

# ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY:

## One Retiree's Journey

By Bill MacKenzie

In the unabashedly sentimental book and movie, "A Dog's Purpose," written by W. Bruce Cameron, a devoted dog successfully captures the essence of an animal's amazing capacity to love and protect.

As the story shows, pets are perfect companions. Research has found that people with pets have healthier hearts, stay home sick less often, make fewer visits to the doctor, get more exercise, and are happier. Even the simple act of stroking a pet can help lower blood pressure. Among elderly and ill people, pets can also be an important source of social support that enhances well-being.



*Will Clenney is at the bottom right with his dog Cali, a Labrador Retriever/Plot Hound mix*

Will Clenney, who retired from Intel's Folsom, CA site in Dec. 2013, knows from experience how animals can change a heart and soul.

Before retiring, Will spent 16 years working in Intel's Information Technology Division where he held a variety of positions in such areas as Business Process Engineering, Business Quality and Reliability, IT Infrastructure Roadmap Planning and IT Master Data Engineering.

In 2013, his last year at Intel, Will passed an animal-assisted therapy evaluation with his dog, Cali, a Labrador Retriever/Plot Hound mix, and signed up with [Lend A Heart Lend A Hand Animal-Assisted Therapy](#), an all-volunteer non-profit organization.

“Intel was very supportive,” Will said. “It helped me train Cali in 2013 to prepare her for animal-assisted therapy by allowing me to bring her to work over the course of the year.”

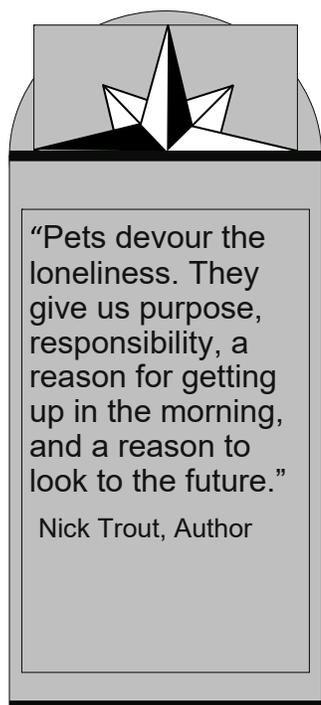
Since retiring, he and Cali have been visiting libraries and assisted living facilities in the Folsom and Sacramento, CA areas. His wife, Susan, soon joined him, allowing her and Cali to entertain and comfort residents of assisted living facilities while Will played the piano.

Upping his commitment, Will joined the Board of Directors in 2016.



*Will Clenney's dog Cali, a Labrador Retriever/Plot Hound mix*

Will, Susan and other trained volunteer handlers visit clients throughout Sacramento and surrounding counties with their specially trained therapy animals, mostly dogs, but a few cats and rabbits, too. Helping activities take place at libraries, assisted living facilities, schools, sites assisting adults with special needs, parades, community events and other locations.



“Animal-assisted therapy is well documented and has long been accepted as effective in relieving stress,” Will said. “Children read out loud to non-judgmental animals, which improves their reading skills in a non-threatening environment, and assisted living residents visit with animals for calm, therapeutic interaction in facilities where it’s not always possible to keep their own pet.”

Want to learn more about Lend A Heart Lend A Hand? Send an e-mail to Will at [wtawtaw@comcast.net](mailto:wtawtaw@comcast.net), take a look at the organization’s website, [www.lendaheart.org](http://www.lendaheart.org), or submit an inquiry via the website.

Decided already that you want to join in on this truly meaningful good work? The organization has 200 members, but the welcome mat is always out for volunteer handlers and their pets and there are periodic openings on the board.

