

# DOG an outstanding profession

Current canine mediation  
practice in therapeutic,  
educational and social projects



**FONDATION A ET P SOMMER**  
sous l'égide de la Fondation de France

# Friend and partner...

For thousands of years, we have assigned our oldest domestic companion to specific tasks: tracking, herding and protection. However, in developed countries, the number of dogs still performing these tasks has declined. Have dogs stopped working? Not at all, but now, its primary role is to be present. Do not be mistaken: companionship is a key function. In everyday life, pets -dogs are not the sole contenders- provide well-being. For those living in urban areas, pets maintain a connection with nature. For an isolated person, a companion animal may be his only contact with the living world. Knowing that one out of two French households decides to acquire a pet - half of them choose a dog - clearly illustrates that the presence of pets is important.

Thus, more and more dogs are taking over their specialized ancestors. These dogs are no longer used for herding livestock: now, they are trained instead of being tamed; their submissiveness has shifted to partnership. Their outstanding abilities: dynamism, responsiveness and cognitive skills have become particularly useful in medical, social or educational settings. Assistance dogs, skilled companion dogs or social help dogs, all have professionalized with ease the comforting warmth displayed to our contemporaries.

On the occasion of its second seminar, the Fondation Adrienne et Pierre Sommer highlights the dual function of dogs: companion and partner; thus explaining that unique bond between men and pets. We are delighted to see that the scope of activity within our foundation has initiated such abundant research and projects. This has been confirmed by the 153 applications, often of high quality, that we received for the 2011 call for project. Furthermore, Boris Albrecht analysis (see page 8) indicates that the dog occupies a strategic position in a large number of the projects submitted, –worthy of its universal status of a well-being messenger.

Guy Coutois

President of the Fondation Adrienne et Pierre Sommer

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# 8 short stories

**Close companion or partner to help care for other? it depends. But whoever they are, artists, explorers, prominent professionals.... dogs are their favorite. These well-known personalities have agreed to discuss their relationship with their dog.**

## The job of a dog

«To his dog, every man is Napoleon; hence the constant popularity of dogs.” said Aldous Huxley. I sometimes think about it, passing by the homeless beggar who camps just in front of my building. Winter and summer, the two mongrels are lying near him showing absolute trust and not asking any questions. I must have had a dog in my cot as I could never imagine life without one, nor without music. Music raises my spirits; dogs bring me back to nature and to my childhood. With my dog, I will always be seven, and this is a good way to stick with the basics. My dogs are the best teachers for patience, affection and non-verbal communication. Whenever I am truly happy, I surprise myself by barking.



**Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber** | Journalist, media proprietor and writer. His most recent book is entitled: *Trop vite!* (Too fast!) (Albin Michel, 2010)



## Mourning the dog

I remember Christian. When his dog, companion of all time, disappeared, he was deeply disturbed for eight days. I was the one to discover the body and to break the news to him. Consumed with grief, he ran to the half worm-eaten body. He hugged it for a long time. Then his anger burst out. He would have murdered anyone who dared to make careless remark. He left the next day saying only: “I felt I died yesterday.” On his return to Paris, he renewed his delinquent’s life but even worse. I visited him regularly in prison. At each visit, he would speak about his dog. Fortunately, sometime later, Christian succeeded in rebuilding his life and eventually found happiness.

**Guy Gilbert** | Priest and youth worker, he devotes himself to the rehabilitation of youth in difficulties through the human-animal bond.

## She changed my life!

I had always wanted a dog, but the opportunity had never occurred. About six months ago, I was given a little griffon dog that the owners couldn't keep. She changed my life! When I come home, she is waiting at the window, and then rushes to the door to hug me endlessly. She amazes me with her ability to give affection. When I tease her, she doesn't like it. She looks as if she was saying, “it's unfair”, but when I stop - Hop! - She starts hugging again. She is never angry. What she expresses is the extraordinary innocence of an animal. Her freshness. It seems that evil doesn't touch her. It's beautiful. Her name is Sarah, but the name of Abraham's wife seemed too solemn for her. So I call her Pépette. And I don't groom her. I want her to keep the long salt and pepper coat that nature gave her. Do I talk about her with passion? Of course. This little critter is a revelation. She prevents my loneliness.

**Jean-Marie Pelt** | Plant biology professor and botanist-environmentalist. He is the founder of the European Institute of Ecology at Metz. His most recent book is entitled: “l'évolution vue par un botaniste” (the evolution seen by a botanist) (Fayard, 2011).

## Two faces of violence



For three years, I have been studying the link between animal abuse and domestic violence. According to a survey conducted among Dutch veterinarians, 52% of animal abuse cases coincided with violence against humans. The proven link shows that whenever there is animal abuse we could suspect domestic violence and vice-versa. The media took up this question concerning a serious case where victims were sheep and horses and could have ended in a homicide; this finally convinced the authorities to act. Since April 2011, Dutch veterinarians have to report cases of animal abuse observed, initiating the sharing of information between the media, the justice system, the police and, social workers. Animal welfare inspectors had already warned their colleagues a few times in the social sector. Furthermore police officers will now receive specific training to help them identify the link between animal abuse and violence against humans. An abused animal often precedes a tragedy - and often there are no limits.

**Marie-Jo Enders-Slegers** | She specializes in human-animal relationships, she is a researcher at Utrecht University, Vice-President of the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO), and she leads the Dutch working group on domestic and animal violence.



## 83 years going from dog to dog

My parents owned a Fox-Terrier. Then, there was Lassie, a Scottish terrier, she would come over and visit me at boarding school. Otherwise, the headmaster's wire-haired Dachshund kept me company. It was very

comforting for I was the youngest of the classroom. Once during a European trip, my parents enrolled me at a Swiss school. I got infatuated with Poochy, the director's dog. Poochy did not understand English, so I had to speak to him in French, quite a good stimulus. At University, I adopted a Terrier. In 1947, my father bought me Green Chimneys. At that time, I got a Collie. Then I was offered a Setter. In 1954, Myra and I were given a Boxer dog as a wedding present. Since then, we have had two more plus an Afghan hound. Although a real vegetarian, he was fond of licking up the barbecue grid. I have also had several Labradors, a Great Dane, a Scottish-Terrier, a Cairn terrier and now our Pomeranian Spike. He never leaves me, he is my partner. Dogs play their part at Green Chimneys. For the last 20 years, some of them have been educated to become assistance dogs. And dogs belonging to the staff also get involved.

**Sam B. Ross** He founded Green Chimneys (New York) in 1947. He is a pioneer in AAA/T for children with special needs.

## Dogs in Antarctica

How can people who defend animals against man's aggression think that our relationship with animals is devoid of love? Spending months and months together in the heart of such vastness, implies an extraordinary osmosis with our canine companions, a very deep bonding, an unusual complicity and mutual affection (...). Just like us, our dogs are explorers too. They will conquer Antarctica as well as us bipeds. Our interdependence is total. To those who protest against our attempt without even understanding what it is all about, I would tell them: "I live a beautiful love story with my dogs, do not despise it!"

**Jean-Louis Etienne** Physician and explorer, has crossed Antarctica on foot with sled dogs. The text below is an extract from his book Transantarctica (Robert Laffont, 1990).



**Philippe Geluck**

Cartoonist and the father of the celebrate feline, The Cat, For him, there is no doubt that «The Cat could have been a dog»

## A dog to live with or it's a dog's life

Since his retirement, my father has been enjoying living in the country; so we decided to give him a Jack Russell. But as soon as the critter entered our house, my children did not want to let go of her. But my father was delighted to share the dog's company with us. This dog was at the heart of the bonding between the generations by going back and forth between our houses. That female dog was mischievous and always had her way. Whenever she wanted to go for a walk nobody could prevent her from doing so. I was always afraid she might get bitten by a fox or, even worse get lost. A few times, she had been seen far away from the village; in fact most of the time she was snoozing quietly in my father's den. When she had been away for a few hours, she would come back to our house, sneakily, settling herself on her cushion. It seems she liked living two lives: either wandering on the loose pursuing her fantasies or enjoying the comfort of our cozy house. "Animus" in Latin means soul or spirit. When I was a little boy, I could not accept that animals did not have a soul. When you live with an animal you know very well how to decipher his wagging tail, blinking eyes or the way his head is moving. Obviously some people do not believe that but I am sure that animals observe us and stay close to us; somehow they also speak but with their heart.

**CharlÉlie Couture** Singer-songwriter, painter, writer and photographer. His last album is entitled: Fort Réveur (2011).

Visit our website for more testimonials

[www.fondation-apsommer.org](http://www.fondation-apsommer.org)



# HISTORY, OVERVIEW, CONNECTION

SHARING ROLES, SPECIALIZATION, LEARNING NEW CODES FROM THE OTHER... THREE APPROACHES TO DECIPHER THE MAN-DOG PARTNERSHIP.



## From Mowgli to R2-D2: What would you lose without dogs?

**Didier Vernay** is a neurologist at the Clermont-Ferrand University Hospital and President of Licorne & Phénix association.

Over all continents, human and canine co-evolution has led to the development of a large selection of dog breeds so that to fulfill human needs. At the same time, over thousands or even millions of years took place the “neuronal recycling” process proposed by Stanislas Daheane(1). This process allowed our two species to share a variety of specializations: the intimate complicity with dogs allowed consolidating mutual strength points. Relying upon their olfactory ability, dogs were dedicated to specific activities such as tracking, hunting and protection. Hence, Men could put their mind at rest to better sleep and dream. Furthermore, Men have had the opportunity to enhance both emotional and relational understanding, paving the way

to a more sophisticated socialization. From that angle, Men would have put some of their abilities aside such as reading environmental cues such as animal tracks or else. Still, Men may have kept a connection with their impaired abilities as dogs have been giving out, without men realizing it, key information. Mainly through olfaction but perhaps also through another significant function quite “scientifically incorrect”: anticipated perception.

Today, the proportion of dogs involved in working or assistance activities is in decline. Regardless of their roles: assistance for handicapped people; mediation in social, therapeutic or educational environments, keepers for persons and their

By dint of rubbing against  
each other, dogs and  
their human companions  
have become some-  
how bilingual.



belongings, rescuers for buried survivors, sniffers for drug detection, truffles or even cancer; working dogs are numerous giving way to their fellows, the pet-dogs. Those pet-dogs are essentially acquired for an affectionate relationship. By dint of rubbing against each other, these dogs and their human companions have become somehow bilingual. This gives the material to work on three levels: technical, affectivity and induction of instinct. So, we have the model to conduct research on educational and behavioral trails for the utmost benefit of our society.

What is next? If prospective is the art of making mistakes, the volume of our frontal lobe forces us to go on playing the game. Let's imagine the scenarios induced by three combined factors. Firstly, there are the human and dog adaptive and progressive abilities. Then, we have the technological innovation and finally, the outbreak of economic, environmental or even epidemic crisis. On this basis, can we expect to live on good terms and share our world with trained, sensory stimulated and sturdy animals, and thinking machines more and more sophisticated; some as likable as the little robot R2 D2 from Star Wars? Or will we live with stressed dogs, suffering from degenerative diseases, unable to enter a world of network

communications and, therefore, confined to an impoverished reality?

Did we lose anything by living with dogs?

Along the path of evolution, the dog, by being in constant contact with us, might have fulfilled a paradoxical function. On the one hand, the dog helped us to develop our social brain which allowed us to become specialists.

On the other hand, as the dog has set us free from parts of our fears, our presence of mind and interiority have been somehow fading. My personal approach of animal mediation brings up the following hypothesis: the presence of a happy and well behaved dog helps humans to reconnect with a more attentive and perceptive sharpness. Have we become dependent on dogs? Are those living without dogs deprived of an enlarged reality? Mowgli, the wild child who lies behind each of us, knows what he owes to the dogs. He asks us in return: What would you lose without dogs?

Stanislas Dehaene is a neuro-psychologist; he holds the chair of experimental and cognitive psychology at the Collège de France. Excerpt from his book: "Neurones de la lecture"

Odile Jacob 2007



## Caninizing humans, humanizing dogs

**Pierre Schulz** is a psychiatrist and the head physician of the Clinical Psycho-Pharmacology Department at the Geneva University Hospitals, Switzerland.

The variety of roles played by dogs for men's benefit is so valuable that, in many countries, the canine population represents one tenth of the human population. Today, people acquire dogs mainly for their companionship. I have been studying that relationship which reveals an unearthly symbiotic role. Indeed, the man-dog partnership is no longer limited to performing tasks such as herding livestock. There has been a transfer of emotions from dogs to men. I call this phenomenon the caninizing of society. There are three main forms, sometimes combining. Caninizing through addition occurs when a person acquires a dog for his own well-being. Caninizing through subtraction is when a human seeks refuge from society by having a dog. Caninizing through substitution concerns socially isolated persons. In that case, the dog is their only friendly support. These three forms demonstrate that dogs are most of the time easy going, confident and not judgmental. It is an easy relationship for people as it differs from the suspicious attitude that prevails in human society when meeting one another. In return, men have started to humanize dogs.

Through their contact, men have provided dogs with a supportive environment for the development of affective and reasoning skills. Lately, this humanization is tainted by caricature trends: fashion clothing, beauty products, etc.. In this case, the human behavior does not serve dog's evolution and looks pretty excessive - as well as others expensive, polluting and useless behaviors - apart from pleasing consumers. ■

As dogs play many roles within the human society; analyzing these roles suggests considering the owners as much as the dogs. This requires conducting an in-depth study concerning the human's emotions, thoughts and behaviors.



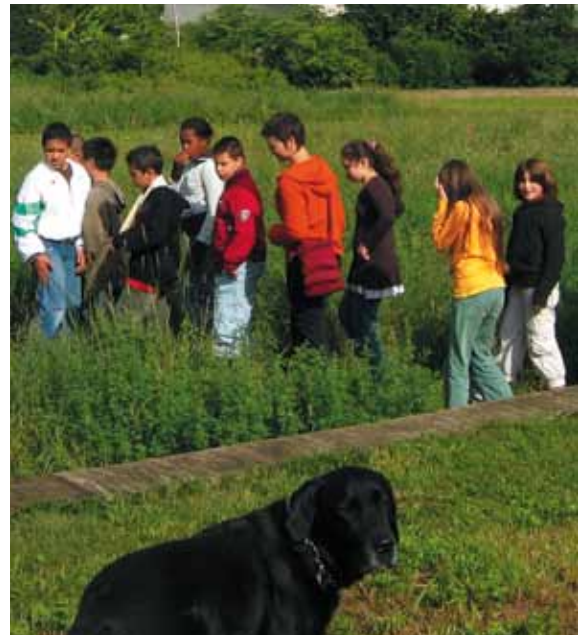
# When men and dogs are playing

**Marion Vicart** has a PH.D in sociology. She is an associate researcher at the European cultures and societies laboratory CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research) and a research analyst for the Greater Lyon conurbation.

Within the scope of a research about human and canine communication, we found out that a dog's behavior and attitudes vary according to whom the dog is playing with, either a person or a dog. When playing with its owner, the dog is less on the alert. But, that wavering attention does not occur when playing with its own kind. Thus, according to anthropologists, distracted attention and quietness are quite specific of human beings.

Dogs belong to one of the few species to keep on playing around once adults. This is the sign of a remarkable learning capacity because playing is essential to get to understand of its environment. The more an animal plays, the more it develops its social and cognitive abilities. Dogs play a lot with humans, so they get to know quite well the human world. This could explain why dogs have served a variety of roles within society. Dogs have the ability to share consciousness with humans while having a limited presence; i.e. the wavering attention that induces quietness and stillness. A dog can distract itself from its owner without neglecting him entirely. This means that a dog can be somehow absent minded or its head "in the clouds". But the dog's ability to ignore slightly a man's presence goes beyond the game. Our study pointed out that a dog is less focused on new or unknown elements of a situation within a man's presence.

The dog can hold at bay its owner's reassuring presence while doing something else. Thus the dog is less vigilant and develops a keen curiosity. That capacity to be "absent minded" in the presence of a known human has not been identified in any other animal. ■



(1) Marion Vicart, *Des chiens auprès des hommes. Ou comment penser la présence des animaux en sciences sociales*, thèse de sociologie, EHESS, Paris, juin 2010.  
<http://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org>

# STUDIES, EVALUATIONS, EXPERIENCES

ONLY FEW STATISTICAL STUDIES ARE DEDICATED TO CANINE-ASSISTED ACTIVITIES. THIS ANALYSIS AND THIS STUDY PAVE THE WAY FOR AN APPROACH IN THIS FIELD.



## Dogs in our calls for projects: findings and prospects

**Boris Albrecht** is the director of the Fondation Adrienne et Pierre Sommer.

**T**he Fondation Adrienne et Pierre Sommer supports partnerships in Animal Assisted Activities in a resolute way.

These activities can be carried out in a social, educational or therapeutic field. Over the eight years of calls for projects, we have seen these diverse forms of initiatives growing and getting more structured, while the dog has become more and more important.

In 2011, out of 153 nationwide requests sent to the Foundation, the dog represented 47 % of the activities being considered. In 33 % of the cases, only dogs intervened. The others species were concerned in 14 % of the cases. Since last year, the number of records dedicated to the dog has increased by 3 %. Some factors can explain this dynamism:

- The positive and universal image of dogs ensuing from its historic proximity with human beings;
- The best knowledge of the canine behavior acquired by the professionals;
- The large variety of interventions and activities for which the dog is competent;
- The structuring and the increased media coverage of projects targeting new populations;
- The logistical advantages of the dog (transportation, health care) compared to other species used in mediation.

In the calls for projects related to AAA usually received in 2011, people with disabilities and elderly people stood at the foreground of the demand (respectively 40 % and 35 % of the total).

Followed people with social difficulties (16 %) and children (4 %), other populations accounted for 5 %. In the case of elderly people, demands involving a dog came first (76 %).

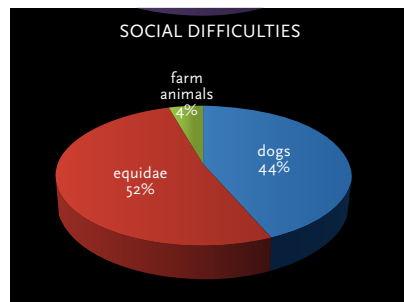
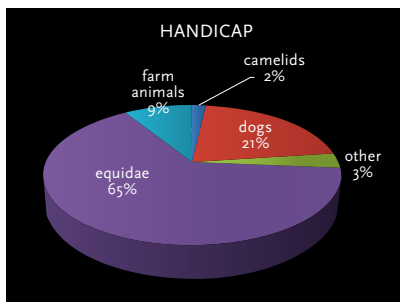
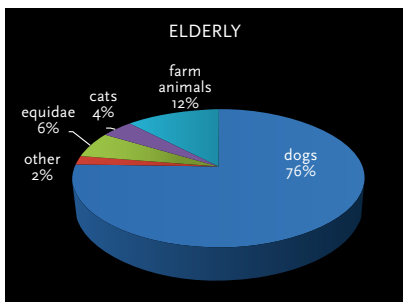
And this result concerned resident dogs as well as visiting dogs. Surveys conducted in 2005 and 2010 by Robert Kohler (read the following pages) for the Fondation Adrienne et Pierre Sommer confirmed this reality. This mode of intervention seems to be well anchored.

In the group of people with disabilities, equines (65 % the cases) outweigh canines (21 %). The wide range of techniques involving horses to relieve pathology is to take into account. About a year ago, we exposed this concept during our Conference dedicated to Equine Assisted Activities. The same was true for the group of people with social difficulties (16 % of the projects in AAA). In this group the gap between equines and canines is shrinking: 52 % and 44 %, respectively. We think of the high proportion of homeless accompanied by their dogs, for whom taking into account their animal is a key factor of reintegration. On a scale that we expect to develop, the interventions in prison settings present the same profile. If, with 4% of requests for support, schools and extracurricular sectors appear to be left behind in the field of AAA, note the high percentage of records for dogs that have these groups: 75%!

To boost this trend, perhaps some prejudices should be broken down. In the end, it is necessary to discuss the new tracks available to canine-assisted activities. Without neglecting the work that has been done, let us hope that researchers and actors would come out, within reason, of the agreed frameworks. Why not try to assign a dog to inmates, which would be trained to become a guide for a blind person? The United States did it - exactly thirty years ago! Today, in Switzerland, dogs help people with epilepsy to deal with their illness. In Great Britain, an educated dog mitigates the deafness of its master. Qualitatively, France is not outdone. At the Tenon Hospital in Paris, a team in conjunction with the Atomic Energy Commission and a military canine unit of Orléans (city in north-central France), is exploring the possibility of detecting some cancers - here, prostate cancer- relying upon the olfactory ability of dogs. Further works have already started to apply the method to tumors of various types.

For our next calls for projects, the foundation A & P Sommer will be delighted to study and support proposals of such inventiveness. We advance well only by imagining.■

**THE PRESENCE OF DOGS BASED ON THE TYPE OF INITIATIVE** In 2011, the dog appeared in 47 % of the projects received by the foundation A & P Sommer. These projects concerned elderly people (35 % out of all the projects), disabled people (40 %), people with social difficulties (16 %) and children (4 %).



Every week and fortnight  
a visiting dog comes  
to visit residents for  
a few hours. This is the  
opportunity to gather  
residents in  
a collective activity.



## Resident or visiting: dogs in nursing homes in France.

**Robert Kohler** is the director of La Roselière, a nursing facility in Kunheim, (Alsace, north-eastern France)

**I**n 2005 and 2010, we have been willing to examine more closely pets' presence in French nursing facilities and particularly dogs. The 2010 survey conducted with the financial support of the Fondation Adrienne et Pierre Sommer led us to contact with 7,725 institutions. 69 % of these institutions (i.e. 5117) acknowledged that pets were present either permanently or part-time and for 10% of them (i.e. 765) one or more dogs were concerned.

These data led us to conclude that 915 retirement homes (i.e 12% of the homes contacted) enjoy a dog visitation program. In the case of dogs, there are two possible situations, either a resident dog living in the facility or a visiting dog. In the nursing home I manage we have a resident dog

a Nova Scotia named Upton. This dog can spend the whole morning in the Alzheimer section with a trained staff member, and then Upton can be handed over to a resident for a few hours giving the resident an individual and private "dog time". Later on, Upton might go for a good nap in a resident's room providing a warm presence once again. Every one or two weeks, a visiting dog comes over for a few hours. This is the opportunity to have collective activities such as grooming, games and exercises. The dog can visit a resident in his room but never stays there by itself.

The visiting dog has also a significant quality. It is a "Trojan dog" that arouses the interest of having a dog permanently in the facilities visited. Thus, four years ago, we created a structured

The resident dog can spend the whole morning in a specialized section of the institution, and then be assigned to a resident and rest in his room.



visiting dog program. To this day, five of the nursing facilities we have been visiting have a resident dog. The wish to have a permanent dog would certainly not be there without these visiting sessions. The staff usually think of dogs as extra work and trouble. But seeing how the residents like these visits and look forward to the next, the nursing staff rapidly shift their concern to a pro-active attitude either by increasing the number of visits or by acquiring a dog.

I insist on the fact that those projects are mostly set up by the staff. Ten years ago, the nursing facility top management would have been the one to decide of any pet presence in 80% of the cases. Back then, there was no specific regulation. However, the 1986 regulation forbidding animals the access to social and medical facilities was repealed in 2003. Besides, in 2002 a new law was issued making the residents' well-being and satisfaction a priority for nursing homes. Within this new frame of organization, nursing, social-help and technical staff has been the motive force in favor of the presence of pets. Among the applications received by Handi'chien to acquire a trained dog, 80 % were projects supported by caregivers as they are the closest to the residents in the daily

routine and share their thoughts and memories. Pets coming with the family to visit a parent-resident have also played their part, they are welcomed in 4,476 out of 7,725 facilities contacted (i.e. 58 %). Another taboo has been swept away considering that, ten years ago, the large sign "no dogs allowed" used to be very common on the front door of most nursing homes. Noticing how the family pet brings immediate happiness to the resident and provides a focus of attention and common interest, the staff is considering to extending such experience to other residents.

Today, animal presence either permanently or part-time can be found in 5,426 French nursing homes and has increased by 140 % over the last five years, i.e. 70 % of all the facilities we contacted. In 2005, they were only 2,226. It is clearly an uptrend and, I would conclude with this wish: All Animal Assisted Activities performed in nursing facilities must be careful not to delay the set up of an ad hoc organization as they may suffer from the accidents that might statistically occur as a consequence of a growing development. ■

To consult the survey conducted by Robert Kohler visit our documentation center website : <http://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org>



# HANDICAP AND PARAMEDICAL SUPPORT

WHOEVER THEY BRING HELP TO: PARAPLEGIC,  
BLIND PERSONS OR PATIENTS IN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS  
THESE ASSISTANCE DOGS ARE EDUCATED DOGS.



## At the end of the leash, life in blue and yellow.

**Marie-Claude Lebre**t is the director of the association Handi'Chiens in Alençon (Normandy)

**F**or the last 20 years, the association Handi'Chiens has been training dogs that are handed over to people in need of help, completely free of charge. These Labradors and Golden Retrievers follow the same educational program although their ultimate function is defined according to the recipient's needs or condition.

### ASSISTANCE DOG

This dog helps persons who are paraplegic, quadriplegic, have cerebral palsy or those who have progressive diseases. On a daily basis, reliance on other people for routine tasks is reduced. Its presence makes it easier for the recipient to communicate with others: the dog hides the wheelchair. That friend is a good listener, doesn't judge, gives affection and restores confidence - whatever disability or speech disorder the recipient may have.

### SKILLED COMPANION DOG.

This dog is handed over to the parents of children suffering from autism, trisomy 21, cerebral palsy, severe and multiple disabilities. The dog gives a playful stimulation in the activities the child has to

*"Upon their first meeting, Ulotte, the new member of the family knew that Lisa was different. We used to be very anxious when going out but not anymore as Ulotte is doing a great job; she stimulates Lisa who is now more focused and concentrated. Now our daughter and her lab are going along the path of life in a perfect symbiosis".*

The father of an autistic girl

undergo (education, therapy). The dog reduces the reliance on parents as the child steadily accomplishes by himself simple daily tasks. Altogether, pleasure, spontaneous and creative games help the child to go through physical or speech-language therapy rehabilitation. The dog boosts his confidence.

#### SOCIAL HELP DOG.

This dog can easily adapt to various recipients. The dog is handed over to workers in healthcare and medico-social establishments. The dog helps bonding with others and boosts sensory and physical abilities. The presence of a dog facilitates understanding, elaboration of thoughts, behavior adjustment and interest. With a dog, it is easier to connect with the patient maintained in silence by illness. The dog alleviates the painful moments, especially during the end-of-life period.

But before wearing the Handi'Chien yellow and blue cape, the dog has been through two years of training. At only seven weeks old, the puppy goes for 18 months to one of the 250 foster families working with Handi'chien. The family provides the puppy socialization opportunities; teaches him manners and 30 basic commands- by the end of the training program, the dog will know 50 commands. Every two weeks, volunteer families meet locally with a professional dog trainer or one of the 40 Handi'Chiens representatives. When it reaches 18 months, the dog completes its training

by staying 6 months in one of our 4 regional centers. Finally, during a two weeks session, the dog meets its new master. During that period, they choose each other and with the help and advice of instructors, they get to know each other and team up. Training for both, the recipient and the dog is an absolute must.

Referents in social, medical institutions or medico-social establishments in charge of a social dog attend a training session where they will learn about the dog itself and the activities to be proposed to patients: people in retirement homes, children in special schools... Either, therapeutic, educational or social, the program has to be evaluated -and sometimes readjusted- depending on the recipients, the professionals, and the well-being of the dog.



*"My lab Benco? He is a devoted help who gives me amazing attention and affection. Benco is always by me wherever I go either to tennis games, work, at friends' or to the movies. When I am with him, people see me again as a very positive and energetic person".*

Muriel, paraplegic in a wheel chair

*"Alleys waken up, eyes brighten up and hands extend to gently caress, heads bend down to kiss, arms stretch out to embrace, emotions burst, laughing and petty talks are spreading: a feeling of shared happiness embraces us altogether".*

When Celeste, the volunteer and her dog arrive at the nursing home

Back twenty years ago,  
the master and his dog  
memorized their regular  
routes which they rarely  
deviated. Routine  
was the rule.



## The guide-dog and the blind person: from technical assistance to an elaborate partnership

**Christine Turc** is the communication manager for the association Chiens-guides d'aveugles de l'Ouest ,  
(Guide-dogs of Western France) in Angers.

When looking at the first known pictures with guide-dogs, we notice that back in the thirties the fundamentals had already been laid out. The dog could stay focus on its task, guide carefully around obstacles and cross over a straight line. Since the postwar period, the major achievement was made on traffic areas. The maneuvering no longer falls to the dog with its high sensitivity to immediate danger. Ahead of getting a dog, an instructor will teach the blind person how to decipher an extremely challenging urban environment. The master gains more security and serenity. Indeed, in our modern cities, it can be difficult for the dog to identify the limit of a roadway or the painted line marks of a sidewalk without raised edges ... The dog has just to detect obstacles both on the ground and in height. Over the years, the dog will expand its skills for its owner's benefit: finding a free seat, showing the doorknob, a stair handrail or a cash dispenser.

In the 1980's, another major step forward was made. So far, the owner and his dog had to "learn by heart" their usual routes, from home to work or shopping areas and the way back. Walks were restricted to these routes, the dog acted like a robot and routine was the norm. The dog training practice was also rigorously strict: the dog was pushed, forced to sit down, thus enduring the work without participating.

Since then, the puppies are carefully selected and are raised by foster families to be socialized. Dogs now develop the necessary self-confidence to deal with stressful situations and are able to take initiatives. On top of that, positive dog training is now efficient. Dogs are encouraged with praise or other rewards to have faultless performances. That way, the handler and the dog develop a strong complicity. In some ways, the blind person learns how "to read" his dog. Body movements compensate for the absence of eye-contact so puzzling for the dog. The master brings confidence to his dog, and finally they team up successfully. ■



The dog helps psychotic patients to return to reality, and has a soothing and reassuring effect on neurotic patients

## Conciliation and opening to the world in a psychiatric closed ward.

**Éric Trivellin** is a mental health nurse at the Mulhouse hospital unit (Alsace region, eastern France). He is also in charge of the nationwide task group "Visiting dog activities" within the Central Canine Society (Société Central Canine). He is a confirmed trainer for this activity.

Since 2006, Animal Assisted Activities are performed in the restrained ward of the Mulhouse hospital unit. It took only 6 months to launch the project, without a doubt my "dog expertise" did count. Initially, it was a full-day session once a week, but three months later upon request of the medical team it came up to be 2 days a week. Presently these AAA are operating one day a week in two distinct wards.

I practice AAA, my four dogs participate by group of two in one of these wards. In the "heavy weight" category are the two Sarplaninac female dogs, and in the "medium and light weight" category the two other dogs, a Colley and a Shetland. Within that offer, the patient can choose a dog according to his mood and abilities. Interactions are more dynamic and the dogs get to rest when they feel like it. My first goal was to alleviate the burden of the ward. Quietness has been the crucial thing primarily and collectively shared. Arbois, U2, Dharma and Fleur have a soothing effect giving way to improved nursing care. When doing AAA, I do not wear my uniform, it's like a fence disappearing, contacts with the patients are

much easier. When I am wearing my professional nursing outfit, the question frequently asked is: "Where are the dogs?" The answer is the opportunity to discuss and provide them with some time references. I must add that the dog's presence brings also some relief to the medical staff: between them and patients, the beneficial effect works as a mirror.

When a psychotic patient takes care of the dog (brushing, cleaning its teeth and ears), he is on the path of taking care of himself and developing confidence and self-esteem. When the same man returns from a walk with the dog, he will frequently say "amazing, today many people did say hello to me". I remember one patient with suicidal behaviors and under heavy medication who had met the visiting dogs. Once he was released, he went to a shelter to choose the most astonishing cute mixed-breed dog. Over the last four years, he has not been re-hospitalized... But from time to time he comes back to visit his pals and inspires them to live a better life. Dogs give love, help structure and bring back into the real world. ■

# DOGS AND CHILDREN AT SCHOOL AND AFTER SCHOOL

DOGS ARE INVOLVED IN 75 % OF THE PROJECTS DEDICATED TO CHILDREN SUBMITTED TO THE FONDATION A ET P SOMMER. THREE INITIATIVES ILLUSTRATE THIS NATURAL ALLIANCE.



## A partner and a friend on the road to citizenship

**Alain Lambert** is professional dog trainer; he proposes canine education workshops for children in Paris and suburban towns.

When choosing “Citizen Dog” as a trademark for the canine education and bite prevention activities we have developed; we knew that we would upset purists: How can a dog be a citizen? Historians would point out that even if dogs have been present in cities since the mists of time that does not make them suitable voters. However dogs have no equal when it comes to promote the learning of citizenship rules. That is why we decided to invite dogs to the after class-activities for children from 6 to 12 years old. Most of these children live in working-class areas or in those deemed “sensitive neighborhoods” sometimes pictured as “no-go areas”.... The kids are extremely steady in attending the citizen dog scheme classes. We have

thought wiser to propose dog-activities during after-class activities than trying to introduce that activity into the overloaded primary school curriculum.

Our “canine” approach of citizenship reflects also the concept of how to live in society. The children we meet represent a large diversity of social, cultural and religious backgrounds. We work with dogs regardless of their breed or their previous life. We believe that for humans as well for dogs experience outdoes the innate. We have to admit that we are completely fond of the Grigri from Genevilliers\*, who is a terrific dog to work with, especially for after-class activities, and truly, in that context, Labrador and Golden Retriever would not be as efficient!





Children from the Descartes recreation center in Asnières (suburban town, northwest of Paris) pose for the purpose of Alain Lambert : "I asked them to stay perfectly still so that the dog would be perfect. Otherwise, he would be stressed and keep sticking out his tongue. They were completely relaxed".

Our teaching has nothing in common with a lecture. We proceed step by step so that the children gradually master their knowledge by training the dogs themselves. The children learn the basic rules needed for dog training. They learn how to control emotions and attitudes and anticipate the dog's reaction. They also have to adopt a rigorous and coherent behavior and be respectful towards people and animals -in the city and in the countryside, at home and in public areas. It happens that dog training rules are quite similar to the ethical and moral responsibilities a citizen must develop. The children successfully involved in these workshops have earned to live happily in society... without even having a dog themselves.

\* it is a dog adopted from the Gennevilliers animal shelter for Paris area. ■





Throughout a school year, 3rd and 4th grades children have been the foster family of the puppy Frosties, a future guide-dog for a blind person.

## The Children and their schoolmate Frosties

**Corine Berthy** is an educational psychologist. She teaches to children with special needs in an elementary public school in Meaux, a small town close to Paris.

Belonging to the network “give a chance to success”, the elementary school “Alain, in Meaux” is attended by children from very disadvantaged backgrounds. They have behavioral problems, poor relationship and lack of self-esteem. In September 2010, an animal assisted-activity project was proposed for these children. In the metropolitan area of Paris, the guide dog school of Coubert was kind enough to give us for a school year, Frosties, a three months Labrador puppy. Children in 3rd and 4th grade received the puppy for the “the foster family” phase of his training and were responsible for his socialization. Two main reasons dictated this choice. First, the deep cultural resistance these children usually have against dogs but Frosties status swept it away. Secondly, the project had been of unquestionable seriousness and altruism. Children quickly perceived Frosties as another pupil. Feeling in charge, the children wanted to give this puppy the best chance to enter successfully in his “next school” (some kind of a professional school) and later doing his job. These children became the teachers.

From troublesome, they became more soothed. Frosties acted like a mirror. For the pupils, it has helped them to become self-conscious of their own education and behavior. A visit to a veterinarian allowed them to address issues on health and hygiene. Meeting with a journalist and writings in the school newspaper have opened them to the outside world. One of the objectives that the initiative provided was to become aware of disability. Finally, the fear of the animal has been easily overcome for some of the children. In fact, an adult and educated dog may have less easily triggered so much openness and involvement. Now that Frosties has joined his “big school”, children who shared its life wonder about their own future and how to build it. What is the purpose of going to school? Frosties made that question less puzzling. ■



For these children suffering from different pathologies, Pivoine, Djazie and Sumo facilitate learning skills and help building self-esteem.

## A Westie and a Labrador to conquer self-esteem

**Catherine Debieu** is an elementary school teacher in Paris specialized for children with special educational needs.

Children from 8 to 12 years old attend that special class (CLIS) located in a Parisian school. They suffer from various pathologies such as autism, trisomy, intellectual deficiency, or pervasive developmental disorder. Every Friday, they welcome the teacher's little Westie Pivoine and Djazie, a female Labrador lent by the "Parole de Chien" association. Djazie is in training to become an assistance dog. "These dogs have a twofold purpose" explains Catherine Debieu, the teacher. "First, they facilitate learning skills and then, they offer a tremendous springboard for developing confidence and self-esteem". Within the school, the other pupils are somehow a little bit jealous: "those of the Cliss are too lucky! They have dogs in the classroom, and they can make them do things!" According to the child's age and personal abilities, dog training activities range from basic orders to role playing games - for example, the shopkeeper and the client in a wheelchair with his assistance dog. Indeed the children wrote a short play out of their work with the dog, and at the end of the school year they performed in front of their families and the other pupils. For the first time in their life, they were proud and in the spotlights. One month before the event, the

children went to the Handi'Chiens facilities in Alençon to obtain their assistance dog trainer certification which includes theory and practice. "They had perfectly mastered the entire curriculum. They want to go back there!" Why have we paired a trained Labrador and a pet Westie? "Djazie is able to identify any order even ambiguous" answers Catherine Debieu. "The children have never the feeling that they have failed. Otherwise it would be devastating for them. As for Pivoine, she is quick to imitate Djazie when I train her! She shows the children that, whatever the differences, anyone can learn." One by one, self-esteem and confidence activate learning skills. Just like this little girl who had been in CLIS for four years, she did not master reading, but guess what were the first words she singled out? Pivoine and Djazie!



\*CLIS (classes d'intégration scolaire) is for children with disabilities too severe for schooling in regular classes, but not requiring special facilities. ■

# 5 EXCLUSION: WHEN A DOG OPENS DOORS

THE DOG PROVIDES WARMTH TO THE INMATES. ALONG THE STREETS, THE DOG SOFTENS THE LIVES OF THE HOMELESS... AND CAN ALSO HELP THEM COME TO TERMS WITH LIFE.



## The sunny hour at a Strasbourg prison

**Patricia Arnoux** has funded the association Evi'dence . She carries out Animal Assisted Activities in the detention center of Strasbourg.

**T**he detention house of Strasbourg was created in 1988. Presently there are 700 inmates, much more than the 444 theoretically expected. Inmates stay there from a few days up to two years, or even more. In 2008, a suicide by hanging occurred in the young offenders unit. Previously several suicides had already occurred nearby in the Metz detention centre. At the same time, Evi'dence had just started visiting with pets and these tragic deaths somehow boosted the activities. "The main objective was to reduce tension between inmates and guards and alleviate the stress of the professionals" explains Patricia Arnoux who founded Evi'dence. As one guard told Patricia "Having to bring down the dead kid is a lasting torment".

Today, the experiment has extended. Juveniles can keep and take care of a small pet (rabbit or guinea pig) in their cell. In return, they have to accomplish paid work ten days a month. Half of their income is spent for the care of their pet. Regarding adult prisoners, facilities for pets are available in three units. These facilities are remarkably well kept with fresh straw, fresh water and food...

Daily, rabbits, ferrets, mice, chinchillas, diamond doves or turtle-doves receive a one hour visit from their inmate; time to open the cages and let the birds fly onto branches hanging from the ceiling. Whispering, stroking and unusual kindness are hanging around. "Until now I never thought I could be kind" said a prisoner".



The dog is at the core of that feeling of wellness. For the last six months, groups of four or five prisoners have regularly gathered in a large room that used to be a search room to meet with Sunny, Patricia's Golden Retriever. To this day, one hundred prisoners have been participating. The prisoners have the opportunity to put aside their burden which makes bonding easier. Either mischievous or loving, the dog is always in tune with the mood prevailing in the session. Sunny is the group totem. The rabbit and the turtle-dove never get out of the prison. For the dog, it is quite different; he lives outside and comes in through the automatic gates along the corridors. Guards step out of their security cubicle to greet him; one of the guards might even hold the leash and walk Sonny to the prisoner's cell. In the security cubicle fridge, there is always a jar with dog food waiting for Sonny. In the administration unit, the secretary keeps in a drawer a Tupperware full of kibbles for the four legged visitor!

The women wing. Standing by the wall she has decorated and painted, inside the pets' room, Z explains: "Thanks to the dog, guards are not the same. They are nicer. Even when Sunny is not here". This slender and shy young woman is serving a fourteen years sentence. A woman guard enters the pets' room and takes out of a bag a dog treat and a carrot for Danette, the black and tan guinea-pig that Z is in charge of.

When the dog is present, the women are more talkative. Touchy subjects about pregnancy or sexuality can be shared. Patricia Arnoux noticed "The female inmates are more physical with the dog. They like hugging or mothering. On the contrary male prisoners prefer brushing the dog's hair and playing around." Of course the dog also helps the

male prisoners to bring up sore points but a prisoner can very well appreciate an hour lying down on the floor with the dog, both relaxing. "Beyond the activities, the main objective is to help the prisoner into rebuilding self-esteem, testifies Patricia Arnoux. But I am neither a physician nor a psychiatric. With my dogs I set off and facilitate. That's all."



At the Renne Central prison (in Brittany), Emmanuel Doumalin leads activities with his dogs similar to those developed by Patricia Arnoux. He plans to entrust inmates with the care of dissocialized animals from the local humane society.





## Homeless and their dog: shelter inadequacy

**Christophe Louis** is the director of the association "Les enfants du Canal" (The Children of the canal)

"Get rid of your dog and you will be welcomed!"

It is always the same, whenever a homeless person wants to enter a shelter with his dog; he has to face that issue. The association "Les enfants du Canal" has decided to have another approach based on two facts. First, only 15 % of the homeless people own a dog. Then, there is no logical reason to discriminate them when at the same time the law stipulates that dog-owners cannot be banned from living with their pets in housing buildings (social or private). We know of some young working adults living in the streets because the dormitories for young working people do not accept them with their dogs.

Beyond the management of care facilities, the staff is not the least friendly thus making things worse. Moreover, in a number of facilities, homeless owners are shocked that their dogs should endure an aggressive disinfectant treatment or to be given no other choice than sharing the room with another dog-owner. No need to say that this means incessant barking in case both dogs are male. Does this need to be reminded? To engage

a homeless person on the road to independence, you have to adopt a comprehensive approach.

First you have to consider what he wants, his dog included. Quite a basic move but still not really thought thoroughly.

The association "Les enfants du Canal" receives homeless dog-owners in their centers. A team of two peer workers (previously homeless persons) has joined the staff of the "Busabri", our day-center. That pair patrols the Parisian streets looking for homeless dog-owners. Food support is part of the scheme, but in an instructive way: the owner remains responsible for the subsistence of his dog. The team provides tips on animal behavior and healthcare. Finally, in January 2011, we opened a center dedicated to integration projects where eight peer workers are introduced to animal issues. Once they have completed their training, they will go on to other care facilities and help change judgmental attitudes (for both the general public and professionals) regarding homeless people and their dogs. ■



## Streets and dogs are the family-like environment for young homeless people.

**Christophe Blanchard** is a certified dog-trainer and is currently completing doctoral studies in sociology.

**K**haki pants, Rangers, laces undone, a tired face marked with tattoos, T. has the perfect apparel of the commonly called: "Punk with a dog". A usual way to identify a young-homeless living with his dog either in the streets or squatting. That pair is on the fringes of society. They depict the insidious development of social exclusion in western societies. This made me decide to track down the path of that strange couple. As a certified dog-trainer, it was relevant to me to explore the way they live. I see them preferably as urban nomads. That odd couple seduces as much it despises.

While often suspicious of the boisterous youth, the old lady will give some change so that the dog be fed. Still, young people with dogs are most firmly banished from cities areas as their presence is annoying for passer-by and prejudicial for business. However, the man-dog pair remains quite inventive against the odds. Contrary to established bias, the dog is not only a bait to obtain money or sympathy. Most of all, the dog

is a strong affective support and a precious help for psychological survival. For these young people who have often been through a chaotic background, their dog is in some way a child substitute. T. did confirm: "They are my kids"; looking at his canine pals Farfouille and Djinka with kindness. I pamper them, I care for them the way my parents should have taken care of me. Happy and not aggressive at all, both dogs are nothing close to the dangerous beasts anxious people are afraid of. Like other "integrated" dogs, they have their legal papers; papers most often missing for the owner himself. Furthermore, I found out that the dogs are part of an elaborate relationship scheme. The dogs are for these young people the foundation of a reinvented family where each puppy has an owner but also a godmother and a godfather within the group... ■

(1) Christophe Blanchard *Les jeunes errants et leurs chiens, un parcours semé d'embûches* – (Young homeless and their dog, a pattern of pitfalls) A study conducted by the Brest CCAS . Visit our documentation center : <http://documentation-apsommer.org>

# RESSOURCES

Some speakers of the symposium “Dog, an outstanding profession” are professionals working in specialized institutions. Here are their profiles and website addresses. We have also listed the references of inventive French, as well as foreign experiences.



## **Green Chimneys** • See page 2

Located upstate New York, the pioneer facility created by Sam and Myra Ross welcomes young people from 7 to 18 years old facing social, school or family difficulties. Since 1947, 10,000 children and teenagers have benefited of this rebuilding process where animals play the leading role.<http://www.greenchimneys.org>

## **Licorne & Phénix (Unicorn & Phoenix)**

• See page 4

This association led by the Dr. Didier Vernay aims at promoting exchanges, training and meetings between people involved in animal-assisted activities/therapy and those interested in this practice. Brought together around shared values and goals, all members join on a personal level.

<http://www.mediation-animale.org/lassociation>  
contact :licophe@gmail.com

## **Handi'Chiens** • See page 12

Unique in France, the association started in 1991 at the initiative of Marie-Claude Lebet. Over a 24 months program, Handi'Chiens trains social help dogs, skilled companion dogs, and mainly assistance dogs. These dogs manage to help disabled people in wheelchairs to gain more autonomy. The dogs are entrusted to their recipients free of charge.

<http://www.handichiens.org>

## **Les chiens guides de l'Ouest (Guide-dogs of Western France)** • See page 1

Since 1975, schools in Angers and Pont-Scorff supervised by the umbrella association train dogs that will provide secure autonomy to people with visual disabilities, when they travel and during their every-day life activities.

<http://www.chiens-guides-ouest.org>

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Thanks to André Juillard for the drawing, on page 4: The hero of this booklet and its human partner.

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### **Cynothérapie (dog-assisted therapy)** • See page 15

Founded by Eric Trivellin, mental health nurse and dog trainer (first and second degrees), the association proposes dog-assisted therapy within the psychiatric unit of the Mulhouse hospital (Alsace region, eastern France). <http://sites.estvideo.net/cynotherapie>

### **Le Copain (the Buddy)**

This association located in western Switzerland trains assistance dogs for people with motor disabilities or epilepsy (warning before a crisis occurs, protection, etc..) <http://www.lecopain.ch>

### **Les Chiens du silence (The Dogs of silence)**

Located near Tarbes, south-western France, the association trains dogs within a five months program to meet with the specific needs of deaf and hearing impaired people (tactile and audible alert when the phone rings, etc..) <http://www.leschiensdusilence.sitew.com>

### **Le Chien Citoyen (The Citizen Dog)**

• See page 16

Alain Lambert carries out workshops about dog's behavior understanding and how to educate him so that the dog behaves appropriately in any situation. The workshops are proposed to local institutions (recreation centers, etc...) as well as to dog-owners. <http://www.preventioncanine.com>

### **Marlaguette** • See page 18

In Meaux, in the metropolitan area of Paris, the association led by Corine Berty develops educational and psychomotor activities associated with animals. The association also promotes safety awareness and bite prevention through activities led in groups or individually. <http://enfant-et-chien.fr>

### **Parole de Chien (Word of Dog)** • See page 19

The association led by Isabelle de Tournemire trains volunteers who visit elderly or disabled people with their dogs. The activities aim at stimulating mobility, senses, expression and memory. <http://www.parole-de-chien.com>

### **R.E.A.D.**

The Reading Education Assistance Dogs is a UK program that involves dogs specifically educated for workshops aiming at improving children's reading skills. <http://www.therapyanimals.org/R.E.A.D.html>

### **Les enfants du canal (Children of the Canal)**

• See page 22

This Parisian association creates shelters hosting homeless people or with housing difficulties in order to help them achieve autonomy. Dog owners are subject to a specific care. <http://lesenfantsducanal.fr>

### **Evi'dence** • See page 21

Patricia Arnoux carries out Animal Assisted Activities for various audiences (elderly people, people with disabilities, children with selective mutism, etc...). In prison, the activities aim at promoting socialization, regaining self-confidence and channeling aggressiveness. <http://www.evi-dence.fr>

### **AZBR** • See page 23

The AAT Association of the Rennes region in Brittany, led by Emmanuel Doumalin offers animal-assisted activities/therapy for people with disabilities, elderly people, people isolated or with social difficulties. The association has developed a dog visiting program at the Rennes detention center. <http://zootherapie.asso.fr>



# THE FONDATION ADRIENNE ET PIERRE SOMMER

Improving the relationships between humans and animals and alleviating human suffering: when they created the foundation in 1971, Adrienne et Pierre Sommer had this dual mission in mind. Along with targeted actions on autism and Parkinson's disease, or related to the fields of psychiatry and palliative care, the Foundation chose to address the human-animal bond in its educational aspect the most effective lever to change people's mind.

This educational activity enabled to take the lead in considering animal-assisted therapy, practice in which a companion animal completes the relationship between a therapist and a person in pain in order to improve the conditions of the latter - or to facilitate healing. In addition to the therapeutic field, this method has a complete expression in the social and educational fields.

With the legitimacy of its expertise, the Fondation A and P Sommer contributes to the structuring of the animal mediation and actively supports initiatives implementing this mediation. The foundation has a multidisciplinary resources center that encourages research on a broad spectrum: in addition to its support for academic work, the foundation rewards with a triple annual prize memoirs from social workers. In its mission, the Foundation also carries out and distributes educational kits, has a partnership with the Cité des Sciences in Paris and holds symposiums.

Since 1984, The Fondation A et P Sommer is under the aegis of the Fondation de France. From 2003 to 2011, the foundation contributed to the development of 270 projects for a total of 2 million Euros. The foundation is financially independent.

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