



Therapy Dog Program

2005 Annual Report

Therapy Dog Program

With a history of more than 900 years, St. John Ambulance is one of the oldest humanitarian organizations in the world today. The St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program builds on our proud tradition of community service by bringing the benefits of pet companionship to those who are isolated, ill or residing in long term care facilities.

Therapy Dogs can significantly change a person's life. It has been proven that therapy dogs can improve physical and mental health, improve vocabulary and memory, and increase motivation in those people being visited. More benefits include:

- Reducing stress levels
- Lowering blood pressure
- Calming the distressed
- Comforting the dispondent
- Distracting the pain-ridden



Advisory Committee News

St. John Ambulance is pleased to announce the formation of a new Advisory Committee to help make the Therapy Dog program even more successful. Under the direction of Chairperson Annette Deagle, the committee will be comprised of volunteer coordinators from various districts and Program Coordinator, Tiffany Mullen. The Committee will meet three times a year to discuss topics such as program success and effectiveness, as well as health and safety matters. We are hoping that coordinators will bring their experiences and opinions as well as those of the volunteers in their area.



T.A.I.L.S. Reading Program

In 2005, St. John Ambulance NS/PEI Council piloted a program called **T.A.I.L.S.** (Therapy Animals Involved in Literacy Success), in which therapy dogs help to improve children's literacy skills by making them more comfortable when reading. We currently have one T.A.I.L.S. volunteer in a Lunenburg school, and one volunteer in a Halifax Regional Municipality Library. Cape Breton Therapy Dog volunteers also continue to run the **R.E.A.D.** program in their local libraries.

We expect the T.A.I.L.S. program to grow as more facilities and volunteers become interested.



Respect in the Organization

We are very proud to say that 115 (50%) of our Therapy Dog volunteers have completed the Respect in the Organization Program to date. This program is now a *mandatory* part of new member evaluations, which will certainly continue to increase the number of volunteers completing the R.I.O. program.

