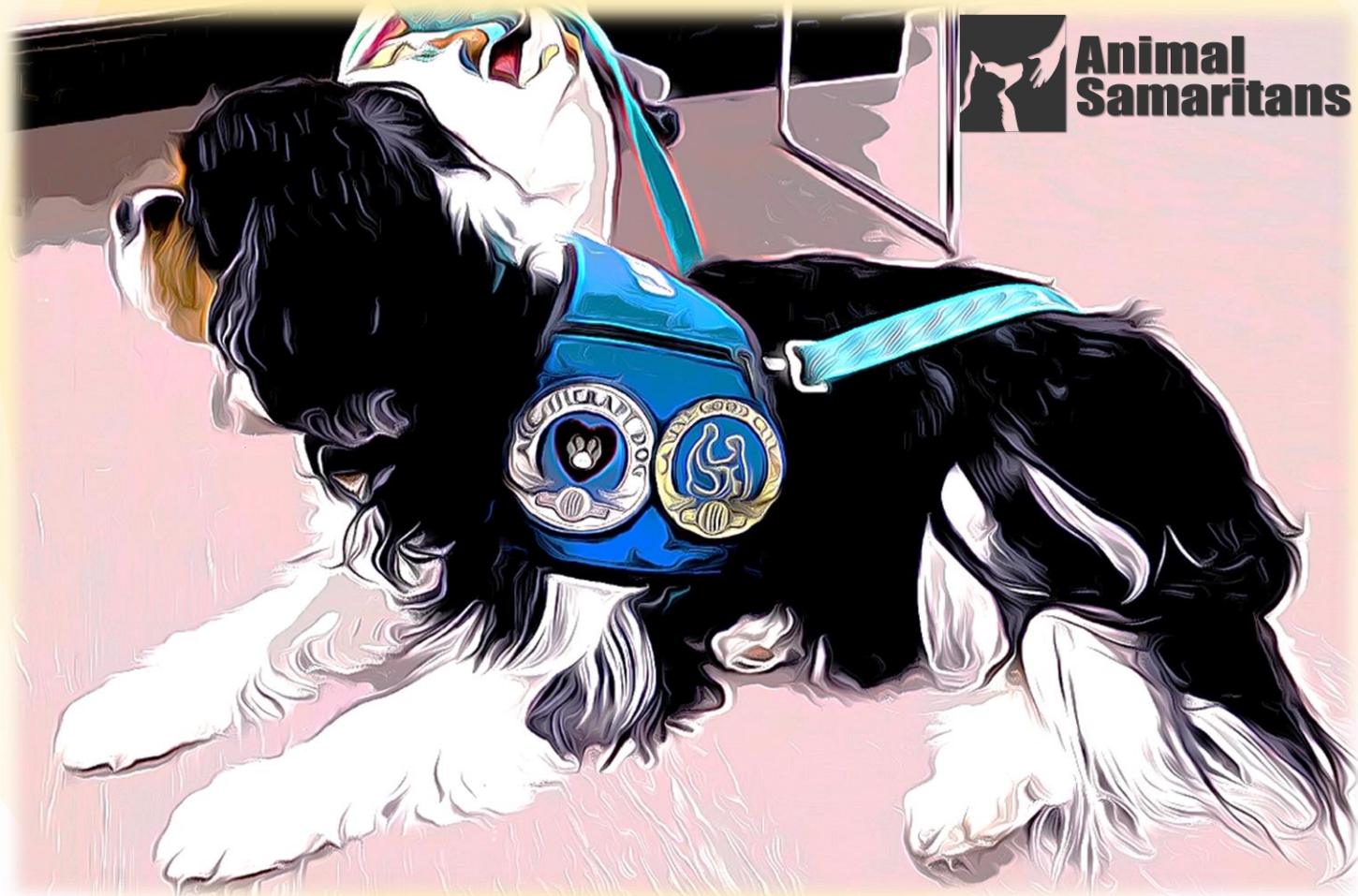
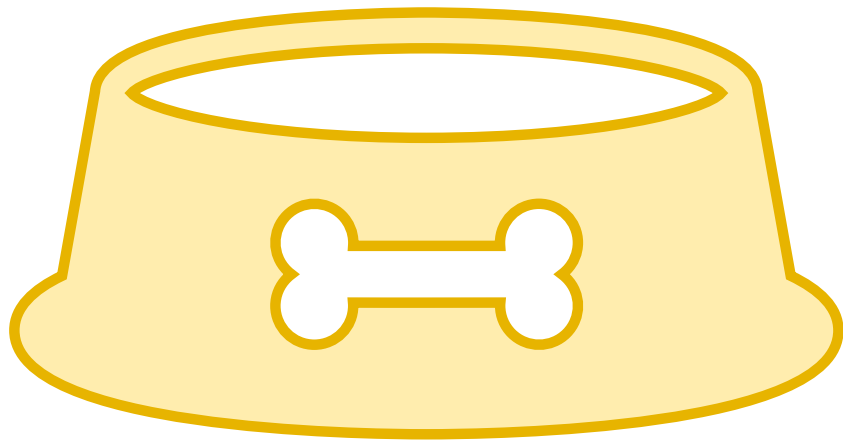


# Charlie, Our Therapy Dog



## Cavalier King Charles Spaniel “The Love Sponge” Dog Breed



Charlie’s story starts with his future owners falling in love with Cavalier King Charles Spaniel dogs.

For many years, Suzy and Gary visited their friends who owned four Cavalier King Charles Spaniel dogs.

Even though they owned and loved their two rescued dogs, a Shepherd mixed dog and a Pointer-Jack Russell mixed dog, they just had this special love for their friend’s dogs.

It was inevitable!



## Welcome to the family!

It was not until they lost one of their rescued dogs when they were offered a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel puppy.

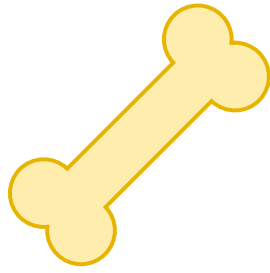
Their son's dog was also a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who gave birth the same year their senior dog had passed away. Suzy and Gary were touched by the offer and immediately adopted one of the puppies. They were sent pictures of the puppies until the puppies were two months old. At this age, they were independent and could go to loving homes.

Suzy and Gary were so excited to meet their new puppy. Little did they know, Charlie was going to bring them and others so much joy!





Good boy!



## A Mellow Fellow

At first, Charlie's new sister, Princess, was not a fan of his. Little by little he won her over with his gentle personality. Suzy then realized Charlie was such a good puppy. Her curiosity led her to do some research on Charlie's breed to learn more about his personality traits. That is how Suzy learned that Charlie was a potential therapy dog.

Suzy became very excited at the thought of her and her new puppy becoming a team to help others. Suzy was retired and the idea of visiting people who needed emotional support made her very happy.

Suzy immediately called Animal Samaritans SPCA since they had a large and successful therapy dog program in the Coachella Valley, their home.



## Charlie's Mission



Unfortunately, Charlie was too young to enter the therapy program. He was only nine months old. To qualify, he had to be one year old or older. In addition, he had to pass his temperament test and obtain his Canine Good Citizen certificate.

Committed to her new mission, Suzy enrolled Charlie to take basic, intermediate, and advanced training courses. He completed three months of training, which also meant three months of truly bonding with Charlie.

At one year of age, Charlie passed his temperament test and his Canine Good Citizen test without a problem. He was a certified therapy dog! Suzy and Gary were proud of Charlie's accomplishments.





**“Once you learn to read,  
you will forever be free.”**



When Suzy and Charlie entered the Animal Samaritans’ Animal Companion Therapy program to serve as volunteers, she learned that therapy dogs often help those who felt sad. Because of Charlie’s gentle personality, and level of training, he fit perfectly with children.

Suzy’s and Charlie’s first assignment was to let children read to him to improve their reading. Charlie was so quiet and attentive but sometimes he would fall asleep while a child read to him. The children knew it was okay to read to Charlie. He was not going to judge a child for being a slow reader. He was not going to laugh at a child for mispronouncing a word. They felt comfortable reading to him, and he loved it.

## The Dynamic Duo

Children responded so well to Charlie that later he was assigned to visit special needs students with his Animal Companion Therapy partner named Harley. Harley was a rescued female Labrador Retriever mix, and Charlie's best friend.

The students in wheelchairs could easily pet Harley since she was a big dog, while other students could get on the floor and pet Charlie. They worked so well together that the students kept asking if the dogs were married. Of course, their owners thought it was an adorable question so they decided it would be a fun activity to marry the dogs at the school. All the students in special education were invited to the wedding. In fact, they helped with the decorations.

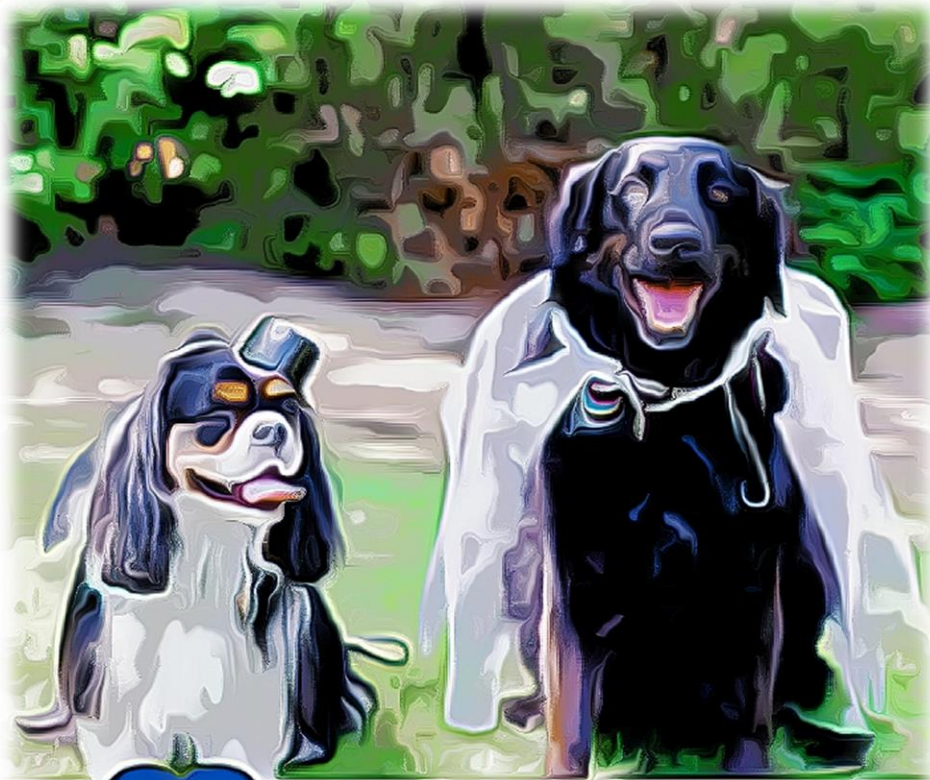
Landau Elementary School



May 19, 2015

Charlie

Harley



**Animal Companion Therapy**  
ANIMAL SAMARITANS

**Charlie & Harley**

Registered Therapy Dogs, CGC



**I Do. Woof!**



The teachers asked that it be a Jewish wedding so the students could learn about another culture. It took Suzy and Ann Leiboh (Harley's Mom) three months of planning and there was finally a "dog wedding." Gary was Charlie's Best Man and Harley's "Dad," Al Leiboh, walked her down the aisle to "*Who Let The Dogs Out?*"

Charlie and Harley exchanged duplicate engraved red heart-shaped tags. The children clapped and smiled out of joy.



“A service dog is trained to do a specific thing for a specific individual with a specific need.

**Therapy dogs** are more like a generalist, not a specialist. They work with medical and educational specialists to attain specific goals with clients.”



## Coachella Valley's Best Friend

Charlie became a well-known therapy dog due to his dedication to Animal Samaritans Humane Education program. He travelled all over the Coachella Valley teaching students how to be responsible and kind pet owners.

In these classroom presentations, Suzy explained what the job of a therapy dog was and the difference between a service dog and a therapy dog. She also talked about how she cared for Charlie. Charlie would then do a few tricks. At the end, the students could pet him after practicing safety tips to minimize the chances of being bitten by a dog.

Sometimes, Suzy and Charlie came to assembly presentations where there would be 100 or more students petting him! Charlie enjoyed every single pet.



## Charlie, The Super Dog

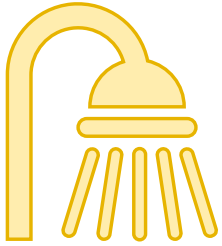
Besides presenting for Head Start through Middle School students, Charlie also visited the Stroke Center, Shelter From the Storm, high schools and colleges before finals, retirement and nursing homes, Boys & Girls Clubs, many social events promoting therapy dogs, libraries, and Animal Samaritans' Summer Critter Camps. He also had the special assignment of visiting a girl whose dog had bitten her, leaving her traumatized. After several home visits, she did not fear dogs anymore. Yes, Charlie was that amazing!

Suzy experienced so many special moments with Charlie but there is one moment that deeply touched her heart. A four-year-old special needs boy confined to a wheelchair was non-verbal. After a year of visiting him and never petting Charlie, his teacher kept saying "dog" to him, when all of a sudden, he said, "dog." The teacher and Suzy cried with joy. This just shows what a powerful impact a therapy dog can have. A therapy dog's job is to make people feel comfortable and happy.

After eight years of therapy services, Suzy realized Charlie was slowing down and decided to semi-retire him at age nine. Charlie still visited a few classrooms to offer presentations.



## Charlie's Diary



“When I saw my ‘Mom’ dressed in her Animal Samaritans uniform I knew we were going out to do therapy work. Before we left the house, I had a good breakfast, had my teeth brushed along with my coat. She cleaned my ears and sprayed doggie cologne on me! I would go pee before I got into the car, where my ‘Mom’ put on my halter, therapy vest, and hooked me into the car seat so I was safe. Once at school, I put on my therapy hat. I am naturally a calm and low-energy dog, but when I see the students, I do get excited.

When Covid-19 came in March 2020, our schools shut down and I was feeling a little sad not to be able to do therapy work. My ‘Mom’ had me practice my commands and tricks so I would not forget. I became a little needy and barked when I did not before. My other therapy dog friends felt the same way.”



Love  
Kindness  
Respect

On August 31, 2020,  
Charlie left us, but he gave  
his heart and soul to his  
therapy work and keeping  
his home calm and happy.  
He touched a lot of people  
old and young. Suzy and  
Gary will never forget him,  
and neither will we.

**Thank you, Charlie!**





# In loving memory of Therapy Dogs



## Charlie Walker and Harley Leiboh

It takes a special kind of dog  
to become a therapy dog.







# Animal Samaritans

*Animal Samaritans was founded in 1978 by local animal lovers determined to end the suffering, abuse and unnecessary death of local shelter animals and educate the pet owners of tomorrow on responsible pet ownership. After more than four decades of service, Animal Samaritans has grown to become the desert's largest, most-comprehensive animal welfare organization by adopting out more than 11,000 homeless dogs and cats, rescuing more than 14,000 adoptable, at-risk shelter animals, and spaying and neutering more than 220,000 pets. We've educated more than 250,000 school children on kindness to animals and responsible pet ownership and made tens of thousands of pet therapy visits to people in need. Animal Samaritans views all living creatures with compassion and respect, with a primary focus on dogs, cats, and the people who love them.*

[animalsamaritans.org](http://animalsamaritans.org)







Written by Suzy Walker

Edited by Diana Martinez Humane Educator

July 2021