

Oprah's BigGive Vermont Causes Tails and Tongues to Wag

Over \$38,000 raised for Therapy Dogs of Vermont

April 25, 2008 (Williston, VT) – The pay-it-forward spirit of Oprah's BigGive spread a wave of support across Vermont to help raise over \$38,000 for Therapy Dogs of Vermont. At a "big reveal" reception Thursday to celebrate the effort, many volunteers shared stories about the impact their furry, four-legged miracle workers have with children in hospitals, seniors in nursing homes, reading programs in schools, and more.

“With no paid staff, our leadership volunteers are stretched to the breaking point trying to keep up with their full-time jobs plus run this non-profit,” said Steve Reiman, founder of Therapy Dogs of Vermont. “I started this organization 18 years ago, and we now have about 200 certified teams across the state delivering about 5,000 free visits a year. The generosity of Northfield Savings Bank, ABC22 and our community is going to help us secure a sustainable future so we can keep making a difference in the lives of others.”

In addition to orchestrating all these volunteers, visits and administrative duties, the organization receives about a dozen requests a month to train new teams. Training each new canine/handler team involves over 19 hours of leadership volunteer time – and a space to do it. The organization has not had a place to call home. They run it out of the trunks of their cars, garages and spare bedrooms. Among other things, this money will help them find a home and hire some help.

“I can't tell you how many times I have cried during the past six weeks as I've heard stories about how much these dogs have done – everything from bringing people out of a coma, to putting the spirit back into the life of elderly nursing home residents,” said Tina de la Torre, Director of Marketing and Community Relations for Northfield Savings Bank. “We had so much fun getting to know the Therapy Dog volunteers and helping their organization to keep doing what they're doing. They truly embody the pay-it-forward spirit.”

To learn more, visit www.nsbvt.com, or www.therapydogs.org.



PHOTO CAPTION:

Northfield Savings Bank and ABC22 present Therapy Dogs of Vermont with the results of the recent Oprah's BigGive Vermont initiative. (left to right: Vic Veters, General Manager of ABC22, Steve Reiman, founder of Therapy Dogs of Vermont, and Tina de la Torre, Director of Marketing for Northfield Savings Bank, each with a hand full of therapy dogs.)