

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### SUCCESSFUL TAILS

*The Wonders of Therapy Dogs*

Wheeler, Patricia H.

AuthorHouse (374 pp.)

\$31.99 hardcover, \$23.95 paperback, \$3.99 e-book

ISBN: 978-1477264713; October 4, 2012

## BOOK REVIEW

Wheeler's debut gathers more than 250 anecdotes and testimonials about the wonders of therapy dogs.

The book's title might suggest a lighthearted approach to its subject, but in fact, it's an authoritative guide for anyone who aspires to be a therapy-dog handler. This thorough, but never pedantic, book emphasizes the value of therapy dogs and encourages owners to realize their dogs' potential to serve the needy. Wheeler, a dedicated therapy-dog handler, has been involved with therapy-dog programs since 2004, when she and her Labrador puppy were certified to participate. In the first chapter, she explains the certification process and which breeds are best suited to the work (and it is indeed work that can be stressful for a dog). She also provides hundreds of comments and stories she has collected from others that describe how beneficial a therapy-dog's visit can be. (In a foreword, U.S. Rep. Jerry McNerney of California, ranking member of the House Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, lauds Wheeler's book for showing how therapy dogs help military men and women recover from physical and emotional trauma.) The remaining chapters of this hefty 359-page book organize data and comments by location; for example, it lists therapy-dog sites in the vicinity of Livermore, Calif., including the Livermore VA Medical Center, where the "overall effect...can only be measured by the smiles and the upbeat behavior that one will witness when the dogs approach." Wheeler has two dogs now, Lawrence the Livermore Lab and Albert; many of the stories involve the talented and unusually empathetic Lawrence. In an appendix, she provides a biography and photo for each of the 51 dogs featured in the previous chapters, and another appendix contains biographies of each dog's handler. Yet another helpful appendix offers a list of suggested readings.

A thoughtful labor of love that dog aficionados will particularly enjoy.