



Tina & Bobbie



photos by CRIS KELLY

## LAPS: LOVING ANIMALS PROVIDING SMILES

### Pet therapy works wonders

For ten years, Loving Animals Providing Smiles (LAPS) has brought certified therapy volunteers and their trained pets to help bring smiles to many Napa Valley residents in need.

LAPS currently has twenty teams working with special-needs

children, troubled teens and older adults, including those suffering from dementia, as well as hospital and skilled nursing patients. Their teams provide interactions as fundamental as sitting with a client while they pet and brush a dog or cat, to advanced skills used in physical therapy and educational settings. LAPS encourages its volunteers to extend their pet's training in order for each team to reach more types of people. LAPS has one of the highest standards of training, testing and mentoring of animal-assisted therapy teams in the U.S.

Former *Napa Valley Life* employee Tina Wielandt is one of those volunteers. Her dog Bobbie, adopted from the Australian Shepherd Rescue, grew up with the magazine and was even featured in some

ads. "Bobbie and I have been doing visitations for a little over a year now, and we love every minute that we are able to visit with people and bring smiles and joy," said Wielandt.

Each LAPS therapy team is registered with the Delta Society/Pet Partners program, an international organization devoted to strengthening the human-animal bond. The program includes a home study course, pet health check, and a practical twenty point evaluation administered by the Delta Society. To learn more about LAPS and how you and your pet can be involved visit [www.lovinganimalsprovidingsmiles.org](http://www.lovinganimalsprovidingsmiles.org)

## PEOPLE AND PLACES