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Canine Concierge Corporation

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2026

HAPPY NEW YEAR

<<First Name>> <<Last Name>>

January 2026 | Edition 25 | Northern Virginia's Therapy Dog E-Letter





Click the headshots for their AKC breed guidelines

The Best Therapy Dogs According To



PURINA



HOW I HELP OTHERS FIGHT SOCIAL ISOLATION



Volunteers Rick Skoglund with his dog Digger (left) and Darian Hall (right)

Across Northern Virginia, senior living centers are increasingly integrating therapy dog programs to combat isolation — a timely reminder of how impactful AAT teams are in community wellness.

Virginia Health Officials Tell Doctors to Stop Prescribing Raccoons as Emotional Support Animals

The Winchester Gazette



Virginia health officials issued an unusual but urgent advisory after doctors in several counties reportedly attempted to list **wild raccoons** as Emotional Support Animals. The state clarified that ESAs must be safe, domesticated species—and that raccoons pose significant risks, including rabies exposure, unpredictable behavior, and legal liabilities.

This timely reminder helps keep ESA guidelines clear while protecting both patients and wildlife.

Why this matters for NoVA: Misunderstandings about ESA rules are increasingly affecting local clinics, housing offices, and landlords, making clear guidance essential to protect both residents and animals from unsafe or illegal practices.

[Read Full Article](#)

Service Dogs of Virginia

Based in Charlottesville and serving clients across the Commonwealth—including Northern Virginia—Service Dogs of Virginia provides accredited training and placement programs. Their resources clearly explain the differences between **service dogs**, **therapy dogs**, and **emotional support animals**.



Visit SDV Website



Buenos Aires

**This is what happens when
2,397 golden retrievers
gather in an Argentina park**

January Is International Train Your Dog Month | Zebra Press



Thu, Jan 1

Hike into 2026
Leesylvania State Park

9:00 AM & 11:00 AM
Woodbridge, VA —
Wetland Hike & Kids
Sensory Hike; dogs
welcome



Thu, Jan 1

First Day Hike
Laurel Ridge Connector
Trail

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Warrenton/Fauquier, VA
Family & pet-friendly
guided hike



Fri, Jan 2

Pup Nights
Meadowlark's Winter Walk
of Lights

5:00 PM -10:00 PM
Vienna, VA
Leashed dogs allowed
on holiday light trail



Sun, Jan 4

Pup Nights
Meadowlark's Winter Walk
of Lights (final night)

5:00 PM -10:00 PM
Vienna, VA
Final dog-access night
of the season



Sun, Jan 4

FPCA Dog Obedience
& K9 Nose Work
Classes Begin

4:30 PM - 5:25 PM
Providence Rec Center
Fairfax, VA



Sun, Jan 4

Adoption Event
Petco
(Rockville / NoVA border)

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
Hosted by Petey and
Furends
Rockville, MD



Sun, Jan 4

Fondant
Dog Cake Topper
Fran's Cake & Candy
Supplies

10:00 AM to 1:00 PM
Fairfax, VA



Tue, Jan 6

Pet Loss Support Group
Fetch A Cure

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM
(Virtual)



SPCA
of Northern Virginia

Sat, Jan 10

SPCA of Northern Virginia
Dog Adoption Fair

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
Weber's Pet Supermarket
Fairfax, VA



Sun, Jan 11

FOHA Adoption Event

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Friends of Homeless
Animals

Fleetwood Farm Winery
Loudoun, VA



Sun, Jan 18

Adult Basics (Level 1)
Group Class
District Dogs National
Landing

12:30 PM
Arlington, VA



Sun, Jan 18

Adoption Event
Petco
(Bailey's Crossroads)

12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Hosted by Petey and
Furends
Bailey's Crossroads, VA



Tue, Jan 20

Reading to Dogs
Dumfries Library

4:30 PM
Dumfries, VA



Sat, Jan 24

SPCA of Northern
Virginia
Dog Adoption Fair

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Weber's Pet
Supermarket
11135 Main Street
Fairfax, VA



Fri, Jan 30

Yappy Hour @ October
One Vineyard

5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Leesburg, VA



Children's Speech and Language Services

Meet "Sage" Our Therapy Dog

CSLS is proud to introduce you to Sage. Sage is a Samoyed dog. Jenifer Midili, Clinical Director, has been working with trainers and training her as a therapy dog. Sage is often at the Falls Church office.

**FAIRFAX COUNTY
TIMES**



Keeping Pets Safe This Holiday Season

Key safety reminders for pet owners:

- Decorations and festive outfits
- Food and drinks
- Candles and burn risks
- Plants and trees
- Cold-weather walking

[Read the Full Article](#)

Therapy Dog Certification Test Essentials



Therapy dog certification helps ensure that dogs and their handlers are prepared, safe, and effective when providing comfort and emotional support in a variety of settings. Below is an updated 2026 overview of major

certification programs, visit-based recognition, health & safety requirements, and practical guidance for selecting the best path for your dog and team.

- **Certification isn't automatic — it requires formal evaluation.** Dogs must demonstrate consistent obedience, stable temperament, and the ability to work calmly and safely around unfamiliar people and environments.
- **Training foundations matter.** Most certifying organizations expect teams to complete baseline skills such as **AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC)** before advancing to therapy-specific evaluations.
- **Handler + dog = a team.** Certification focuses not just on the dog, but on how well the handler reads, supports, and manages the dog in real-world settings.
- **Health, grooming, and behavior standards are non-negotiable.** Certified therapy dogs must meet strict hygiene requirements, maintain vaccinations, and present reliably gentle, predictable behavior.
- **Ongoing commitment is required.** Certification must be renewed, visits logged, and standards upheld — therapy work is a continuous responsibility, not a one-time test.

Explore Certification Paths

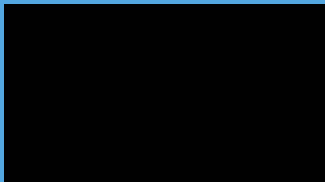
Calming Canines

Meet a few of our area's working dogs — and learn about the distinctions between them.

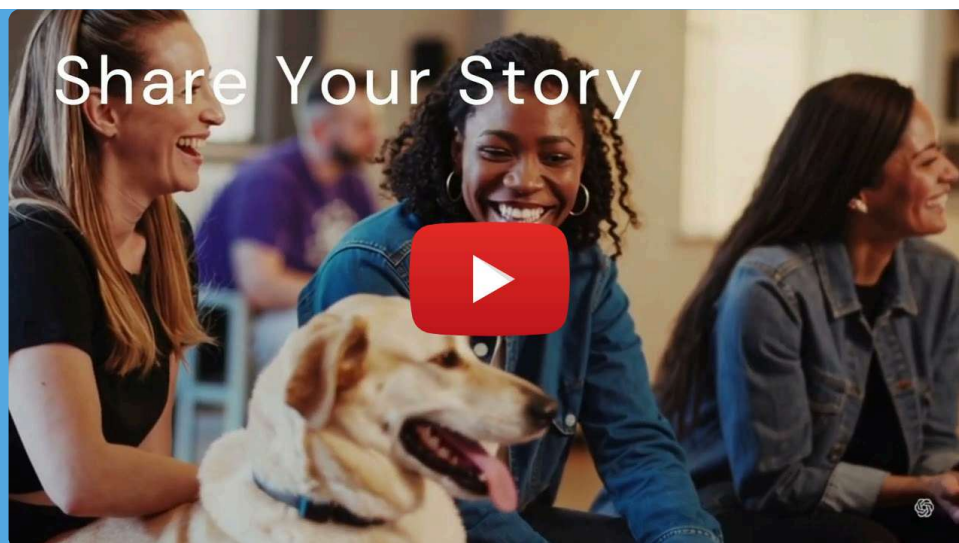


Alexandria

LIVING



Got a Therapy Dog Story?
We Want to Hear It!



Share Your Story

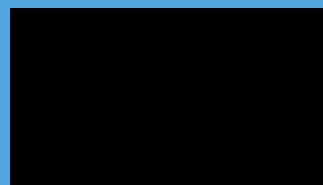
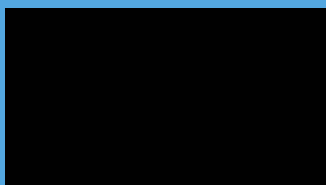
Every therapy dog has a story worth sharing — and yours could inspire someone in ways you never imagined. Whether it's a wagging tail greeting a lonely veteran, a gentle paw comforting a child, or a joyful visit to a nursing home, your story matters.

Help us celebrate the healing power of therapy dogs by sharing your favorite photos and stories with the world.

Together, we can show Northern Virginia — and beyond — how much comfort, connection, and care a therapy dog brings. Your story could be the one that sparks someone else's journey toward healing and hope.

Stories will be featured in future Digests.

[Submit Your Story](#)



Labrador Retriever 'Bea' Wins 2025 Service Dog Award for Canine Excellence



Capital Caring Health

Advanced Home Care & Hospice for All Ages at All Times

A Chapters Health® Affiliate

Capital Caring Health offers therapy dogs in Virginia for patients and others who rely on our services to provide comfort and enjoyment when they need it most. We know the positive impact that therapy dogs can have and participate in the Pet Peace of Mind program, which teaches hospice care providers the importance of these services.

Off Leash K9 Northern Virginia – "How to Train a Dog at Home: Behavior Experts Share Proven Methods"



Northern Virginia pet owners increasingly seek guidance on independent dog training methods. Off Leash K9 of Northern Virginia provides professional insights and support for home-based training success.



Ridgeside K9 – Emotional Support Dog Training

A Northern Virginia-based program offering ESA and PTSD support dog training, including temperament considerations, training expectations, and ESA legal distinctions.

Emotional Support Dog Training in Northern Virginia (Off Leash K9)



A detailed breakdown of ESA qualifications, DSM-based requirements, and distinctions from therapy/service dogs – with a Northern Virginia training focus.



Bringing smiles and
happiness to Manassas and
the surrounding areas of
Northern Virginia

Manassas Therapy Dogs began in 2003 with just one dog and one lady. The founder, Shirley Way, and her Pembroke Welsh Corgi "Dilly", composed the first therapy dog team in our local area. Since those humble beginnings, Manassas Therapy Dogs has grown to over 50 dog teams and serve the Manassas area and beyond. All Manassas Therapy Dog teams are certified through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs.



Read to the Dog

Come in person to the library on the morning of the event to register for a 15 minute slot to read to a trained therapy dog. Registration begins at 10 a.m. and slots fill up quickly. First come, first served. Dogs are certified and trained through PAL (People. Animals. Love.). Bring your own book or choose a library book. Ages 5 to 12.

Library Schedules

Reading Tails



Reading Tails is a fun and engaging program where kids learn about the shelter and improve their reading skills by sharing bedtime stories with shelter pets! Kids just need to bring their favorite books and a flashlight.

[More →](#)

Schedule: Offered on select Sunday evenings.

Time: 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Locations:

Michael R. Frey Campus
4500 West Ox Rd.
Fairfax, VA 22030

Lorton Campus
8875 Lorton Rd.
Lorton, VA 22079

Art Unleashed

Art Unleashed is a public art fundraising event organized by [Service Dogs of Virginia](#) (SDV) to raise money for a new facility for their organization. The event features twenty life-sized, painted Labrador Retriever statues displayed in public spaces, followed by an auction of the statues to benefit SDV. The initiative is a collaboration between SDV, area artists, and local businesses.



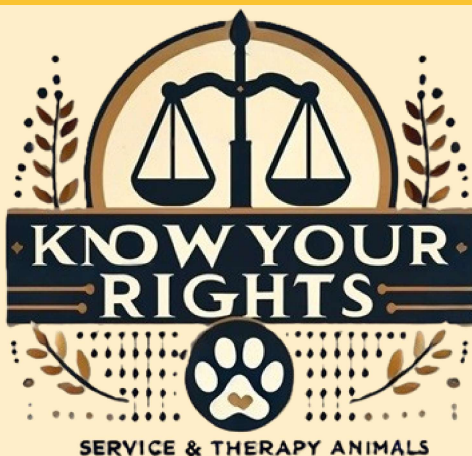
Where Creativity Meets Compassion

October 2026



Licensing a dog in Arlington could get easier someday.

By [Scott McCaffrey](#) | [ARLnow](#)



Explore Your Rights

A January refresher for therapy dog handlers, service dog teams, and ESA owners across Northern Virginia.

1. Know Your Dog's Legal Role.

Therapy dogs, service dogs, and ESAs each have different rights — knowing them prevents conflict.

2. Public Access Laws Are Not Universal.

Service dogs have ADA access; therapy dogs enter by invitation; ESAs receive housing protections only.

3. Only Two Questions May Be Asked.

Staff may ask if your dog is a service animal and what task it performs — nothing else.

4. Housing Rules Differ from ADA.

ESAs are protected under the FHA even in “no pets” housing, without breed or fee restrictions.

5. Documentation Helps — Diplomacy Helps More.

Calm communication and organized records resolve most issues faster than citing laws.



IRS Dependent Debate: Pets?

A lawyer is suing the IRS, arguing pets should qualify as legal dependents. It's not the law today—but it's an interesting snapshot of how fast the legal conversation around companion animals is evolving.

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January DaVinci Digest Subscriber Launch

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New Year

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