

AHVRP congratulates the 2015 Traditional Excellence Program Award Winner:

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Program: **Paws of Love**, program in place since 2008

Avi's application included the following:

Paws of Love (PL) is currently made up of 35 teams (handler/dog) and requires 15 teams to maintain its existing structure and branches. Scheduling for inpatient/outpatient rounds is done quarterly; for PAWSitive Change every semester (LAUSD academic calendar); for Canine Prescription, Eventful Canines, and Dog Tales on a monthly basis. While PL teams are volunteers, if they cannot make their schedules they find PL teams to fill-in to avoid areas missing rounds, schools and community groups not receiving supplemental education, physically/mentally impaired children losing on their weekly dose of skill building, or event participants having their emotional/behavioral build-up amplified.

Paws of Love launched in 2008 with a focus on meeting inpatient needs like any other healthcare oriented pet therapy program. However, as healthcare reform and the importance of the continuum of care became more of a reality, Paws of Love redesigned its care model. With healthcare shifting towards managed care and the ambulatory clinic setting, the program saw a deployment throughout outpatient clinics, with the goal to expand services beyond inpatient nursing units, visiting back office exam rooms and waiting areas. But in an effort to further integrate and transform Paws of Love to meet the demands of community-based care, the customers it served and the goals it set around patient care were no longer confined to the grounds of the medical center. Through a series of branches, Paws of Love now sees hospital-based volunteers close the gaps in the "circle of care" as related to population health management, education, and treatment. Paws of Love has transformed to align towards 360-degree engagement to foster total health and wellness. Through involvement at grief support and de-stressing events at camps and universities, to educating nursing schools and community groups on the physical and mental benefits of pet therapy, to working with physically and mentally deficient children at special education centers and strengthening children's' reading skills and confidence, Paws of Love's goals and objectives have transformed and adapted to reconcile societal healthcare needs with actionable solutions under one umbrella that translate into physically and mentally healthier, more knowledgeable, and empowered communities.

Paws of Love first created Canine Prescription in 2009 as a branch dedicated to visiting nursing schools and community groups to educate and provide a foundational understanding of the effective utilization of pet therapy to enhance recovery and maintain clinical outcomes. Buoyed by a need and desire to cater to physically and mentally deficient children, Paws of Love next moved to form PAWSitive Change in

2010 in partnership with special education centers. PAWSitive Change has helped 90.3% of children benefit positively in mood/behavior, physical, verbal and/or social skills highlighting the power, value and benefits of pet therapy when confronting care and rehabilitation systems built on a school's conventional methodologies and limited resources. Pet therapy teams volunteering with grief centers, universities and community organizations paved the way for Eventful Canines in 2013. Paws of Love teams organically release children from their isolation and behavioral outbursts while other participants find relief in the calming and reassuring presence of a dog as they attempt to break the monotony of work and exams that impose physical and mental toxicity. In its newest and most current community outreach venture, Dog Tales sees Paws of Love teams propel student proficiency and competence in the language arts as well as children's eagerness to read more as the younger generation gets entrenched in technology and consumed by illiteracy. Paws of Love has set itself as a model that pushes traditional program limitations, caring for patients and members of the community without the boundaries of a hospital setting.

Paws of Love serves to expand Kaiser Permanente's and the administrative leadership team's strategic push towards population care management and ensuring that a community's health system takes care of its surrounding areas, allowing community members to live well and thrive in an air of total health and wellness. Through its underlying foundation and numerous branches, Paws of Love continues to work to enhance patient engagement and elicit the memories and interactions that translate into emotional and in turn physical recovery, reminding patients of the life, passions, and activities that exist beyond the four sterile and blank walls of the hospital or exam room. While there has always been speculation and broad based evidence that integrative medicine, such as pet therapy, can enhance patient satisfaction scores and outlook as associated to those measured by HCAHPS, Avatar, and NRC Picker, a recent internal 6 month case study run by the Volunteer Services Department (Sept 2014-March 2015), sought to validate the effects of Paws of Love. The research study found that an experimental group receiving pet therapy from Paws of Love teams, in comparison to a control group receiving no interaction with Paws of Love, was significantly and positively impacted in "care experience" and "outlook on recovery" with an alpha of 0.05 while mood scores increased by an average of 1.38 on a scale of 1 to 10. Just the same, internal studies have been run by the Volunteer Service Department on the different branches of Paws of Love to authenticate the efforts and work done in the sub-programs that are going beyond the traditional framework of pet therapy. In the 2012-2013 academic year, of the 134 students observed in the PAWSitive Change program: 40 students, or 29.9%, exhibited noticeable and positive changes in their behavior over time with each of the dog visits; 51 students, or 38.1%, were observed having good interactions and exercising social skills with the dogs or their peers during visits; and 30 students, or 22.4%, made notable verbal advancements during encounters with the dogs. Overall, 121, or 90.3% of program participants benefited positively from PAWSitive Change and the nontraditional therapeutic medium of pet therapy. Whether it is interacting with patients and family members at the bedside or in exam rooms, visiting with staff and visitors in the lobbies or reception areas, Paws of Love has come to appreciate the value of its traditional foundation. However, with leadership seeking a

greater presence in the community and a targeted focus on population health, management teams from varying disciplines in the care experience have given Paws of Love the free hand as well as the budget and resources to design and develop programs that seek alternatives to the status quo and in turn offer the community non-traditional ways to tackle mental illness and physical disability (PAWSitive Change), literacy and comprehension issues (Dog Tales), the toxicity of grief, stress, and social isolation (Eventful Canines), and the importance of continuous education and outreach throughout the surrounding community (Canine Prescription).