



Research to protect, treat and cure animals.

Pet Owners Drive Efforts for Medical Cures

Dog lovers throughout the country are supporting science to cure canine cancer. Through a variety of grassroots efforts, dedicated pet owners raise awareness about the disease and bring Morris Animal Foundation (MAF)-funded scientists one step closer to finding a cure.

“One person can make a difference,” writes Sandy Vilahu, a California resident who organized the [K9K—Walk to Cure Canine Cancer](#) in Elk Grove this month. “We are dog lovers who believe we can be part of the cure.”

Monies raised by Vilahu and her team of volunteers on the 3K and 5K walks benefit MAF’s [Canine Cancer Campaign](#), an unprecedented effort to cure cancer, which kills one in four dogs.

In addition to onsite walkers, [virtual teams](#) of pet lovers—including veterinary clinics, families and individuals from at least seven states—are participating in the K9K to support its overall goal.

“We are surrounded by dedicated pet owners who want to make the world a better place for current family members and future generations,” said Patricia Olson, DVM, PhD, president and CEO of [Morris Animal Foundation](#). “It is rewarding to see our vision—to protect, treat and cure animals—championed by the very people whose lives are enriched by these animals.”

From Netop, the painting dog, whose work benefits canine brethren, to two Great Pyrenees walking from Austin, Texas, to Boston, Massachusetts, the canine cancer message is being conveyed in effective, albeit unconventional ways.

A unique component of these efforts is that they harness the dog’s innate ability to inspire and warm the hearts of strangers. Personal stories, which called these folks to action, will tug at your heart strings but the overtures to eradicate cancer through science are empowering.

April 17, 2009, marks the second anniversary of MAF’s Canine Cancer Campaign, and as an increasing number of pet owners join this cause, prospects for success improve dramatically.

“We’ve known about cancer for over half a century and that we still don’t know these answers [is] unacceptable to me,” writes Luke Robinson, a pet owner who took to the streets in 2008 to raise awareness about the disease after a cherished dog died of osteosarcoma, a painful bone cancer.

In a quest coined [2 Dogs, 2,000 Miles](#), Robinson and dogs Hudson and Murphy seek to raise awareness of canine cancer one city at a time. His personal and touching story is published [online](#).

The genesis for the [Pepper/Sampson Memorial Cancer Fund](#), which began in 2001, is similar. The annual agility event, held this year on July 24-26 in Carson City, Nevada, celebrates the life of Pepper, who died of lymphoma. It annually attracts human and canine cancer survivors who recognize the need to band together; they know there is power in numbers.

In Kansas, several pet owners created a nonprofit group known as [GREYlong](#) after their dogs died of cancers that had no known cures or further treatment options, said Lori Haberman-Wilson, one of the founders. Because the goal is “to make a difference in the lives of our companion pets today and tomorrow,” GREYlong uses money raised from events to sponsor MAF health studies.

The organization’s name is a nod to graying dogs and the hope that pets will live long, healthful lives—an objective supported through a partnership with [M&M Designs](#), a signature canine clothing company that donates profits to GREYlong and animal adoption programs.

In North Carolina, a small dog named [Netop](#) and his owner channel their artistic energies into whimsical artwork—[paintings](#) and [note cards](#)—that support MAF-funded research, local humane organizations and community rescue workers. Proceeds from his work were recently used to purchase 54 pet oxygen masks for city fire and emergency vehicles.

Birds, bears and a variety of other animals take shape among Netop’s brightly colored broad brush strokes. Muse, mentor and pet parent Jacqueline Karch describes Netop as an abstract expressionist.

“He brings a lot of joy to a lot of people,” says Jacqueline, a visual artist and sculptor who taught Netop to paint using “touch” training techniques. “If I had been a musician, I probably would have taught him to play the piano. Netop could do anything.”

Indeed, his fundraising and artistic feats are impressive.

Across the country, grassroots efforts—from artistic endeavors to physical feats—are raising awareness about canine cancer and funding future cures through MAF. We applaud these initiatives and encourage pet owners to participate in the ongoing effort to find a cure.



Luke, Hudson & Murphy
Courtesy of Kathy Chapman



Netop the Painting Pooch



Pepper