

# WAGS At Baptist East Hospital

By Julie Hines  
WAGS Roving Reporter



WAGS currently has 15 visiting teams at Baptist East Hospital and the Charles and Mimi Osborn Cancer Center on Kresge Way. Under the direction of Nicole Crum and LeeAnn Hill, (the Volunteer Coordinators) and Jenny Pagni, (WAGS's Team Leader), WAGS Ambassador Teams and their Aides fill a much-needed role in offering comfort, reducing stress and spreading smiles for both staff and patients. Coordinating all of this is a challenging undertaking that Jenny, Nicole, and LeeAnn do cheerfully.



*Jenny Pagni & Ruby*



*LeeAnn Hill & Nicole Crum*

Nicole Crum relayed that Animal Assisted Therapy at Baptist Health Louisville is provided exclusively through their partnership with W.A.G.S. Pet Therapy of Kentucky. The program started in the hospital in late 1999 and has been making “paw-sitive” impact on patients, staff and visitors ever since. (That is almost 23 years folks!) WAGS Teams visit at least once a month, assigned to almost every inpatient unit. Patients can also request unscheduled visits.



During COVID when we could not spread the comfort that was much needed inside the hospital, Jenny and Nicole organized an outside visit for the staff. As you can imagine it was well received.



*Melanie Broughton, Linda Laun with Penny, Diana Cook with Yogi, Ben Cook as a Trained Aide (TA), Paula Weller as a TA, Karen Bickel with Teddy, Sharon McDermott with Patches, Janie Dobbins with Indy, & Jenny Pagni with Ruby.*

WAGS started doing occasional night shift staff visits in 2022. Some staff were so appreciative they were brought to tears. They have even FaceTimed with their families to share the moment. These visits are met with great enthusiasm and WAGS Teams are thrilled to be able to support the entire staff at Baptist East. Candice Canan, MSN, RN, the Night Shift Educator, gladly guides us through the hospital and has shared these expressions of gratitude she heard: "You don't know how bad I needed this tonight." "Wait! What! They are here and we can pet them?" "Can you all stop by like this every night? We really need this."



*Dottie & Toby, Leslie & Finn, Sharon & Patches, Martha as TA, Jessie & Mac, Melanie as TA, Mickie & Leo, Amy K. & Edith Mae, Amy L. as TA, Amy J. & Holden*

On the fourth Wednesday of each month, Micki Thomas with Leo, and Jenny Pagni with Ruby visit CVU & CVI. Melanie Broughton and Janie Dobbins are their Trained Aides. Jenny shared that she once knocked on the door of an elderly woman, who sat in bed with no lights on, looking at nothing while her son sat beside her reading. When Jenny asked if the lady would like a visit she quickly snapped, "No", to which Jenny smiled and asked them to have a nice day. However, as Jenny was leaving, she heard the patient say



regrettably, “Is that a dog?” Jenny stepped back in and replied, “Yes this is Ruby, a Therapy Dog. "Would you like us to come in?" The patient’s face lit up immediately as she gently said, “Yes, come in.” Ruby approached the bedside and instantly engaged with her. Jenny pulled a chair over, and Ruby hopped up to visit her eye to eye. The elderly woman put her hand out, and Ruby relaxed her chin into her palm. She spoke to Ruby softly as if they were the only two in the room. The woman's demeanor lifted completely as a ray of joy inflated her. As they left the room her son followed them out and offered a heartfelt thank you. “That was incredible,” he said, as he had not seen his mother that animated in a long time.



*Jenny Pagni, Melanie Broughton and Ruby Visit Maggie Avaydin*



*Ruby is a very lovable girl!  
Jennifer Suter gives her some love*

*Leo & Jennie Ensor*



Leslie Portaro and her Great Pyrenees, Finn, spread smiles every other Friday, within Inpatient Therapy, Human Resources, Outpatient Therapy, and the nurses' stations in the main hospital's fourth floor. I am delighted to be their Trained Aide and I dare you to meet them and not smile! We recently had the labor and delivery nurses from day shift find us in the hall. They exclaimed, "Why don't you come visit us?" Night shift had been bragging that Finn had come to visit them. Finn is a very popular boy!

*Leslie Portaro and Finn both smiling*

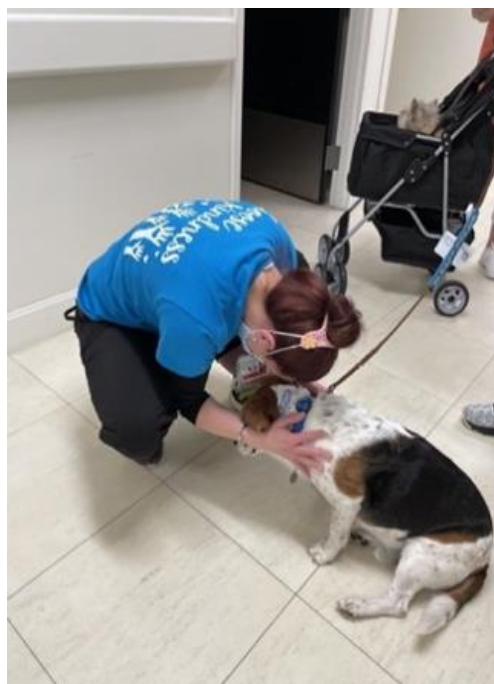
On the first Tuesday of the month, Toby with Dottie Chapman, Penny with Linda Laun, and Jessie with Mac Barr spread their joy dust throughout the hospital. They are joined by Trained Aides Martha Raymer and Janie Dobbins. They visit the staff in Observation, the Emergency Room, Mother and Baby, CCU, and all the corridors in between. Some days they have so many staff members enjoying them they cannot make all the destinations. Many of the staff get down on the floor to pet and hug the dogs while expressing just how much they needed this visit and as you can imagine the dogs eat that up. I have witnessed a nurse coming down the hall exclaiming “TOBY!” as she opened her arms wide. Good thing Dottie can move quickly to keep up with Toby’s exuberance to catch that hug.



*Jessie says, “Yes, right there!”*



*Penny gets held*



*Toby caught that hug!*



## The Amy Teams!!



“The Amy Teams” consist of Amy Jordon with Holden, Amy Kadner with Edith Mae, and their Trained Aides Amy Lee and Pat Mccullough (Pat refuses to change her name). They are also joined by Diana Cook and either Yogi or Frankie. (Diana is currently on leave, and we all pray she will return soon.) These teams visit staff and patients, spreading good humor on the 5th and 6th floors of Park Tower on the first Wednesday of each month.

*Amy Kadner with Edith Mae collecting smiles*



I do not think Frankie's tail stops wagging from the minute he enters either Baptist East or the Cancer Center until he leaves. Frankie truly loves his job! Especially when the nurses offer treats!

*Frankie gets a treat*



*Yogi wants one too!*



Amy Jordan and “Holden the Golden” encountered two very nice ladies at the elevator in Park Tower one day. Holden's new friends were on their way to visit their mother in palliative care. They fussed over him and talked about growing up with golden retrievers. A mutual friend called Amy at home that night to relay "the rest of the story." Upon leaving Holden, the two daughters told their mother about the beautiful golden retriever they had just met, and how they believed all her past Goldens would be waiting for her when she passed on. Their Mother then relaxed and passed away peacefully. Holden and Amy are so glad that they could provide some comfort in the saddest of times.

*Holden gets a big smile from Virginia Austin*



Jenny Pagni and Ruby, along with their Trained Aide Melanie Broughton visit the Main Hospital on the second Wednesday of each month. Ruby has what Jenny calls, "White Coat Syndrome." She gives very close attention to every doctor in a white coat. She is looking for a very special one.



***RUBY FINDS DAD!***



On our very first visit to Baptist East, Bailey and I asked to enter a room and found a nurse treating a patient who had not been responsive. She asked if we would try to visit, although she was doubtful we would get a response. I laid Bailey next to the patient on a towel. The nurse picked up the patient's hand petting Bailey with it saying, "Look! It's a puppy". The patient responded with a huge smile. Since then, I have seen many examples of just how powerful pet therapy can be, and I am so grateful to be on the other end of Bailey's leash. We visit the main hospital on the second Monday of each month, and I appreciate our rotation of Trained Aides, Amy Jordon, Jean Glenn and Amy Lee

***Julie Hines & Bailey***



***Linda Laun & Penny***

Currently WAGS visits the CBC Group and Cancer Center at 4003 Kresge Way with four teams; Jenny Pagni with Ruby, Dottie Chapman with Toby, Linda Laun with Penny, and Diana Cook with Frankie. Their Trained Aides are Martha Raymer and myself. Some patients receive infusion therapy for hours and the distraction our dogs provide as well as the support and comfort they offer cannot be measured.



***Dottie Chapman & Toby***



*Jill Mangold & Bence, Maggie Collie,  
Jennifer King, & Alex Williams*

On the third Wednesday morning of each month the Baptist East visiting teams consist of Sharon McDermott with Patches, Gerrie Leppert with Maggie, Jill Mangold with Bence and Melissa Gernet with Stella; the Trained Aides are Kathleen Duane and Jean Glenn. They visit Palliative Care and Oncology. Sharon shared that there are times when the visitors in Palliative Care show so much relief for just a few moments of comfort that it makes every visit special. In Oncology whether the patient is dealing with good news or bad, they are delighted to have a hug or be able to pet the dogs. These teams do what they can to offer support to both the patients and staff in these very stressful environments.



*Melissa Gernert & Stella*

Melissa relayed that she has seen some patients go from being unsure if they wanted a pet therapy visit to telling endless stories about their pets. She shared how good it feels to be a small, bright spot in someone's day!



*Jean Glenn, Gerrie Leppert  
& Maggie*

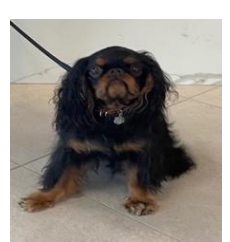


*Sharon McDermott & Patches*



WAGS is thrilled to have a few dogs in the wings, looking forward to joining the Baptist East Team. Those teams include Linda Laun's full-of-personality *Luna*, Jean Glen's gorgeous, Golden Retriever *Sadie*, Melanie Broughton's friendly, little tail wagging *Dash*, Martha Raymer's beautiful, gentle Collie *Ivy*, Jenny Pagni's, foster failure/therapy dog success, *Berni*, and hopefully some of you. (Bernie recently passed evaluation as a Level 3 and may be visiting by the time this article is published.)

If you are interested in joining the teams for these very fulfilling visits, please contact Jenny Pagni ([jenny.pagni@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.pagni@gmail.com)). Jenny, Nicole, and Leeann will happily guide you through the process.



*Martha Raymer's Ivy, Linda Laun's Luna, Jenny Pagni's Bernie, Jean Glen's Sadie, Melanie Broughton's Dash*

*To be continued .....*

When researching this article, I heard so many wonderful stories; they would not fit into one article. So, the next WAGazine will feature "Baptist East - Blasts from the Past." Don't miss it!