ABOUT CHAI

The Center for Human-Animal Interaction (CHAI) is a 501 (c)(3) charity that exists within Medical College of Virginia Foundation (assessed by Charity Navigator to be a 98%, 4-star rated charity). CHAI is generously housed within West Hospital by the Psychiatry Department of Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of Medicine. Many of CHAI’s staff and executive committee members are VCU professors and professionals with a passion for animals and the benefits of Human-Animal Interaction. But CHAI’s greatest asset is its volunteers, both human and four-legged.

Mission

Improving health and well being through human-animal interaction.

To achieve our mission,

Our research goal is to increase knowledge of the benefits of the human-animal interaction through interdisciplinary research.

Our clinical goal is to enhance health and well being for patients and other members of our community through animal-assisted interventions.

Our educational goal is to improve understanding of the benefits of the human-animal interaction.
WHO WE ARE

2022 Executive Committee

Nancy Gee, Ph.D., C-AISS
Committee Chair
Director, Center for Human-Animal Interaction

Sharon Alexander, MPA
Director of Workforce Initiatives,
Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA)

Marjolein de Wit, M.D.
Associate Professor of Internal Medicine,
VCU School of Medicine

Carissa Etters, B.S.
Director of Executive and Enterprise Communications,
VCU Health

Randolph T. Barker, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Business, VCU

Sandra B. Barker, Ph.D., NCC, LPC, Professor Emeritus, Psychiatry, VCU

Gonzalo M.L. Bearman, M.D., MPH, Professor & Chair, Internal Medicine/Infectious Diseases, VCU

James Bjork, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Institute for Drug and Alcohol Studies, VCU

Pamela Dillon, Pharm.D., Associate Professor and Research Liaison,
Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research, VCU

Jeffrey D. Green, Ph.D., Professor, Psychology, VCU

Gary Southard, Jr., MBA
Senior Administrator, CHoR, VCU Health

Susan Kornstein, MD
Director of Clinical Research,
VCU School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry

Co-Founder and Executive Director,
VCU Institute of Women's Health
Professor of Psychiatry and Obstetrics & Gynecology, VCU School of Medicine

Kathleen O'Kane Kreutzer, M.Ed.
Director of Special Projects,
VCU School of Medicine
Assistant Professor, VCU School of Medicine

Reuban B. Rodriguez, Ed.D
Associate Vice Provost and Dean,
Division of Student Affairs, VCU
Assistant Professor, VCU

Paul Wesolowski, MBA
Former Chief Operating Officer, VCU Health

2022 Research Affiliates

Randolph T. Barker, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Business, VCU

Sandra B. Barker, Ph.D., NCC, LPC, Professor Emeritus, Psychiatry, VCU

Gonzalo M.L. Bearman, M.D., MPH, Professor & Chair, Internal Medicine/Infectious Diseases, VCU

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Gary Southard, Jr., MBA
Senior Administrator, CHoR, VCU Health

Susan Kornstein, Ph.D., Professor, Psychiatry and Obstetrics and Gynecology, VCU

Ashlee R. Loughan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Neurology, VCU

Gretchen N. McCandless-Neigh, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Anatomy, VCU

Shelby E. McDonald, Ph.D., Director of Research, ASPCA

Lisa Townsend, LCSW, Ph.D., Associate Professor,
Department of Pediatrics – Adolescent Medicine/Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
It gives me great pleasure to share in this report the achievements of the Center for Human-Animal Interaction over the past year. As you will read, our research program has been very active, we have an exciting publication about to be released, we continue to provide educational opportunities both within and outside VCU, and our Dogs on Call teams have increased their presence throughout the VCU Health System - and beyond.
WHO'S ON THE TEAM?

Lisa Townsend, LCSW, PhD
Clinical and Research Associate
Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry, VCU School of Medicine

J.T. Hosack, MA
Volunteer Coordinator, Senior

Karl Dorn, MEd
Program Coordinator
OUR VOLUNTEERS

CHAI’s 53 volunteers contributed a whopping 1,515 hours of service during 2022.

Administrative Volunteers

Our administrative volunteers (some of whom are also Dogs on Call team members) each bring unique skills to the table to support CHAI and Dogs on Call in meaningful ways.

- Dr. Randolph T. Barker
- Dr. Sandra B. Barker
- Margaret Popik
- Kathy Albers
- Morgan Gossman
- Denice Ekey
- Barbara Klucik

Research Teams

A number of our Dogs on Call teams go above and beyond by helping CHAI conduct randomized clinical trials in the hospital to examine experimentally the impact of therapy dog visitation in a hospital setting. We are grateful for their commitment to the additional training and time commitments this work requires.

- Anna w/ Murphy
- Beth & George w/ Maggie
- Carmen w/ Weird Alf
- Denise w/ Wiley
- Jeanne w/ Zeke
- Kathy w/ Hairy Harry
- Linda w/ Jag
- Marcia w/ Phoebe
- Margaret w/ Elsa
- Marcie w/ Harry
- Nancy w/ Allie
- Simone w/ Captain Jack
- Susie w/ Homer
- Tracy w/ Missy
- Wayne w/ Maxwell
In 2022, Dogs on Call continued to recover from, and adapt to, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One area of focus was on improvements to the number of in-hospital visits completed. Roughly 1,500 more visits were completed in 2022 than in 2021.

Additionally, we are now completing roughly 90% of all visit requests successfully, compared to last year’s 75%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Visits</th>
<th>Requests Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,765</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teams Onboarded</th>
<th>Handlers</th>
<th>Dogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While Dogs on Call continues to focus on serving VCU Health patients, families, and staff, our teams enjoy providing support to VCU Health, VCU, and the community when time and resources allow.

**Chesterfield County School Literacy Program (3/7 and 3/18).**
The Dogs on Call program was happy to participate in 2 kickoff events for a program dedicated to promoting literacy skills in children.

**The Self-Care Experience (10/14).**
Dogs on Call teams joined this event in support of survivors of domestic violence.

**VCU De-stress Events.**
In 2022, with fewer restrictions in place, the DOC program received many requests to participate in student de-stress events. Teams were able to meet over a dozen requests this year, including:

- the Cabell and Health Sciences libraries;
- the Schools of Pharmacy, Nursing, and Engineering; and,
- the Athletics Department
ANNUAL fundraisers

The Center for Human-Animal Interaction is sustained in no small part by the generosity of the VCU Health community. We are grateful that so many friends and allies showed their support for our dogs and our mission at our fundraiser events.

**Pups on the Plaza.** Our first Pups on the Plaza since before the COVID-19 pandemic was a rockin’ success. This block party-type fundraiser featured DJ’d music, dancing, and over a dozen Dogs on Call therapy dog teams as we sold meal tickets, t-shirts, and mugs to raise funds for our program.

**Calendar Sales.** Our Dogs on Call calendars, presenting photos of our Dogs on Call teams in action, were once again highly popular in the VCU/VCU Health community. This year’s calendar was dedicated to the resiliency of the VCU Health staff in responding to, and rising above, the pandemic. Our 28 sponsors and those who purchased over 1,000 calendars once again made this a successful undertaking!

**Love Lights.** In 2022, the MCV Auxiliary selected Dogs on Call to be the beneficiary of its first post-COVID fundraiser. Members of the VCU Health community made donations in exchange for the opportunity to hang an ornament bearing a loved one’s name on a tree in the Main Hospital lobby. Both Dogs on Call dogs and CHAI staff gladly made appearances daily across this week-long event.
The Center and Dogs on Call program demonstrated their support for the VCU Health system in multiple ways during 2022.

Once again, Dogs on Call participated in Nurses Appreciation Week, this time in person rather than virtually. For three successive days, our teams raised their paws in support of the tireless efforts of the nursing staff.

The CHAI staff, accompanied by Dogs on Call teams, presented a best practice model for wellness at a School of Medicine Alumni Wellness Event and again for VCU Health PACE Center medical professionals.

Our Dogs on Call teams were also happy to be on site for other events throughout the VCU Health system, including the VCU Adult Outpatient Pavilion Donor Reception, the Ryan White Center Holiday Party, and the VCU Health Integrative Medicine Resource Center.

As always, Dogs on Call lent our support to Arts in Healthcare Day, our partner program in VCU Health.

Dogs on Call made an appearance at VCU’s Theta Delta Chi’s fundraiser, in which they raised donations for the Children’s Hospital Foundation.

Dr. Gee, accompanied by a Dogs on Call team, participated in the 2022 Radiothon in support of the Children’s Hospital Foundation. Dr. Gee spoke about the benefits of HAI and CHAI’s Dogs on Call program at this 11th annual 36 Hours for Kids radiothon, supported by multiple radio stations.
Presentations and Informational Sessions

While many of the presentations delivered by CHAI staff through the year are at conferences as part of the process of creating new scientific HAI knowledge (see the Research section), CHAI also educates by presenting and disseminating more general HAI information. In 2022, CHAI staff made the following formal and information educational presentations:

**Formal Educational Presentations**
- **Gee, N.R.** (2022, March 17). Distinguishing Among - Service/Assistance, Facility, Therapy and Emotional Support Animals. Presentation to VCU Staff Senate Sub-Committee for Accessibility and Inclusion. Richmond, VA, United States.
- **Gee, N.R.** (2022, April 23). Medical Student Engagement and Wellness [Panelist]. VCU School of Medicine’s 2022 Reunion Weekend. Richmond, VA, United States.
- **Gee, N.R.** (2022, August 11). Center for Human-Animal Interaction and Dogs on Call. Presentation to VCU Health PACE Center medical professionals. Richmond, VA, United States.
- **Townsend, L.** (2022, November). Animals in Human Health Care. Presentation given for the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine chapter of Veterinarians as One Inclusive Community for Empowerment (VOICE).

**Informal Educational Sessions**
- **Hosack, J.T.** (2022, October 8). Informational tabling at Barktoberfest. Clarksville, VA, United States.
- **Townsend, L.D.** (2022, October 13). Informational tabling with the VCU Staff Senate Accessibility and Inclusion Working Group. Richmond, VA, United States.
- **Townsend, L.D. & Dorn, K.** (2022, November 9). Informational tabling with VCU Arts in Healthcare. Richmond, VA, United States.
CHAI provides educational opportunities each year for a variety of students and residents ranging from undergraduate students, to those finishing professional school, to those completing a residency.

Fourteen medical students in their fourth year (M4s) completed an elective rotation at CHAI. During their time at CHAI they split their time between working with CHAI's Director on research projects and helping with CHAI's daily functioning. They supported and photographed Dogs on Call teams, helped prepare and distribute stuffed animals, and performed a variety of other mutually-beneficial tasks.

Four psychiatry residents worked with the Director on more extended research related to human–animal interaction.

Four other students received support from our Director toward their educational goals. Two worked on PhD dissertations, one completed an undergraduate independent study, and one completed a 10-week practicum in MPH program.
CHAI research

Publications
CHAI staff’s publication efforts in 2022 were focused heavily on the book *The Role of Companion Animals in the Treatment of Mental Disorders*, soon to be published by the American Psychiatric Association. As noted below, in addition to editing, Drs. Gee and Townsend authored many of the chapters within the volume.

2022 Edited Books and Chapters
- Dr. Gee, Dr. Townsend, and Dr. Robert Findling edited a volume on the relationship between human-animal interaction and mental disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association.
2022 Journal Publications


Conference Presentations

The Center for Human-Animal Interaction does not only apply and disseminate existing HAI knowledge - CHAI creates new knowledge by conducting rigorous research. Three randomized-controlled trials examining the impacts of therapy dog intervention on loneliness, depression, anxiety, and related health outcomes are currently underway for three vulnerable inpatient populations: older adults, adults with mental illness, and children.

During 2022, the fourteen Dogs on Call teams listed on Page 5 began patient visits at the Sheltering Arms Institute and other locations throughout the VCU Health system, accompanied by human research assistants collecting data from the patients. This is a demanding form of research, but our teams are up for it!

These trials are possible thanks to grants provided by:

- MARS Petcare
- A Better World For Pets
- PURINA® Your Pet, Our Passion.
- WALTHAM Petcare Science Institute
- habri human animal bond research institute
CHAI SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

What would the “rock stars of the hospital” be without their social media?

Top Posts of 2022:
- 149 Hearts - Dogs on Call is for EVERYONE! (above)
- 127 Hearts - The Cardiology Consultation Team agree unanimously that Homer’s heart is overflowing with love. (below)
CHAI
public relations

CHAI staff and programs again garnered a steady stream of media coverage in 2022.

- Interviews with Dr. Barker

- Interviews with Dr. Gee

- Selected 2022 News Articles about Dr. Barker’s Research

- Selected 2022 News Articles about Dr. Gee’s Research

- Other
  - Dogs on Call volunteer Kim Maxey featured as a “Hometown Hero” for her work with Dogs on Call and other therapy dog organizations
  - VCU mascot Rodney the Ram thanks Dogs on Call
  - Dr. Gee speaks about the benefits of HAI and CHAI’s Dogs on Call program at the 11th annual 36 Hours for Kids radiothon. The radiothon is supported by several radio stations.
  - VCU Empowerment Committee’s December Newsletter features Dogs on Call dogs.
OUR GRATITUDE

It truly takes a village, and we are immensely grateful to the community of people who have come together in supporting CHAI’s mission. We give our thanks and deep appreciation to the following:

Our Calendar Sponsors
Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU
Denice, David, and Darcy Ekey
Greg & Rebecca Felton
Holiday Barn Pet Resorts
Iron Bridge Animal Hospital
Karl’s Aunt Gail
Dr. Lisa Townsend, Dr. Robert Findling, Roo, and Minnie
Dr. Nancy Gee
Attorney Paul Hux; Reese; and Allen, Allen, Allen, & Allen
Drs. Randy and Sandy Barker
Mr. and Mrs. Richard T. Robertson (and their Frenchies)
Richmond Dog Obedience Club
River City Veterinary Hospital
Sheltering Arms Institute

Town & Country Veterinary Clinic
Transtar Moving Systems
VCU Dean of Students Office
VCU Department of Psychiatry
VCU Health Arts in Healthcare
VCU Health Community Memorial Hospital
VCU Health Department of Pathology
VCU Medical Center MCV Hospital Auxiliary
VCU Medical Rehabilitation Services
VCU Police
VCU School of Medicine
Virginia Book Company
Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
Wellesley Animal Hospital

Other Program Sponsors
Children’s Hospital of Richmond
Petsmart
Shirley Gibson, Interim Vice-President of Support Services
Tony Stewart Foundation
VCU
VCU Health
VCU Department of Psychiatry