



4PAWS LEARNING AND WELLNESS CENTER

Making the lives of pets and people better



What we do:

4Paws teams bring lots of smiles, comfort, and a love for learning to patients and students at Sonoma Valley Hospital, Valley of the Moon Children's Home, Sonoma Developmental Center, El Verano and Flowery Elementary Schools, and several residential care homes. It is so simple and so profound when our dogs touch someone's life and that person feels a renewed kinship with another being.

We also offer special classes for both our therapy teams and the public regarding the important ways dogs and people share the same needs: good nutrition, exercise and care, and vital mental and social activity.

Three short stories:

Volunteer Nancy Swick with therapy dog, Max, writes:

"We work with a client at the Sonoma Developmental Center and sometimes I'm not sure it matters. Then every once in a while, the client says 'Max' and smiles, and it is all worth it."

Lydia Calderon, Flowery Elementary Teacher, writes:

"I knew that reading aloud in Spanish would be a challenge for some of my students. So when I heard about literacy dogs coming to class, I signed up right away. One student in particular wasn't reading or participating with the others. But on the day she met and read to Rudy, everything changed. She wanted to practice in hopes of helping him become bilingual! Then, when she raised her hand to read in front of the class, I saw my student with newfound confidence and a love for reading Spanish books."

Volunteer Sue Cole with therapy dog, Reuben, writes:

"We were visiting one lady in memory care who doesn't speak anymore. Reuben was leaning into her chair so she could easily pet him. All of a sudden this voice came out of nowhere. We looked around and then realized it was our patient who was talking to Reuben!"

Our start:

4Paws was the inspiration of animal advocate, Chris Williams. His idea was to make the world a better place for animals and people by better understanding the emotional bond they share.

Shortly after his death, ten individuals came together in early 2010 to work on Chris' project. In September of that year, 4Paws was incorporated in northern California and its board of directors began managing operations. We began with a handful of volunteers, and today we have over 120 teams throughout Sonoma – as well as at sites in Napa, Marin, and San Francisco who visit thousands of patients and students each year.

4Paws teams and programs are how we help people to live with meaning, regardless of their age, abilities, or language.

Our future: Our next step is to find a space for the "4Paws Learning and Wellness Center." For canine and humankind, we will have organic gardens to nurture the body, classes to keep mentally and physically fit, and a compassionate place for growing older and staying younger, together.

 **Impact100 Sonoma awarded a \$2,200 Community Grant to 4Paws to increase the number of canine social therapy teams in Sonoma Valley (2015).**