



### **Successful Tails: The Wonders of Therapy Dogs**

Patricia H. Wheeler, Ph.D.

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*Successful Tails* explores the world of therapy dogs, serving both as a guidebook for those who might be interested in working with the canines, as well as a tribute to the animals and the people who work with them.

The book begins with an introductory chapter, defining therapy dogs, their training, requirements, and the rewards and benefits of working with the dogs. The animals, notes author Patricia H. Wheeler, “are selected and trained, with their handler, to serve people of all ages, and conditions.” They “are someone’s pet, but they serve other people.” The chapters that follow are structured around individual organizations that utilize therapy dogs, with accompanying testimonials, anecdotes, poems and pictures.

Some of the most poignant stories come in a section on therapy dogs and veterans. In one tale, Wheeler’s Black Lab, Lawrence, goes to the aid of a Vietnam veteran who suffers PTSD and struggles with alcohol. It is the man’s first time addressing a group of fellow veterans.

“At one point, I considered thanking him and moving on, as I felt he was experiencing too much anxiety,” writes Wheeler of the vet. “But ... a funny thing happened. Lawrence went up to him and perched his nose on his knee. The group member ... reached down and started stroking Lawrence ... as he continued to tell his story. There seemed to be a noticeable change ... His face seemed to soften and his body seemed to relax...”

*Successful Tails* is a thorough look at the service therapy dogs and their handlers provide. While the book could have benefitted from a judicious pruning to eliminate all but the most effective stories and many testimonials that can feel redundant, the entries shed light on how varied and extensive the use of these dogs can be. This will be especially interesting to anyone considering getting involved with therapy dogs – and readers who are not just might be by book’s end.

Also available in hardcover.