

# Animals As Intermediaries

Bringing Nature, Animals & the Arts to People

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

FALL 2007

*Animals As Intermediaries is a nonprofit organization that brings educational and therapeutic nature-based programs to children and elders at institutions where access to the natural world is limited. Founded 25 years ago, AAI grew out of a belief that people's connection to nature can provide a sense of wholeness and a sense of place.*



*New Volunteer Michelle DuBois with her therapy dog and an elder at CES (Cambridge Elder Service Plan)*

*A Russian Tortoise named "Whisper"*



## "At Home" at Concord's Minute Man Arc

Minute Man Arc for Human Services is our newest site in Concord. Each month, as we bring the bounty of nature indoors, we are getting to know the wonderful people there. We serve 6-8 adults in the Day Habilitation program that offers developmentally disabled adults a wide range of activities and work opportunities. Our programs include life themes such as work, play, and home.

"We all have a place that we live and we call it Home," we explained as the group settled during our August program. "Animals have homes too...even plants. Perhaps the entire planet is the home to all the plants." We loudly clapped wood boards together . . . "Ka-chunk!" "Wood homes." We clapped large rocks together. "Tda-konk!" "Stone homes." The group grew very quiet as they

listened. "Some animals live in our homes. Some animals have homes outside."

Then we introduced each participant to Amanda, a honey colored terrier, explaining that she lives in the home of our volunteer, Michelle. With tail wagging eagerly, Amanda was lifted to each person's outstretched hands.

I passed around the milkweed plant and showed how its pod is home for its many seeds—the airy fluff lying in its cradle of a pod. One participant commented, "Plant homes are like cribs." Another, Ellen, added, "Seeds are like the babies of the plants." We encouraged everyone to pluck a seed. And as they blew the feathery cluster across the room, we saw smiles all around.

Then we asked: "What animals carry their houses?" "Turtle," responded Natalie. On cue, our volunteer Joanie gently lifted "Whisper," a Russian Tortoise, from his carrier. "Home protects you if you are needing comfort or feeling shy," she said. Everyone watched intently as we placed Whisper on a sheet in the middle of the circle. He slowly extended his neck from his shell and began walking—eager to greet all the group members. He clearly felt at home. Smiles and laughter all around.

*A resident at the Bedford V.A. Hospital explores the ocean up close with Program Coordinator Jude Aronstein*

Emily Firor who directs Minute Man Arc's Day Habilitation Program recently observed one of our programs and commented: "A program like AAI brings joy and excitement, along with initiation and movement. A dog can come up . . . and the person can touch it, initiating a movement that may achieve an occupational therapy goal." She also emphasized that "lack of motivation stands as a powerful obstacle between developmentally disabled adults and their growth. Engaging them in these functional movements may help them with basic activities of daily living such as reaching out for a cup, or putting their arm into a sleeve. A program like AAI is one that will motivate."

—Jude Aronstein, Program Coordinator



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## Current Program Sites

Boston's Hope of The Home for Little Wanderers, Dorchester

Boston Medical Center's Intensive Residential Treatment Program

Cambridge Hospital's Elder Service Plan, Central Square

Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital, Bedford

Katherine Kennedy Senior Center, Natick

Massachusetts Hospital School, Canton

Minute Man Arc for Human Services, Concord

Walden Street School, Concord

## August 2007-July 2008

### Current Board of Directors

Nancy H. Shepherd, <i>Chair</i>	Mark Bamford Don Payne
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Sophie Wadsworth, *Development and  
Outreach Director*  
Jude Aronstein, *Program Coordinator*  
Kate Crosby, *Program Coordinator*  
Jules Fiske, *Office Assistant*  
Marcia Chertok, *Animal Care Consultant*

### AAI Newsletter

Sophie Wadsworth, *Editor*  
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Kathy Costello, *Website Designer*  
Dianne Brooks, Heidi Caro, Aliza Edwards,  
Sue Huszar, Carol Krauss, Bob Lotz,  
Ivan Massar, Ann Ringwood,  
*Photographers*

Printed on recycled paper

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*Founder Sarah Seabury Ward, engaging children with storytelling, circa 1970s, before Seabury School became a traveling program. Animals As Intermediaries has been bringing nature, animals, and the arts to people with limited access to the natural world.*



## Dear Friends,

Imagine the day, back in 1983, when our founders Sarah (Sally) Seabury Ward, Suzanne Ballard and Nancy Ashkar first loaded a van full of gourds, pears, apples, bright orange pumpkins—and two collies—and drove them from Concord to The Massachusetts Hospital School in Canton. Carrying everything indoors to teacher Beth Little's class, they brought the harvest in to children with physical disabilities who are often isolated from the natural world. For an hour these children could explore and enjoy nature's colors, smells, sounds, and the dogs' healing presence, with their own hands.

Today, twenty-five years later, the staff and volunteers of Animals As Intermediaries continue to bring the harvest, the forest, and the ocean to the hospital school children in Beth Little's class. Month after month they delight in smelling fragrant pines or watching frogs emerge from leaves at the bottom of a

miniature "pond." Having started with just a few sites in 1983, AAI now serves eight sites in greater Boston.

As a child growing up near Boston, I would spend my days catching tadpoles at a local pond, making a "fort" under the huge branches of a big old pine tree, or simply lying in a field to watch the clouds overhead. Today, children spend more time watching television, playing video games or consumed in scheduled activities than ever before—and much less time exploring the natural world. In his book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, child advocacy expert Richard Louv argues that "exposure to nature is essential for [children's] physical and emotional health."

As we approach our 25th anniversary in 2008, the need for AAI's work seems greater than ever. We are excited to keep our founders' vision alive and growing,

Massachusetts Hospital  
School circa 1990



Ivan Masser



Carol Krauss

*Friends and Family Night, June 2007  
Kate Crosby shares live mussels on a rock  
found at low tide*



## Tidings

### Welcome . . .

Animals As Intermediaries is delighted to welcome **Don Payne** and **Mark Bamford** to our board of directors. Don, who specializes in organizational effectiveness, has offered advice and volunteer support to AAI (along with his artist wife, Max) for many years. Mark, an attorney and management consultant, has also volunteered his services; recently he guided us through a strategic planning process. As Don and Mark transition onto AAI's board, **Dick Pleasants**, a board member for the past five years (and a volunteer for many years before that) is ending his term. Fortunately he will remain active as an advisor, continuing to help coordinate AAI's annual benefit concert. Our sincerest thanks to Dick for his ongoing years of service to Animals As Intermediaries.

Also joining us this year, is **Jules Fiske**. Jules joined our staff in May this year to help with office administration. Although she works just a few hours a week, Jules's presence has already made a great impact in our operations.

### Video . . .

When it comes to the work of Animals As Intermediaries, 'seeing-is-believing'! Thanks to **Joe Mondello** and his pro bono videography, and to the Harpley Foundation, our work in action and its subtleties have been captured on DVD. Newly in hand, this five minute film has already served as a valuable tool in portraying our work to volunteers, community members, foundations, and client sites.

### Friends and Neighbors Night . . .

AAI was delighted to have presented the "official" screening of our new film at our annual meeting, Friends and Neighbors Night. The June event brought a packed room to the Emerson Umbrella to learn first hand about Animals As Intermediaries' work. After viewing the film—which brought great applause—guests watched hermit crabs explore their tiny "beach," and experienced the icy cold and salty smell of a New England ocean.

### For the Whole Family . . .

We're planning new ways for kids to get involved. This fall, our kid-friendly events include our Blessing of the Animals, on October 7th, and our Open House during the Emerson Umbrella's Winter Market. See back page for further information—and stay tuned for details about future family events!

bringing nature's vital connection to more people in need.

This fall I look forward to continuing our newly initiated nature walks here in Concord. We have upcoming morning walks (see back page for details), and I hope you'll join us. We're also excited to announce our Blessing of the Animals, with the Emerson Umbrella Center for the Arts, here at 40 Stow Street, on October 7th. Bring your pet(s), or a photo, and enjoy the company of animals and neighbors alike in the beauty of New England's fall.

All my best,



Carol Krauss

Janey Tallarida, Executive Director

# THE CONCORD JOURNAL

CONCORD, MASS. • VOL. 81, NO. 10 • THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2007 • WWW.CONCORDJOURNAL.COM • \$1.00

## Group Brings Outdoors In

By Kerri Roche  
Staff Writer for *The Concord Journal*

After a long day, sometimes it is necessary to stop and smell the roses.

The rejuvenation and relaxation invoked by nature is sometimes as close and as accessible as your own back yard. However, for people kept indoors with very limited access to Mother Nature, those moments of serenity are few and far between.

A small Concord-based, nonprofit organization is working to increase the frequency of these calming moments for a variety of people who have been placed in institutions. All of them struggle with a wide-range of emotional and physical setbacks.

Animals as Intermediaries is headquartered inside the Emerson Umbrella Center for the Arts, although its programs travel to places well beyond Concord's borders. The volunteers and staff of AAI have been to Dorchester, Natick and the Minuteman Arc for Human Services in Concord, to name a few, said Development and Outreach Coordinator Sophie Wadsworth.

The program is heavily reliant on long-term volunteers and serves a range of people, said Wadsworth, who was formerly a volunteer.

The high retention rate of volunteers is due to the gratifying work of making "someone's world larger ... bringing the outdoors in," said Wadsworth. There are approximately 30 volunteers assisting AAI who range from nurses to artists to poets.

"We could not do what we do without the volunteers," said Wadsworth.

As a nonprofit largely funded by grants and donations, AAI has put together an annual spring benefit concert.

This year, Livingston Taylor, brother of the musical star James Taylor, will perform on Saturday, April 28, at the Emerson Umbrella.

For the elders, children and everyone in between who is a recipient of the program, the bits and pieces of the outdoors brought to their laps are kept in cabinets, drawers and boxes inside the AAI's office. Categorized by season and location, one drawer contains seashells and seaweed, another has beaver-chewed wood and pinesap.



*A vernal pools program this past April at the Katherine Kennedy Senior Center in Natick. Above, as Yvette Prebegig, left, checks out a frog with a magnifying glass, Rita Forte tries to guess what kind of frog it is. AAI volunteer Joanice Caruso helped to present the program.* Photo: Ann Ringwood, courtesy of *The Concord Journal*

To keep pace with the ever-changing weather, new materials are constantly collected and the programs change in sync with the seasons.

The animals, from rabbits to salamanders to hermit crabs, are mostly kept at either the homes of employees or "foster" parents, said Wadsworth. And, once they have served their purpose, most of the animals and materials are returned to nature.

AAI "brings a whole environment. . . That's one of the things that sets our project apart," said Wadsworth. "They're not being educated at a distance. [They're] exploring with their senses."

Wadsworth said the purpose of the program is multi-pronged. Bringing interactive programs into a variety of atmospheres provides both an educational and therapeutic opportunity.

"Something about animals, about the process of the natural world, takes people out of their struggles," said Wadsworth.

According to Program Coordinator Jude Aronstein, in an institution for individuals with severely limited physical capacity, the physical act of reaching to touch, smell and hear the animals or materials creates a sensory experience while strengthening motor skills.

In other environments where adolescents are facing significant emotional turmoil, the softness of a rabbit or the scent of a lilac can alter that individual's behavior, if only for a moment, said Aronstein.

The program is not designed to be a one-show performance either. "We see our clients regularly," said Executive Director Janey Tallarida. The staff and volunteers of AAI frequent the same facilities time and time again to build relationships with the ones they hope to help, said Tallarida.

Year after year, the organization garners enough funding to continue operating. Time and hours are also routinely donated by outside professionals, such as Dr. William Sager in Acton who provides free animal care. Others also contribute their graphic design or photography skills.

"All of this is so people can experience nature in the most complete way," said Tallarida. . . .

*With thanks to the Concord Journal for permission to reprint this article.*

# The Americas at Boston's Hope

“What continent do we live on?” I ask, picking up a globe. (easy!)

“Summer Camp” at Boston’s Hope is built on weekly themes, and one of our July themes was America. I ask the children about where the very first people began on Earth. “Europe?” asks one of them. “North America?” “Asia?” . . . they continue guessing “Australia?” Finally, I turn the globe so that Africa shows prominently. This time, someone finally guesses “Africa!”

Asking how people might have migrated to North America. “Across the Bering Strait!” says an older boy, excited. “That’s right, there was a land bridge there 25,000 years ago, and a few small brave groups of people crossed over to the new continent, probably following large game animals. . . . It was a really wide land bridge—as wide as Massachusetts.” “Did the bridge have railings?” asks Edward. I realize I need to expand on my explanation.

“Imagine being part of a small band of people, and coming to a whole new continent, seeing new plants and animals.” I point to a small leafy plant at the center of the circle. “Does anyone know what this is?” “Strawberry plant!” a couple kids shout, noticing its tiny red berries. We share other foods native to the Americas: acorns, blueberries, corn on the cob, cranberries. Each time they recognize a food the kids raise their hand. Up close to a sunflower, they examine the myriad of familiar black-and-white seeds. “Oh, yeah, I like those!” says Angela.

“Now we are going to meet a bird who may never been away from its home on the farm before,” I explain. We talk about how to create calm and quiet. Everyone does their best; then we undrape the carrier. The turkey needs a little coaxing to emerge, and the children sit very quietly, watching intently. “Can it fly?” “Why does it look so funny?” “Why is it looking up at the ceiling?” One boy com-



Sue Huszar

*“The thing I don’t get is why are the male birds decorated when it seems like it should be the females?”*

ments, “The thing I don’t get is why are the male birds decorated when it seems like it should be the females?” A discussion about peacocks and turkeys follows. Finally we end by passing around real turkey feather quill pens. The kids eagerly write with this new “pen,” dipped in purple cabbage ink. Their papers fill up with drawings, spirals, their names repeated over and over. One of the teenagers comes over and tries it—then writes, “I am all about learning.”

Later, as we’re cleaning up, we’re surprised to see one of the girls again. She’s brought her mom and her younger sister with her, wanting to “show them the animals.”

—Kate Crosby, Program Coordinator

*We’re making a nest for owls at AAI*



*Keep an eye out for the Owl Fund*



*AAI in Musketaquid Earth Day Parade in May (L to R) Caroline and Dianne Brooks, Sophie Wadsworth, Wynne Edwards, Andrew Proulx, and Susan Richmond*

## Our Thanks and Appreciation for Your Support

### Grant Support August 2006-July 2007

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### Special Thanks for In-Kind Support and Professional Advice

Mark Bamford, strategic  
planning facilitation  
Dillon Bustin, benefit concert  
Leslie Hartwell, graphic design  
Erin Herbst, publicity  
Sue Huszar, photography  
Carol Krauss, photography  
Bob Lotz, photography  
George McKenna, CPA  
Joe Mondello, videography  
Monday Night Band,  
benefit concert  
Justin Paquin and members  
of This Side Up, lighting  
and sound  
Dr. William Sager, Sager Animal  
Hospital, veterinary care  
Pete Slonka, Computer Specialist  
Nanri Tenney/Atelier 10, graphic  
design and concert host

### Volunteers

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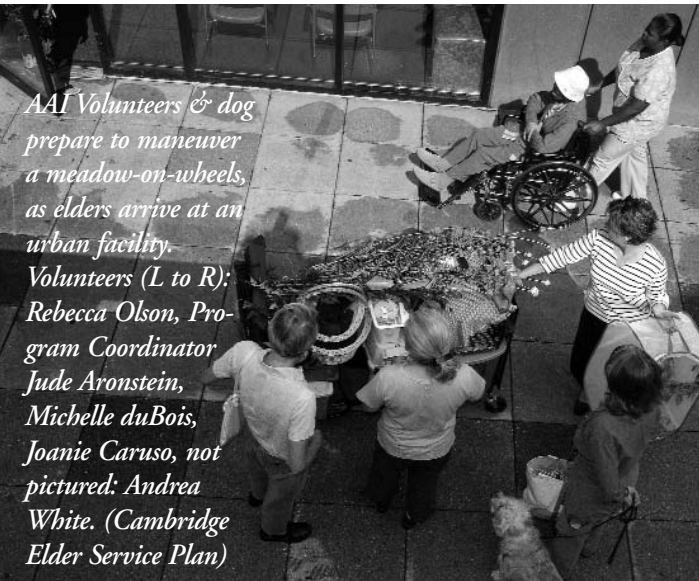
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AAI Volunteers & dog prepare to maneuver a meadow-on-wheels, as elders arrive at an urban facility. Volunteers (L to R): Rebecca Olson, Program Coordinator; Jude Aronstein, Michelle duBois, Joanie Caruso, not pictured; Andrea White. (Cambridge Elder Service Plan)

Bob Lutz

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We have made every effort to be accurate and complete. Please accept our apologies and call us with corrections at (978) 369-2585.

## Ways to Help Animals As Intermediaries

There are many ways that you can help Animals As Intermediaries continue to offer educational and nurturing programs for elders and youth. You can:

### Contribute Financial Resources

Your financial support is what makes our work possible and ensures that our youth and elders continue to receive nature-based programs that improve their quality of life.

### Volunteer

We invite you to join the Animals As Intermediaries team. Without the help of a strong and committed volunteer force, AAI could not offer the powerful programs we bring to elders and children. Our volunteers give generously of their time, energy, and skills. If you have a certified therapy dogs or other animal that might be appropriate for our programs please call to inquire about our screening process and how you might get involved.

To learn more about any of these opportunities to support AAI's future, please contact Janey Tallarida or Sophie Wadsworth at (978) 369-2585.

*Yes, I can help bring nature, animals and the arts to people!*

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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\$75    \$150    \$300    \$500    \$1,000    Other \_\_\_\_\_

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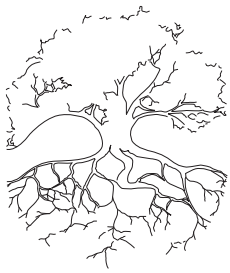


Animals As Intermediaries  
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*Animals As Intermediaries, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.*

## Wish List

- High quality color /b&w Photocopier (please call for details)
- High quality business phone, with speaker and hold button
- PC Computer Ideal: 30GB, 512MB Ram, 2ghz+ (please call for details)
- Flat sheets, dark green or brown



## *Animals As Intermediaries*

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## *Upcoming Events*

### **Nature Walks & Outings with Animals As Intermediaries**

*Monday October 29, 10:30 a.m.-Noon*

*Meet at AAI, Emerson Umbrella, 40 Stow Street, Concord MA*

Guided by AAI staff and volunteers, these outings explore the beauty and richness of local habitats. A great way to learn about nature, rejuvenate, and meet new friends. All are welcome! For more information, please contact Sophie Wadsworth at: (978) 369-2585 or [sophie@aai-nature.org](mailto:sophie@aai-nature.org).

### **Blessing of the Animals**

*Sunday October 7 Still NEED TIME from Carrie*

*co-sponsored by The Emerson Umbrella*

*Emerson Umbrella Center for the Arts, 40 Stow Street, Concord MA*

A non-denominational gathering to bless and celebrate the animals in our lives. Animals of all sizes and stripes are welcome—or bring a photograph or other memento of a beloved pet.

### **Emerson Umbrella Center for the Arts Winter Market**

*Friday December 1, 1 – 7pm; Sat. Dec. 2, 10am – 5pm;*

*Sun. Dec. 3, 1–5pm, Emerson Umbrella Center for the Arts,  
40 Stow Street, Concord*

*Visit Animals As Intermediaries in Studio 123, in the West Wing*

Join the artists of the Emerson Umbrella and invited guests for its annual Winter Market. You will find unique vision and superb craftsmanship. We will have a seasonal nature installation on display—and an animal or two! For more information about Winter Market, call The Emerson Umbrella at (978) 371-0820.



Sue Huszar

*Spring Nature Walk in Concord's Estabrook Woods*

### **Photographs by Sue Huszar on Exhibit**

*December 2007-February 2008*

*Nashoba Brook Bakery, 152 Commonwealth Ave., West Concord*

This winter, stop by Nashoba Bakery and enjoy the work of talented photographer and long-time AAI volunteer, Sue Huszar. Her images beautifully capture the spirit of our nature-based programs. The show will also include a variety of her intimate portraits of children with animals. For directions please call (978) 318-1999.

### **Concert to Benefit Animals As Intermediaries**

Coming in mid-May, our annual spring event here in Concord . . . Stay tuned for details!

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OUR MISSION IS TO SUPPORT THE HUMAN SPIRIT BY OFFERING AND BUILDING CONNECTIONS  
BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THE NATURAL WORLD.