TO OUR PEOPLE-ANIMAL CONNECTION FAMILY
The UCLA People-Animal Connection (PAC) is dedicated to providing compassionate, world-class patient care, companionship, and warmth to more than 1,000 critically ill children and adults every month and is grateful for your support.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS PARTNERSHIP
UCLA Health currently serves as the official medical partner of the Los Angeles Dodgers, a partnership that began in March 2019. PAC is collaborating with the Dodgers on community outreach efforts, including joint PAC-Dodgers visits to UCLA Mattel Children’s Hospital as part of the Dodgers Love LA Community Tour. On May 11, 2019, UCLA Health sponsored Pups at the Park, an event at Dodger Stadium that featured PAC’s pups along with more than 700 dogs who paraded around the field before the game. PAC volunteer Donna Perris threw the first pitch of the game with her Bichon Frises, Tommy and Finley. Fred, one of PAC’s lovable giant Goldendoodles, was featured in a beauty contest during the festivities.

The partnership with the Dodgers has been exciting and rewarding for PAC. The program looks forward to future collaborations that will continue to improve the welfare of Angelenos.

LAKER FOR A DAY
The Los Angeles Lakers have been a long-time partner of UCLA Health. A highlight of their collaboration is the “Laker for a Day” event, which gives UCLA Health patients the opportunity to experience a day in the life of a Laker. In April 2019, PAC therapy horse Blue Moon and dogs Harlow and Pierre became Lakers for a Day in order to bring greater recognition to the program. Together with their owners, they received an exclusive tour of the UCLA Health Training Center and were honored at the Lakers game. To promote this heartwarming partnership, a video was filmed of the animals’ day at the hospital and with the Lakers. PAC is grateful to the actress and comedian Maya Rudolph for being the voice of Harlow in the video.

Watch Blue Moon, Harlow, and Pierre in action: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpV98zfSNrs
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT AND IN MEMORIAM:
AMY AND BENDER PEER

Amy Peer has been volunteering with PAC for more than 20 years, first with her dog Kobe, then with Bender, and now with Henry, Maxine, and Owen. She first heard about therapy dogs through a friend who had been in a hospital that employed such animals. After her husband gave her a chocolate Labrador, Kobe, Amy found her passion for training dogs. Inspired by her friend’s experience with therapy dogs, Amy decided to combine her training skills with volunteering for the PAC program, starting with Kobe, who is best remembered for his miraculous work in the neuro rehab unit, where he awakened a girl from an unconscious state.

After Kobe, Amy volunteered in the same neuro unit with Bender, another chocolate Lab, helping patients recover from brain injuries. Bender recently passed away, having spent more than 10 years improving the lives of patients at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. He is fondly remembered by peers and hospital staff as a giant with a gentle soul. Bender is sorely missed, but his legacy lives on in Amy’s other dogs: Henry, Maxine, and Owen, who are now volunteering with her.

Amy rescued Henry, a Chiweenie, at a local Farmer’s Market and trained him to do therapy work. Later, her Dachshund, Maxine, joined PAC. Owen, another chocolate Lab, has now taken over the “big dog” role in her pack, continuing the work of his predecessors, Kobe and Bender.

Amy says that her dedication to PAC is a reflection of how she feels about the program. She appreciates its impact on patients’ lives and loves visiting the hospital each week with her dogs. She says that every time she walks through the doors of Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, something special happens. PAC is fueled by the passion of volunteers like Amy and the program is profoundly grateful for her service.