

# Courthouse Therapy Dogs

Second Judicial Circuit of  
Florida



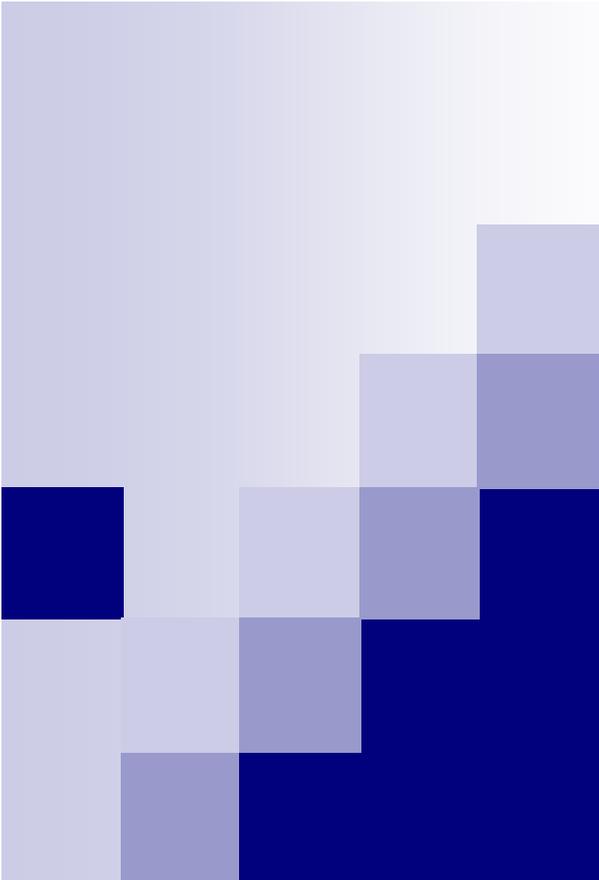
# Operational in Two Divisions

## ■ Criminal Courts

- Format similar to individual visits, though multiple children may be present.
- Felony cases involving child victims testifying in court.
- Most cases involve sexual assault.
- In most cases, the defendant is related to the victim.

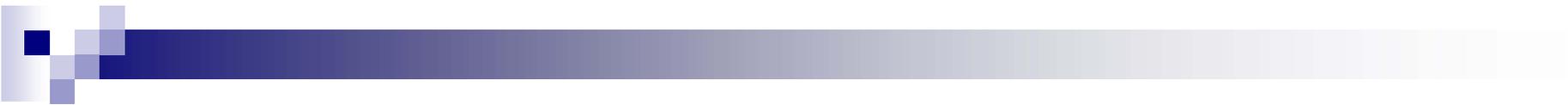
## ■ Dependency Courts

- Format similar to group visits, though you may be only team.
- Matters relating to children who have been abandoned, abused or neglected by parents/custodians; surrendered for adoption; or in need of services.



# Criminal Division

## Program Overview



# Participating Organizations

- Second Judicial Circuit
- Office of the State Attorney
- TMH Animal Therapy
- Various boards of county commissioners or clerks of courts (facility managers for counties in circuit)

# Participating Counties:

Franklin



Gadsden



Leon



Jefferson



Liberty



Wakulla



# Program's Purpose

- Victims as witness are sometimes required to wait for an extended period of time before they testify. This wait produces high level of anxiety for some victims, particularly children and others in vulnerable situations.
- The intent of the program is to have the victim/witness be more comfortable and able to provide more accurate testimony.



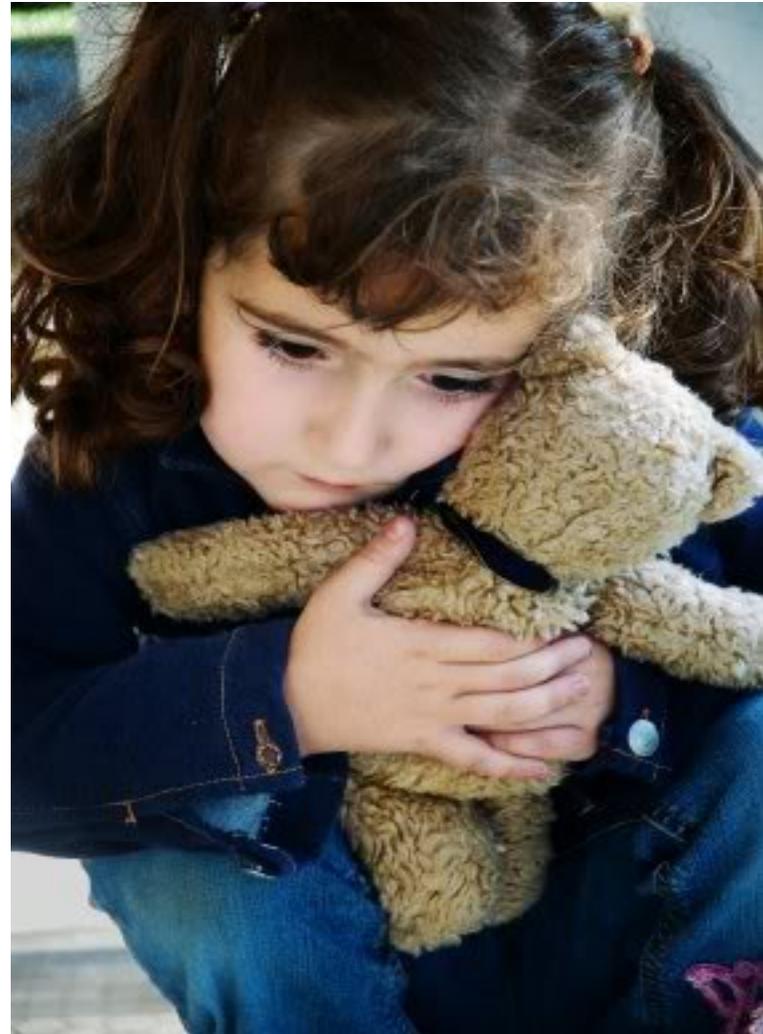
# Program's Purpose Cont

- Animal teams will be used while the victim/witness is waiting to testify, and to the extent possible, be available for the victim/witness at the conclusion of the testimony.
- In criminal cases, animal teams are introduced to a victim or witness in a meeting with the prosecutor and victim advocate at the state attorney's office.



# Criminal Division Target Population

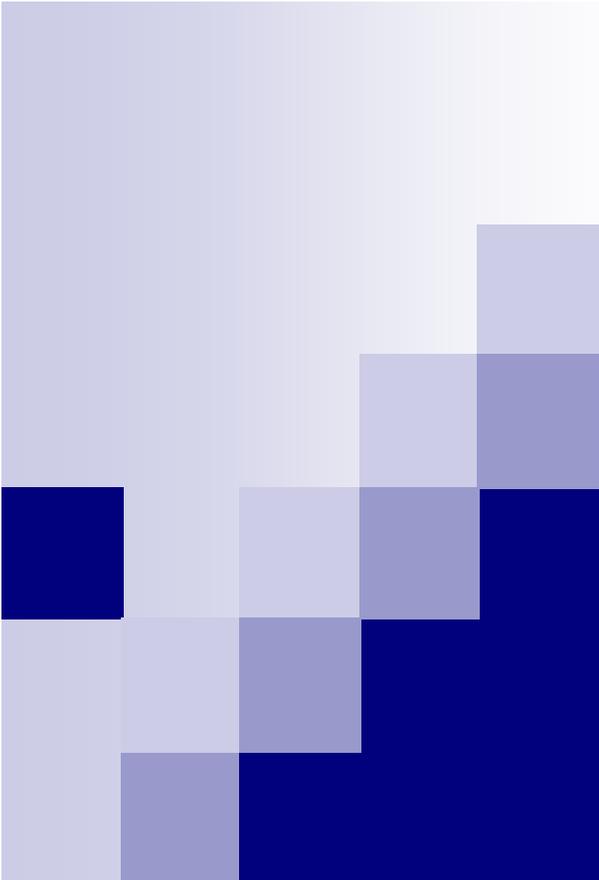
- Victims as witnesses
- Children five and older
- Vulnerable adults
- Primary offenses sexual assault and domestic violence





# Court Events Utilizing Program

- Depositions
  - Hearings
  - Trials
- 
- Teams usually will meet victim during deposition, hearing or trial preparation to ensure victim is comfortable with team.



# Dependency Courts

## Program Overview

# What are dependency matters?

- Allegations that parents/custodians have abused, abandoned or neglected children.
- Children are separated from parents/custodian and placed in foster care or other relative during at least part of the process.
- Although there may be separate criminal cases, the goal of dependency court is not to punish parents, but to find a permanent, stable and safe home for the child.





# Participating Organizations

- Second Judicial Circuit
- TMH Animal Therapy
- Various boards of county commissioners or clerks of courts (facility managers for counties in circuit)

# Participating Counties:

## Wakulla and Leon



# Program's Original Purpose

- Provide a positive court experience for the children.
- Have children look forward to coming to court.
- Reduce apprehension about talking to a judge.
- Assists Court in ensuring child's well being.



# Program's Additional Purposes

- Assists in complying with Rule 8.225 Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure: child has a right to be present at all hearings.
- Bonus effect is parents and other parties are less stressed.



# Target Population

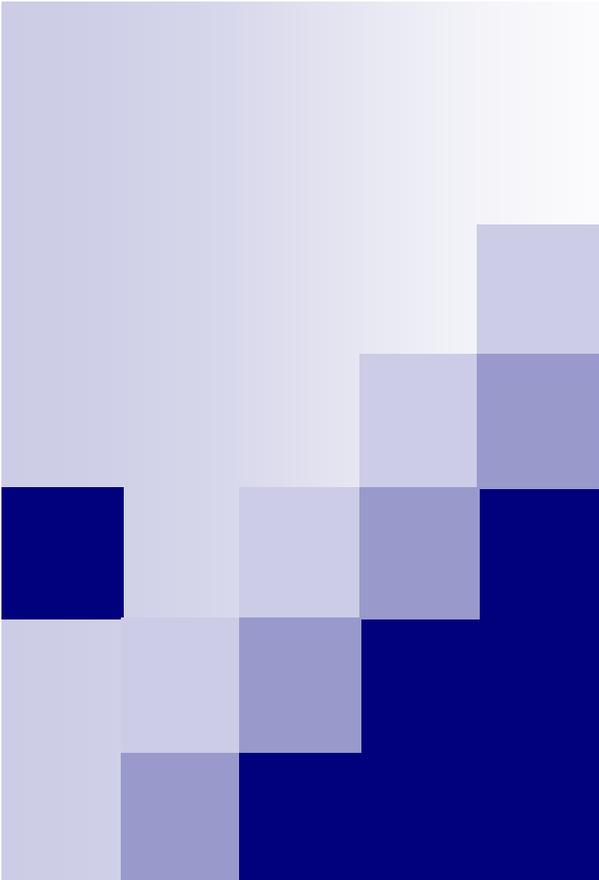
- Ages birth up to 18.
- Children 18 and over involved with Independent Living Dockets.



# Court Events

- All Dependency court proceedings, including hearings, trials, dispositions and judicial reviews.
- These court events include a large number of parties, including attorneys (representing parents, GAL, DCF, etc.), GAL, two case managers (DCF & ct adm) and, DCF-protective investigator.

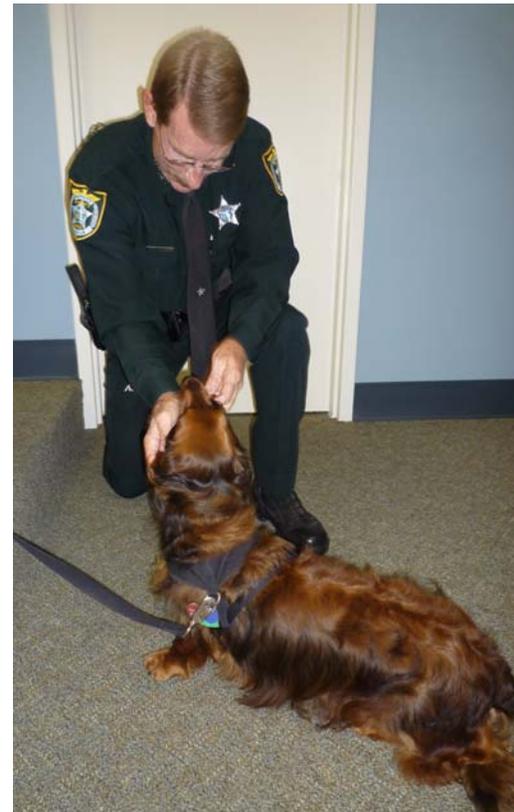




# **Navigating the Court Facilities**

# Navigating the Court Facilities

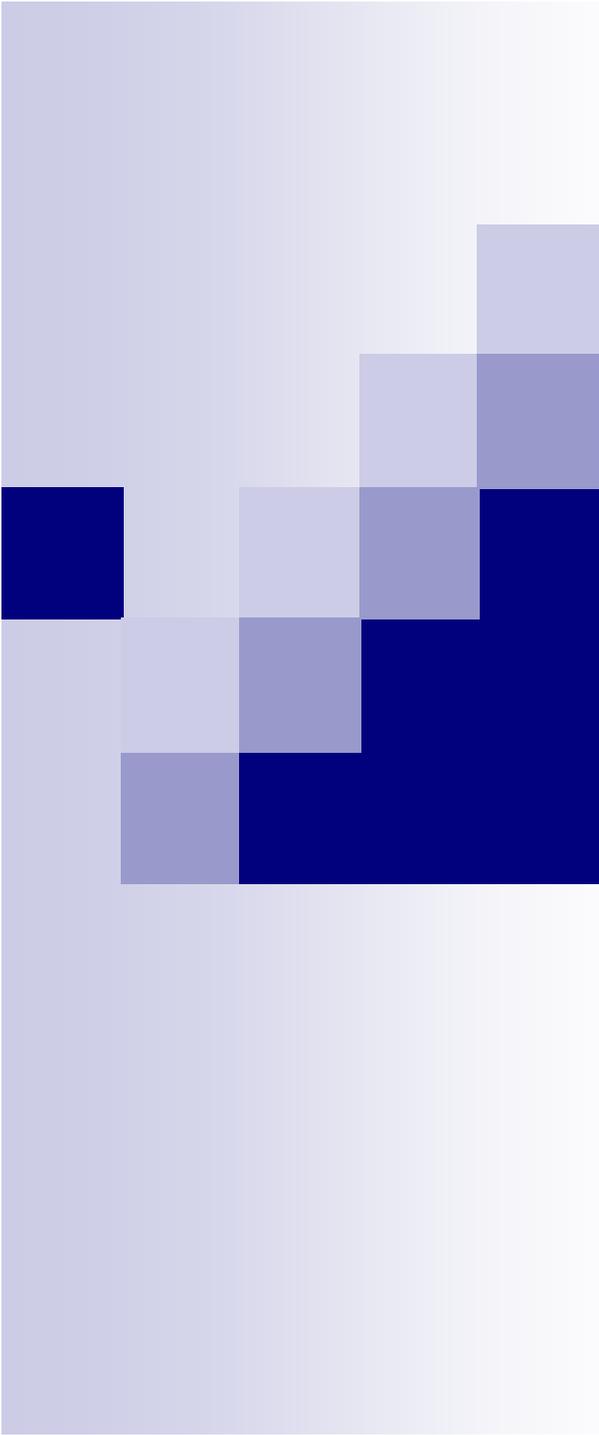
- Follow all Pet Partners and TMH Animal Therapy Policies.
- Must wear Pet Partners ID.
- Must go through security stations (criminal offense to bring firearm into courthouse; mace, knives, etc. cannot be carried into courthouse).
- Meet victim advocate or representative at appropriate entrance to be escorted (varies by county).



# Navigating the Court Facilities Cont

- TMH-Animal Therapy shirt is required (exception is jury trials) and other Pet Partner Logos on apparel or bandanas is a good idea (not required).
- Do not enter snack bars; courtrooms and judicial chambers are also prohibited areas without the approval of both the chief judge and presiding judge.
- You and your pet must stay together at all times, including restroom breaks.





# Things to Consider with Both Programs

# Role of the Volunteer

**To be an advocate for pet partners and enable them to offer comfort and support, and serve as a distraction to the nervousness children feel before and after they talk about the facts of the case.**

**NOT to act as the child advocate or counselor regardless of their professional background.**

**To be in control of dog, observing for signs of stress or fatigue.**



# Are You the Right Team - General

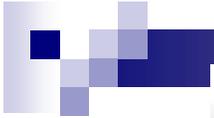
- You will be exposed to the explicit details of violent crimes committed against children as young as four.
- **Victim advocates will provide debriefing services.**
- Parking in Leon County may be difficult.
- Travel time to outlying counties may be lengthy.



# Are You the Right Team - Schedule

- Criminal case trials are set for a trial week, with the specific day not known in advance.
- It is impossible to know when or how long testimony will take.
- Wakulla Dependency court is on Mondays @ 9:00 AM.
- Leon Dependency Court is on Tuesdays at 10:00 AM and 1:30 PM.





## ***The Biggest Myth about Child Abuse***

***The biggest myth is that the dangers to children come from strangers.***

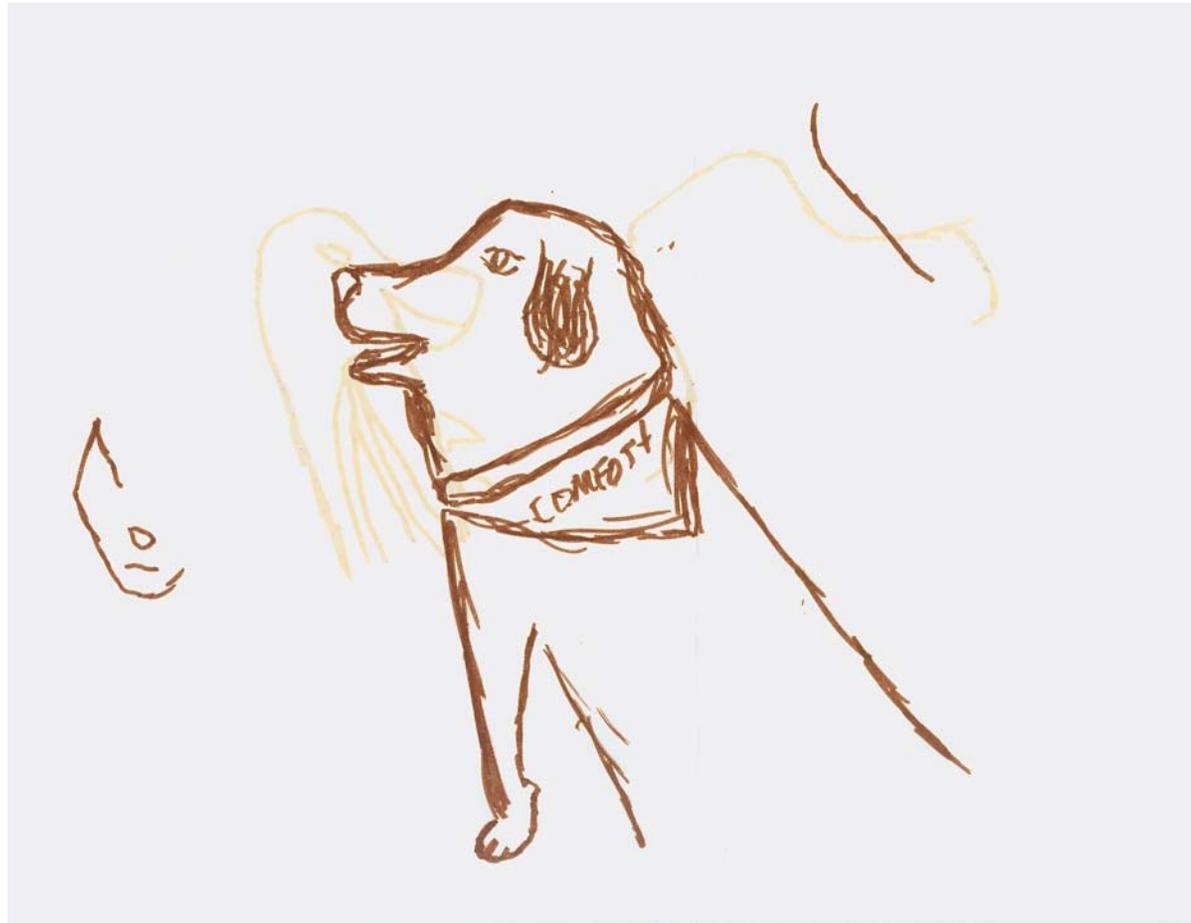
***In most cases, the perpetrator is someone the parent or child knows, and is often trusted by the child and family.***

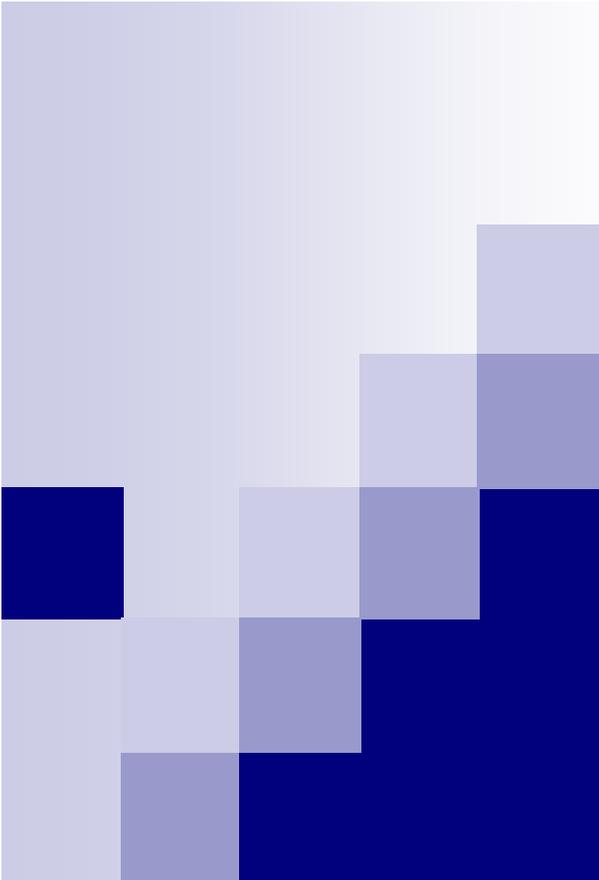
# Rewards of Volunteering

- It is really impossible to express the value of helping the vulnerable and young through one of the most difficult and stressful times they will ever experience and knowing that you helped to empower them to confront their perpetrator.



# Picture of Mickey Winship as Drawn by Program's First Victim/Witness





To Volunteer:

# Complete application for availability information and background check.



# SIGN OATH OF CONFIDENTIALITY



# Review Home Study Guide and Pass Exam

- It's easy



# Additional Training

- Court specific handler training, including emotional impact of volunteering.
- Jury trial procedures.
- Additional animal skills training – working with children.



# Provide Photos for Team Biographies

**Cappuccino**

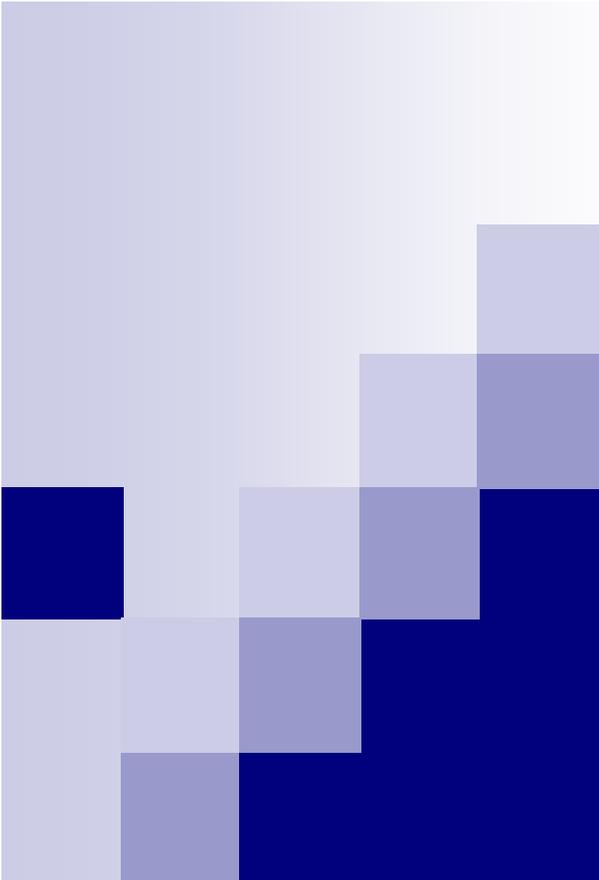


**I LIKE IT WHEN I GET BRUSHED AND SCRATCHED. I REALLY LIKE TO GIVE LOTS OF KISSES, IF YOU LIKE THEM. YOU CAN READ ABOUT ME AND MY FAMILY ON MY [BIOGRAPHY PAGE](#).**

**Grendel**



**I AM VERY BIG, VERY FRIENDLY AND A LITTLE SLOBBERY. I LOVE TO MEET NEW PEOPLE. YOU CAN READ ABOUT ME AND MY FAMILY ON MY [BIOGRAPHY PAGE](#).**



Noteworthy

# Award

- 2009 Big Bend Victim Assistance (BBVAC) Criminal Justice Award.



# *Publicity*

- Interview with Florida Public Radio Network
- Article Wakulla News (Dependency Program)
- Florida Bar News Article
- Featured in WJXT (Criminal Program)



# *Publicity Continued*

- Featured in American Bar Association Journal
- Article in FI Supreme Court's newsletter *Full Court Press*
- Canine Connection, one hour TV show for WVUP a CTN show
- One of FI Supreme Court's Court Improvement Project's Innovative Program



# Assistance to Other Courts

- 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial Circuit (Pensacola)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Jacksonville)
- 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Ocala)
- 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Clearwater)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Daytona Beach)
- 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Miami-Dade)
- 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Tampa)
- 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Panama City)
- 15<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Palm Beach)
- 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Ft Lauderdale)





# *Conference Presentations*

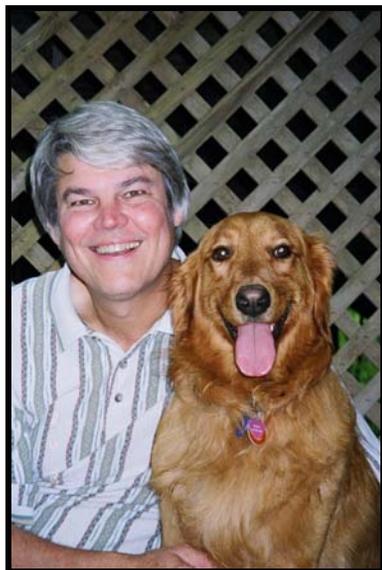
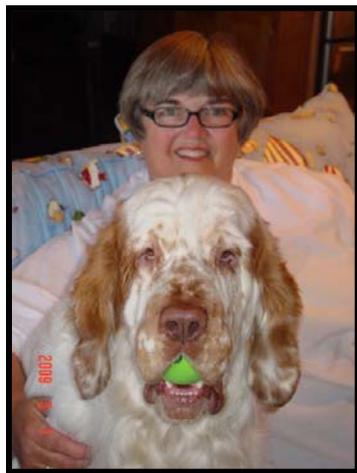
- June 2012: Presentation at the FNVWS Conference
- September 2012: Presentation at the Child Protection Summit (Dependency Summit)
- March 2013: Presentation at the Instilling Hope (Informed Trauma Care Conference)

# *Assistance to Other Courts*

- Drafted Best Practices in Florida Dependency Courts
- Volunteer Chuck Mitchell member of the NDAA Criminal Justice Therapy Animal Task Force.



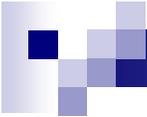
# Some of Our Pet Teams





# Contact Information

- **TMH Animal Therapy:**  
Stephanie Perkins, Program Director, TMH Animal Therapy  
TMH Animal Therapy  
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Tallahassee, Florida 32308  
Phone: (850) 321-3787  
Fax: (850) 922-2420  
E-mail: [comfortpet1@yahoo.com](mailto:comfortpet1@yahoo.com)
- **State Attorney Victim Advocate Program:**  
Helene Potlock, Director of Victim/Witness Assistance Program  
Office of the State Attorney  
301 S. Monroe St., Rm 443E  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301  
Phone: 850-606-6113  
Fax: 850-606-6008  
E-mail: [PotlockH@leoncountyfl.gov](mailto:PotlockH@leoncountyfl.gov)
- **Animal Therapy in the Courts:**  
Susan Wilson, Senior Deputy Court Administrator  
Second Judicial Circuit  
301 S. Monroe St, Rm 225  
Phone: 850-577-4430  
Fax: 850-487-7947  
E-mail: [susanw@leoncountyfl.gov](mailto:susanw@leoncountyfl.gov)  
<http://2ndcircuit.leoncountyfl.gov/petTherapy.php>



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# QUESTIONS

