a therapy dog because she firmly believed in the good work that dogs can do in advancing the human-animal bond. When she passed away, the organization offered to train my daughter and me as handlers for Willy. We jumped at the chance as a way to honor her memory. So, you might say I was the first beneficiary of my own initial foray into pet therapy.

I immediately fell in love with the work and found that I often enjoyed it more than my "day job." I got to know Annie and Joan well when they both worked for a prior organization. Over time and after many discussions, we began to discuss a "better way" to do pet therapy. When Annie and Joan left their prior organization, they invited a small number of us to discuss the possibility of forming a new kind of pet therapy organization. I was hooked! As a senior corporate executive and experienced board member in other businesses, I had the background to help draft the initial business plan and to use my knowledge, background, experience, contacts and other resources to help launch CCPT.

Within a very short period of time after that first meeting CCPT was born!

### What is a success story or memorable experience you have?

Anyone who does or is the beneficiary of pet therapy has so many success stories and memorable experiences. It's hard to focus on just one. Whether it's a child in a special needs school who won't speak to others but will talk to our dogs. Or watching the face of a hospital patient light up when our dogs enter their room. Or maybe it's watching the faces of people receiving outpatient chemotherapy infusions light up when our dogs visit dutifully from chair to chair giving patients a few minutes of respite from their treatment. Or it could be watching the improvement in reading skills over a school year as children get to read out loud to our therapy animals week after week.

One of my personally memorable experiences was being invited to bring Willy, who had recently had surgery for cancer, on a special visit to a local Gilda's Club to participate with the author of a children's book entitled, Dogs Get Cancer Too in a session with the children of the patients who were residents there. I have often said that I got as much out of pet therapy as the people Willy and now Bear, visit. This was definitely one of those times.

As a Board member it gives me great satisfaction to hear and to celebrate all CCPT's success stories! As I recently told the Board when announcing my retirement, being invited to become a Founding Member of CCPT and serving on the Board as its Chair since the creation of this organization has truly been one of the proudest and most fulfilling accomplishments of my personal life and my professional career.



## How is CCPT different than other pet therapy organizations?

When we started CCPT, we knew that there was a different and better way to do pet therapy from the way it had traditionally been done. We thought if we could do it differently and better than what other organizations were doing at the time that we would have an opportunity to create a "new standard" for pet therapy. We built many of those ideas into the CCPT that we know today and believe they are our competitive advantage. It didn't hurt that our timing was also prescient and pet therapy was gaining in popularity.

Joan and Annie and the rest of our initial group wanted our organization to operate more like a "club" than a loose collection of volunteers. If we were going to operate the way we envisioned, we thought it was important to have regular meetings so volunteers could get to know each other as well as the other animals they would work with. We thought we could also feature ongoing education for those interested so we introduced educational sessions on different topics with different speakers at our P.E.T.S. meetings (Programs to Educate, Train and Share). We partnered with local hospitals, universities and healthcare facilities to get some empirical evidence about the effect of pet therapy on both our teams as well as our clients. It wasn't long before we were noticed and invited to participate along with some much larger national organizations with the University of Pennsylvania Ryan Veterinary Hospital in surveys to devise best practices for pet therapy.

The result of these interactions led to us carrying the levels of insurance we have to protect our volunteers, to our bi-annual recertification policy and other things that we take as givens today.

We also understood that having reliable scheduling of visits was critical to signing up facilities to a newcomer organization. Having worked with volunteers, Joan and Annie understood that "no shows" were a problem. It's one of the many reasons that we need to turn down many facilities. We understand that in order to plan, facilities need to be able to reliably expect visits when we say we will be there. We ALWAYS need more volunteers and more certified teams to meet the demand! It's our biggest challenge.

At the end of the day we hoped to create an organization that people want to belong to, to actively participate in and to remain with for the long term, even through multiple generations of animals.

Most importantly, we also hoped that we created an organization of which people would be proud and to be able to believe that they belong to a pet therapy organization that is the Gold Standard for the work we do. If we continue to set those high standards for ourselves, we have all helped create a legacy of which we can be proud.

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HAVING BEEN AN "ANIMAL PERSON" ALL OF MY LIFE, I HAVE PERSONALLY WITNESSED AND EXPERIENCED THE POWER OF THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND. THE BENEFITS OF THAT BOND ARE TO SHARE THE NATURAL INSTINCT OF OUR CERTIFIED THERAPY ANIMALS TO MAKE THAT INDESCRIBABLE CONNECTION WITH OTHERS. I'VE OFTEN SAID THAT MY DOGS DO ALL THE HARD WORK. MY JOB WAS JUST TO TRANSPORT THEM TO THEIR JOB AND TO HOLD THEIR LEASH WHEN THEY GET THERE. EACH OF THEM KNEW EXACTLY WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE IN EVERY SITUATION. TO LET A NON-JUDGMENTAL ANIMAL DO WHAT COMES NATURALLY WHEN THEY ARE ABLE TO INTERACT WITH OTHERS BENEFITS BOTH THE ANIMAL AND OUR CLIENTS. ANIMALS LOVE TO HAVE A JOB AND FORTUNATELY FOR US, HUMANS OFTEN CAN'T RESIST THE ATTENTION THAT OUR THERAPY ANIMALS GIVE THEM.

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**-JOE CARUSO ON THE BIGGEST  
BENEFITS OF PET THERAPY**

## *A Walk Down Legacy Lane*

Did you know that the idea for Creature Comfort was hatched while Joan and Annie sat around Joan's dining room table brainstorming about a pet therapy organization that would be tailored to work with the volunteers? They began to create an organization that would be more like a club with regular gatherings for the volunteer teams of people and their pets to get to know one another, where certification standards would ensure premium pet therapy was being practiced, and the facility visits would be reliably scheduled on a calendar. They created this flourishing organization that we know today, in which volunteers and facilities reap the benefits of a well-run, centralized approach to providing pet therapy for those in need.



**Annie Murphy at 2012  
First Volunteer Picnic**



**Joan Baer & Easton, Michelle Ostrander & Sawyer, Shari Skoloff & Millie, Joe Caruso & Willy, Annie Murphy & Rosie, Maureen "Mo" McEntee & Jenna, Steven Herz & Koko**



**Joan Baer at 2012  
First Volunteer Picnic**

## *Quotes From Our Teams*

In the beginning...

After working in the volunteer office for a local animal welfare center, Co-Founders Annie Murphy and Joan Baer saw the need for a stand-alone pet therapy program. Hence, their journey in creating Creature Comfort Pet Therapy began. A group of teams were "invited" along on this new venture to get it started. CCPT was incorporated in November 2011. After the new year, January 2012, I with my angels, were reevaluated by Annie and Joan in Joan's house as teams for CCPT. In March, Summer and I did our first visit with Annie and Rosie at Boonton Library, representing CCPT. We began with a handful of visits, which grew exponentially, and continued to grow. Team members came with ideas and talents, which were welcomed, allowing CCPT to grow into an even stronger TEAM of volunteers. I respectfully referred to Annie and Joan as Oscar and Felix! They were so very different, yet, complimented each other so very much. Their magic laid the foundation, paving the way for Creature Comfort Pet Therapy to succeed and grow into the service organization as we know it today.

**Maureen McEntee**

**2013 Judy Caruso Pet Therapy Memorial Award Volunteer/Team of the Year**



**Maureen McEntee (2013 Judy Caruso Pet Therapy Memorial Award as Volunteer/Team of the Year) Jenna and Summer, Steven Herz, Joan Baer, and Annie Murphy**



**Summer (angel), Jenna (angel), and current partners  
Page & Story**



**2012 Boonton Library  
visit**



**Joan Baer, Maureen McEntee,  
and Annie Murphy**



**May 2013 MMC visit  
Joan Baer & Konar and  
Janet Kaefer & Ella**



About Annie and Joan....

One was a character, a "free spirit" ... the other, a model of perfection and style. One loved ballet and opera ... the other's anthem became "Who Let the Dogs Out?" But when asked to be the faces of the newly created nonprofit Creature Comfort Pet Therapy, they were like two peas in a pod. Their vision, creativity and drive laid the foundation for what is now the gold standard in pet therapy in New Jersey. They both left us far, far too soon. Their impressive legacy will endure for years to come.

Steven Herz,  
2012 Judy Caruso Pet Therapy Memorial Award Volunteer/Team of the Year



Steven Herz and Koko. Koko was a twice nationally honored working therapy dog. AKC's original THD (therapy dog) 2011 title, AKC's 2014 Therapy Dog Distinguished (THDD) in 2014.



Annie Murphy and Steven Herz at the 2012 First Volunteer Picnic



Annie Murphy, Steve Herz, and Joan Baer



Joe Caruso, Joan Baer, Annie Murphy, and Steven Herz at the 2013 Champagne Brunch



Joan Baer and Annie Murphy 2013 Champagne Brunch

## Meet Our Sponsors

Thank you to our amazing sponsors! Be sure to visit their websites to learn more about them: [Cornerstone Day School](#), [3DogsBytes](#), and [Stephanie Blum Photography](#).

The Living Legacy Gala

**2 Paw Sponsor**

**STEPHANIE BLUM**  
PHOTOGRAPHY

The Living Legacy Gala

**3 Paw Sponsor**

 **CORNERSTONE**  
DAY SCHOOL

The Living Legacy Gala

**3 Paw Sponsor**

  
**3 DOGSBYTE.**

# Become A Sponsor

Sponsoring The Living Legacy Gala for Creature Comfort Pet Therapy, helps to ensure that our nonprofit organization can continue to provide pet therapy to those in need. These donations will help us to increase our volunteer teams (pets and handlers), help provide pet therapy visits, and allow Creature Comfort to continue to give back to the community. With over 2,000 followers, your name will be tied to a worthy cause, which contributes greatly to many different communities in New Jersey.

## Support Creature Comfort and advertise for your business!

### Gold Sponsor

**\$7,500**

- 10 Gala tickets
- Premium placement of logo on event signage, in newsletters (2000+), and on website
- Inclusion in social media posts (Instagram 2,800+ and Facebook 2,000+)
- 4 pet therapy visits to your company
- Table sponsored by your company with signage
- Company logo displayed on the inside of the program
- Company mentioned at event



### 4 Paw Sponsor

**\$5,000**

- 10 Gala tickets
- Preferred placement of logo on event signage, in newsletters (2000+), and on website
- Inclusion in social media posts (Instagram 2,800+ and Facebook 2,000+)
- 3 pet therapy visits to your company
- Table sponsored by your company with signage
- Recognition in Gala program



### 3 Paw Sponsor

**\$2,500**

- 8 Gala tickets
- Prominent placement of logo on event signage, in newsletters (2000+), and on website
- Inclusion in social media posts (Instagram 2,800+ and Facebook 2,000+)
- 2 pet therapy visits to your company
- Table sponsored by your company with signage
- Recognition in Gala program



### 2 Paw Sponsor

**\$1,500**

- 4 Gala tickets
- Name/logo listed in Gala program
- Inclusion in social media and newsletter
- 1 pet therapy visit to your company
- Name displayed on sponsorship materials and website



### 1 Paw Sponsor

**\$600**

- 2 Gala tickets
- Name/logo listed in Gala program
- Inclusion in social media posts
- Sponsorship of 10 pet therapy visits

Scan here for Gala Website



## Legacy Donors

Named after the therapy dogs of Joan and Annie.

A great way to continue the legacy and support Creature Comfort by subsidizing visits.

### Sweet P Donor

**\$300**

12 pet therapy visits

### Konar Donor

**\$200**

8 pet therapy visits

### Rosie Donor

**\$100**

4 pet therapy visits

Click below to sign up to become a sponsor

Become a Sponsor

## Wine Pull & Raffle Items Needed



## *Donate wine to the wine pull!*

Creature Comfort is looking for donations of wine for The Living Legacy Gala wine pull!

What is a wine pull?  
At the event you will be able to purchase a ticket for a chance to win a bottle of wine valued at \$20 and up.

Wine donations must be valued at \$20 and up.

Please contact  
cluciano@ccpettherapy.org for more information!

## **We are looking for donations!**

Do you own or work for an awesome business?

Have a friend or family member that works for a great store?

We need donations for our raffle!

All donations are tax deductible and will help CCPT!

Email [cluciano@ccpettherapy.org](mailto:cluciano@ccpettherapy.org)



Scan here to donate



### **Our Contact Information**

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Madison, NJ 07940  
973.285.9083  
<http://www.ccpettherapy.org>

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**creature**  
**comfort**  
PET THERAPY  
cold noses warming hearts