

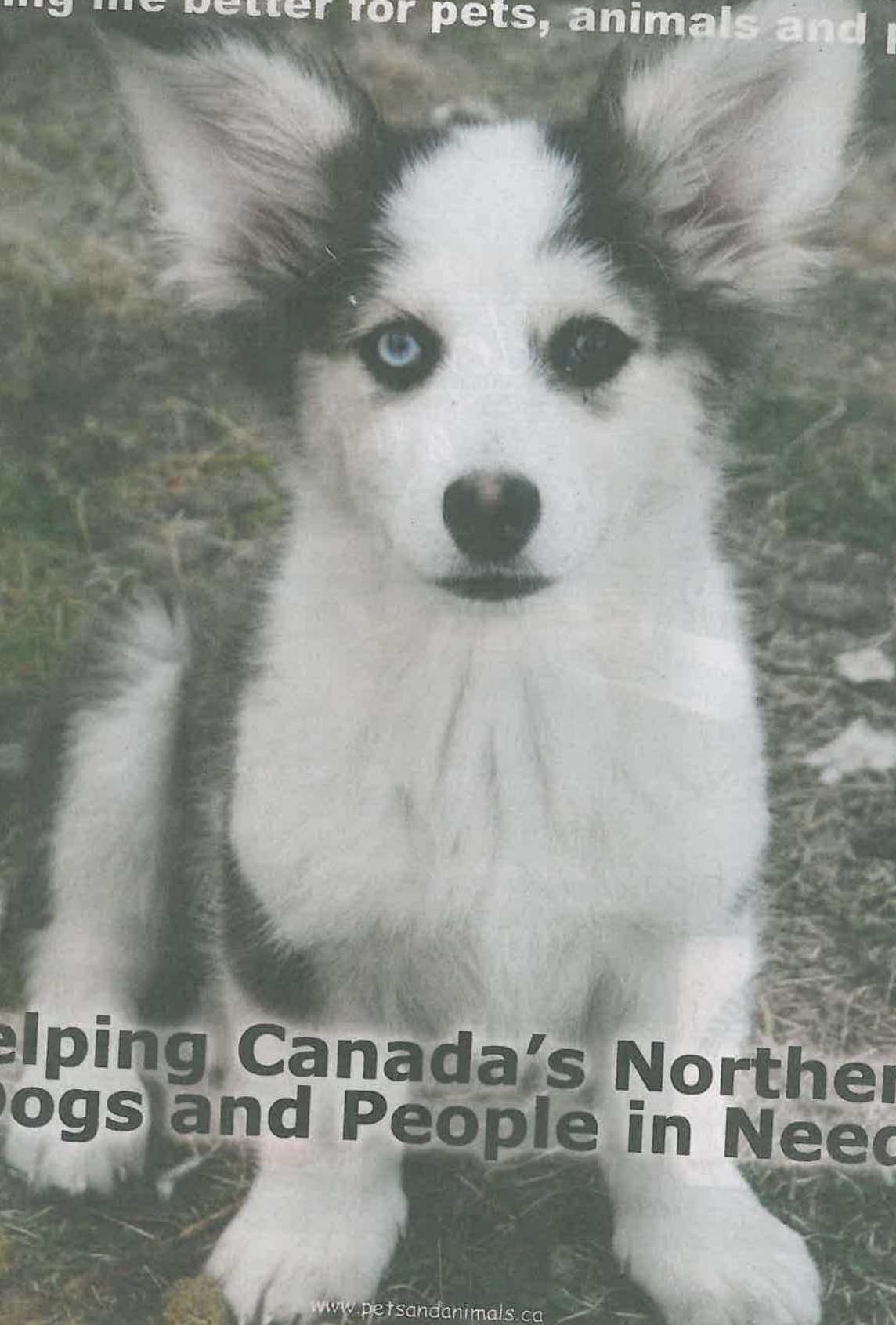
DOGS CATS HORSES SMALL PETS FARM & WILD ANIMALS

**CANADIAN**

**ALWAYS FREE!**

# Pets & Animals

Making life better for pets, animals and people.™



**Helping Canada's Northern  
Dogs and People in Need**

ME 7 ISSUE 8

[www.petsandanimals.ca](http://www.petsandanimals.ca)

# Commentary from Volunteers with Yellowknife's St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program



*Volunteer Lynn Carter describes some of her favourite memories working with therapy dogs and the elderly...*

"Our group started in February of 2006 and I think it was just a couple months after that when we began visiting Aven Manor. We go once a week in the evenings and then do a once a month daytime visit. Visits can last anywhere from 20 minutes to more than an hour.

Some of my favourite memories are



those that come from doing our "special events". In the summer of 2008, we ran a talent show outside in the garden, and there must have been about 20 of the residents - some nurses, and the rec director at the time, Joey. There was so much laughter at the costumes and tricks!

Our New Year's visit this year was also a blast! It was funny (and a little different) to read letters written by our dogs explaining their silly habits and promises. Of course, anyone who had a dog in the past or who has even seen a dog could relate to

the "I will not chase after snowmobiles", "bark crazily", or "eat too quickly" resolutions from our dogs.

And certainly, as Heather says, every visit is different. I recall when I first started going there and I was able to take my dog Indy and have him sit on people's laps. He would often fall asleep in a lap and that was the neatest thing to see because the dog was enjoying himself (obviously) and people who normally did not move much often stroked him and talked about how great he was and his amazing ability to sleep in all situations.

There are some people who come out time after time and are very excited to see us. Other times there will be little interest but all the visits are good."

*Volunteer Heather Hayne comments on some of her incredible experiences with Yellowknife's St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program...*

"I find it very touching to see the different way each of the residents at Aven Manor greet and relate to the dogs. Some of the seniors we visit are very outgoing and social, others quiet and withdrawn.

While it is always nice to see the dogs greeted heartily, sometimes it is more special to see the quieter encounters like the man who hardly speaks but shuffles in and silently spends a few minutes rubbing with his only arm, the ears of a happy dog. Or like the lady who reaches out a soft and manicured hand to touch a dog's ruff, asking intently, "What is his name and how old is he?" - the same questions asked every visit, with the same keen interest.

There is our great pal Jack who is so

consistent in coming out to visit that if he is not in the common room at 7pm on Friday, something really important has come up! He greets the dogs effusively and enquires politely about their health. Once he was asked if during his time in the Navy they had cats as mascots on any ships. Jack replied, "Never, but there was often a ship's dog, and it was treated better than the Captain!"

A gentle lady we visit is one day happy to see the dogs, then the next time wanting nothing to do with them, turning and wheeling away in a huff. One time we got talking about families. She has nine grandchildren, some she rarely sees, and she misses them. Then, pointing at my dog, said, "How many kids has she had?" She could not believe my dog had never had any (she is fixed!), and was even more appalled that I did not have any children or grandchildren of my own.

One elder Aboriginal gentleman, very quiet and seemingly bored during an Aven common room visit, came to life when my dog (a sled dog mix) walked over to say hello. Soon he was reminiscing about his dog team (the only way to travel in his youth), his trap line, and the way life used to be in a remote NWT settlement before snowmobiles and roads. Every visit is different but they are all rewarding. I hope the Aven residents enjoy them as much as we and the dogs do!"

If you would like more information about Yellowknife's St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program, contact Christine Kaskiw Director of Community Services  
One St. John Ambulance Way  
Winnipeg, MB R3G 3H5  
204-784-7016  
[www.sja.ca/mb/](http://www.sja.ca/mb/)  
Charitable# 123226110 RR0001

