

Developing a Therapy Dog  
Volunteer Visitation Service

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*Developing a Therapy Dog  
Volunteer Visitation Service*

An Abstract and Reflections of a Project  
in  
Creative Studies  
by  
Sandra Carol Fink



Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Science

May, 2004

State University College  
at Buffalo  
The International Center for Studies in Creativity

## **ABSTRACT**

This project was an undertaking to complete the requirements of the Master's Program of Creative Studies at Buffalo State College in Buffalo, New York. There were two choices for master's projects under the new curriculum - do something to improve yourself or design a project to improve the quality of life for others. This project was to develop an organized plan to perform therapy dog visits to improve the quality of life for others.

Therapy dog visits require training and national certification of dog and handler. It is a valuable service that provides benefits not only for the dog and handler, but also for clients in a variety of settings. The reader will find samples of products to be used to educate the public of this service and encourage dog owners to give a gift to their community by becoming certified handlers.

Many breeds of dogs need outlets to avoid boredom and depression. Rottweilers are working dogs who thrive on pleasing their owner and being successful in performing their duties. Ava, a two year old rottie, needed such an outlet. Ava and her owners completed therapy dog training August 2003. The handlers needed to establish a clientele for therapy dog visits. In the fall of that year, one of the owners seized the opportunity to begin collecting data about therapy dog visits as the topic for her master's project.

This document is an account of the process and emotions involved in selecting, developing and implementing a research project on the benefits of a therapy dog volunteer visitation service. It also gives an account of the development of products on therapy dog training to make it easier for interested dog owners to complete the process of training and certification.

Buffalo State College  
The International Center for Studies in Creativity

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A Project in  
Creative Studies

by

Sandra Carol Fink

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Science  
May, 2004

Dates of Approval:

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Sandra Carol Fink, Candidate

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The International Center for Studies in Creativity

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was a successful endeavor because of the support, encouragement and feedback from my family, friends, fellow classmates and advisor. Collaborating with them helped me to focus on the task at hand and not concentrate on the big picture.

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## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Motivation and Rationale for Choice**

There were two choices for master's projects under the new curriculum - do something to improve yourself or design a project to improve the quality of life for others. I chose to concentrate on designing a project to improve the quality of life for others.

Our two-year-old rottweiler, Ava, had just earned her therapy dog certification. This certification made her eligible to visit facilities interested in the therapeutic benefits of having clients interact with dogs. As handlers, we had to establish our clientele. This project began as a way to understand the process involved in preparing to have successful therapy dog visits and acquiring permission from several facilities for such visits. However, the project evolved into much more - developing materials to inform and interest dog owners in therapy dog training.

It was important to us for Ava to have a rewarding career. She loves people and has an extremely friendly temperament. She has proven to be an excellent ambassador for the breed. I believed that we could educate people about the importance of good breeding practices and about the history of rottweilers by providing hands-on visits to schools, nursing homes and other facilities. It was hit and miss trying to find a certified therapy dog trainer. I thought that designing a pamphlet on therapy dog training might make it easier for interested dog owners to complete the process of getting their dog trained and certified. I wanted to challenge myself to open the door of pet therapy in some local facilities that had not used this service.

### **Project Objectives**

This project would improve the quality of life of others by:

- educating more people about the benefits of therapy dogs;
- bringing some joy and happiness to patients in residential health care facilities;
- providing valuable information to potential therapy dog owners; and
- providing a venue to share success stories among therapy dog handler volunteers.

### **Tangible Products**

- Informational brochure about use of therapy dogs.
- Video of Ava.

- Web page.
- Project write up.
- Project presentation.
- 10 CBIR annotations. (Including project write up)

### **Creative Benefits of Project**

I am naturally a care giver. Most of my community service has been within my church. I desired to expand my volunteer efforts into the community and share my compassion, understanding and love with others. I thought therapy dog visits with Ava could open the door for me to use humor, photos, art and other creative skills to enrich people's lives. I speculated that use of therapy dogs was not that well known in the Rochester area. The value of this service was worth the effort and time to create products to inform the community about its benefits. It was important to provide information making the process of becoming a therapy dog handler an easier process than we have experienced. And finally, I would be able to reap the benefits of a tax write off for Ava's care while spending quality time with my dog.

KEY;

Blue - goals that were obtained

Black - goal that was not met.

### **Personal Learning Goals and Outcomes**

- Widen and enrich my knowledge of creative usage of therapy dogs;
- Improve my strategic planning skills;
- Improve my organizational skills;
- Adapt my communication and learning tools for the geriatric and early childhood community;
- Increase my research skills;
- Stretch my ability to market and sale a product;
- Stretch my ability to design a video; and
- Stretch my ability to create a web page.



### Plan To Achieve Goals and Outcomes

- Make appointments for shooting video and select photos to be added to video.
- Enroll in an advance obedience training class.
- Research literature on use of therapy dogs.
- Keep a journal of all activities, ideas and progress.
- Use creative problem solving to develop criteria for brochure.
- Have design advisor edit brochure design and content.
- Begin web page design tutorial.
- Complete 10 CBIR annotations.
- Complete project write up.
- Design presentation.
- Submit all products to advisor.

Fink, S. (2003a, pp. 1-3).

*Ava playing in the snow with 'Dad.'*



## **PERTINENT LITERATURE**

Hospital administrators, physicians, nurses, and other policy-makers have the opportunity to be regarded as insightful and visionary for simply recognizing what is right in front of them - that the marvelous healing potential and animal-assisted therapy can be applied everyday in hospitals and care facilities for the benefit of patients and healers alike. The potential of animal-assisted therapy is a story of genius just waiting to be recognized. (Davis, 2002, pp. 12-13).

To gather information for this project I used a variety of print and non-print sources, including the internet and specialized databases. The Internet proved to be a most valuable resource to collect information on therapy dog visits. It was not difficult to find general information on therapy dog visit using the more popular search engines. The specialized databases were MEDLINE and CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature) accessed through the Butler Library link on the Buffalo State website. I was able to download numerous abstracts and several full articles using these databases. Bibliographies from articles and books led me to even more resources.

The key phrases I used to find sites were “therapy dogs, animal assisted therapy and animal assisted activities.” What I found included were links to therapy dog associations, popular press literature and medical journals. I purchased as well as read library books on therapy dogs and dog training. Our dog trainer was also a valuable resource.

The quality of literature was very thorough and useful. An individual with very little or no knowledge on therapy dog visits could get a clear understanding from any of the resources listed in the bibliography. Samples of information from the Internet are located in Appendix E.

Boris Levinson, a child psychologist, is credited with integrating animal-assisted therapy into clinical psychology in 1962 by having his dog, Jingles attend therapy sessions with disturbed children. He noticed that the children who were very withdrawn and non-communicative began to make significant progress. (Chandler, 2001). Another source disputes this by reporting that psychiatric patients at York Retreat in England cared for rabbits and poultry as early as 1792, and that animals were first used in the United States to assist in therapy in 1944. (McConnell, 2002).

The most intriguing literature were accounts of actual therapy dog visits. One of my favorites was a descriptive account of therapy dog visits during the search efforts in New York City after September 11 to assist counselors with talking to the firemen, (Crawford & Pomerinke, 2003). Other accounts were about people who were deeply depressed about their physical appearance feeling better about themselves because of the unconditional acceptance of therapy dogs, a three legged Irish Setter, named Tegan, who helped amputee patients accept their new physical condition by showing them that they too can have a rewarding and fulfilling life like her, comatose patients responding to the touch of a dog, a drama therapist who combined her work with therapy dog visits, (Crawford & Pomerinke, 2003), helping people who were grieving over the loss of a pet, and being catalysts to miracles, (Crawford & Pomerinke, 2003, Davis, 2002; and Dunn, 2001).

There was also an article that touched on one of my goals for our therapy dog services - therapy dog visits to the homeless. (Foreman, 2003). A group of churches in Cincinnati, Ohio rotate in hosting a homeless family for one week. A married couple of one of the congregations were therapy dog handlers who volunteered to bring their two Newfoundlands to the church to play with the children. Needless to say, these two dogs brought smiles, peace, and a feeling that all was well to these children for a few hours.

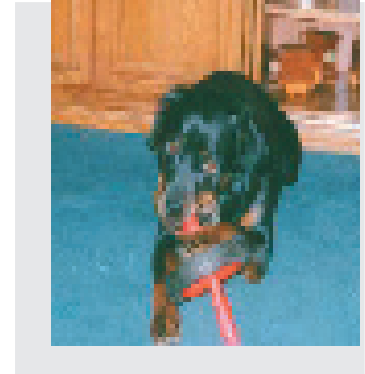
The journal articles, research abstracts and analyses I read concentrated on the implications and benefits of therapy dog visits. Because my project focus was on the implementation and training for therapy dog visits, the popular press and general search engines proved to be more valuable for my purpose.

Steed & Smith (2002) studied the interaction of animals and the geriatric patient. They found that the patients blood pressure and heart rates decreased, along with depression. There were also indications that there was an increase in the quality of life for aging individuals when they had regular interaction with animals. A group of researchers in Australia conducted a study on the acceptance and attitude of implementation of dog visitations to a children's hospital ward. (Moody, King, & O'Rourke, 2001). Questionnaires were completed by administrators, doctors nursing staff and therapists six weeks before dog visits began. There were some concerns about dog bites and equipment damage that subsided after implementation of the program. Their

findings were similar to information I found in all of the popular press books I read about therapy dog visits in the United States; the dogs sell themselves as staff members observe them do their work. Kathryn Gress did her master's thesis on pets as mediators in helping college students suffering with anxiety. Using biofeedback, she was able to measure the emotionality, anxiety and perspiration levels of each student in the study. Her findings showed that the students were less anxious and the sweating decreased as they interacted with the animals. (Greenberg, 1999).

**Some key points from the literature:**

- 'The better you know your dog through games, training, cuddling, and living together, the more power you develop for handling' (Davis, 2002, p. 107).
- A dog's temperament is more important when considering therapy work than breed, age or size.
- It is advisable to gain experience in other settings before doing therapy dog visits with children.
- Most accidents during dog visitations are do not involve trained therapy dogs. (Davis, 2002).
- There are many factors to consider before taking your dog for therapy visits at your work site:
  - is it emotionally healthy for you?
  - do you really want to handle a dog and clients at work?
  - can you provide rest time for your dog?
  - are there liability issues (Davis, 2002).
- It is important to know the rights and differences between therapy dogs and service dogs.
- 'Therapy dogs use their social instincts and learned social skills to bring people emotional benefits' (Davis, 2002, p. 7).
- Therapy dogs have been able to reach areas of success where other types of treatment have failed. (Dunn, 2001 and Crawford & Pomerinke, 2003).
- Therapy dog visits have been accounted for lowering clients blood pressure. (Crawford & Pomerinke, 2003; Miller, J. & Connor, K., 2000; and Steed, H. N. & Smith, B. S. 2002).



*Our dog's idea of fun is biting on an exercise wheel.*

- Resistance to therapy dog visits by staff is usually relieved quickly by the staff observing the dog's do their job. (Dunn, 2001; Davis, 2002; and Crawford & Pomerinke, 2003).
- Therapy dog visits are a good outlet for personnel, especially in a high stress situation such as an intensive care unit.
- Beware of patients eating the dog treats!
- Handlers need to remember that this is work for their dog and to include rest periods during long visits.
- Handlers need to make a long term commitment to a facility since clients become attached to the dog.
- Some handlers dress their dogs in costumes to help clients be more relaxed while interacting with the dogs and as conversation starters.
- There is little evidence of transmission of infections being a serious threat to clients during animal-assisted visits. Certified therapy dogs must pass an annual physical. (McConnell, 2002; Dunn, 2001).

### **Creativity Based Informtion Resources (CBIR) Annotations of Literature Used**

The following annotations were submitted to the Center's database, the only internet database exclusively dedicated to creativity. You may access CBIR at [www.buffalostate.edu/orgs/cbir/](http://www.buffalostate.edu/orgs/cbir/)

Crawford, Jacqueline J. & Pomerinke, Karen A. (2003).

*Therapy pets, the animal-human healing partnership.* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Very well written book that could have easily been entitled "Everything you ever wanted to know about therapy pet and therapy dog visits." There are personal accounts of the volunteer service of several breeds of dogs and horses. The author really does a good job of revealing the varied venues for using therapy pets; mediators, occupational therapy sessions, disasters such as Ground Zero, and therapeutic horseback riding are a sampling. Many of the pets were rescued from shelters and trained for therapy work. There are appendixes that include a therapy pet

glossary, how to get started as a volunteer and a listing of therapy pet national and state organizations.

*Controlled vocabulary: Blocks- Barriers/Behavior-Individual/Climate/Press-Motivation/Communications/Motivation/Person-Therapy/Problem-solving/Process (CBIR)*

Davis, K. D. (2002).

*Therapy dogs - training your dog to help others.* (2nd ed.). Wenatchee, WA: Dogwise Publishing.

This book is written in a step by step manual style to guide interested persons into becoming successful therapy dog handlers. The author gives important tips on how to identify dogs with the temperament for therapy dog work. There are very detailed instructions on general dog training and specific training for therapy work with diagrams and things to avoid. The author includes information on how to a novice should begin and prepare for therapy visits, which sites require more experience and hazards the handler needs to be aware of to keep their dog safe.

*Controlled vocabulary: Process-Training/Problem-solving/Motivation/Blocks- Barriers/Behavior-Individual/Climate/Communications/Person-Therapy/Education-Learning (CBIR).*

Dunn, L. W. (2001).

*Jenni's journal - the diary of a therapy dog.* Bloomington, IN: 1st Books.

A very up close and realistic account of therapy dog visits from a dog's perspective.

Lighthearted, touching and insightful. The author entwines the training, preparation, rewards and hazards of these volunteer visits. This journal is in memory of Jenni, a labrador retriever who volunteered for eight years as a therapy dog before having to retire because of cancer. A must read for novice therapy dog handlers and those interested in understanding the value of therapy dog visits.

*Controlled vocabulary: Blocks- Barriers/Behavior-Individual/Climate/Press-Motivation/Communications/Motivation/Person-Therapy/Problem-solving/Process (CBIR).*

The monks of New Skete (2002).

*How to be your dog's best friend, the classic training manual for dog owners.* (2nd ed.).

Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

A classic book for dog training. The monks' philosophy of dog training involves the trainer being able to think like a dog, use lots of praise, positive reinforcements, and to understand the world as a dog perceives it. New Skete monks breed German shepherds but train all types of dogs.

There are many diagrams and photos to help the reader understand the written instructions on the correct and incorrect approaches of training. The authors want the reader to leave knowing that training a dog is not optional if you are to establish a rewarding relationship with your pet."

*Controlled vocabulary: Process-Training/Problem-solving/Communications/Education-Learning/Sociology/Techniques-Process/Theory-Philosophy/Press-Environment/Organizations-Organizational behavior* (CBIR)

Fink, S. C. (2004).

*Developing a therapy dog volunteer visitation service.*

Buffalo, NY: Buffalo State College.

An investigation into the steps involved in the training and implementation of becoming a therapy dog handler. The author gives details of the successes and challenges incurred during the development of this project. There are numerous listings of the invaluable service therapy dogs provide in a myriad of settings. Fink identifies and makes connections to the creative processes involved on her quest to complete her project. Good source for understanding the rationale for the curriculum sequence of the Buffalo State Creative Studies master's program.

*Controlled vocabulary: Research/Process-Training/Product-Development/Problem-solving/Press-Environment/Education-Training/Leadership/Motivation-Intrinsic*

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Taylor, R. (1995). *Forget laughter - animals are the best medicine*. Retrieved September 5, 2003, from <http://www.dog-play.com/dogpill.html>

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**Introduction**

I began my project by having informal discussions with key people; my advisor, classmates, family members, dog lovers, and people directly or indirectly involved in dog training, counseling or health care. My project became the topic of discussion during conversations with anyone I met. This proved to be a very valuable strategy as I collected a wealth of information such as leads to resources and a greater sense of what to include in the final products.

I kept written, as well as mental notes about each conversation and adjusted my thinking based on the information I collected. For example, I discovered that people were not that interested in knowing the particulars of the rottweiler breed. They wanted to know more about the training, selection, and work of therapy dogs. The more I discussed my research, the more comfortable I became with fielding questions and researching to find new information to add to conversations.

My focus shifted from being overly concerned about Ava being a rottweiler to providing information to encourage dog owners to train their dogs for therapy work. Once I made this mental shift, I began to think of unique ways to involve Ava such as making visits to the Rochester City Mission Homeless Shelter and writing a proposal to have her be of support to children and women assault victims during interviews with legal and health officials. Ava would become their personal guard dog and friend to help them get through difficult procedures. I began to envision accompanying Ava to court to be of support to her new friend.

Another major shift in the project was due to a personal injury. To my surprise I had injured my right shoulder during our therapy dog training. Part of my physical therapy included limiting strenuous use of the arm. This, of course, meant I could not walk Ava or go on therapy dog visits. Thus, my criteria for success had to focus less on active involvement with Ava and more on concentrating on developing products to inform others about the benefits of therapy dog visits.

I established criteria for success to measure the effectiveness of my project. Due to my shoulder injury, I had to focus on completing tasks that did not involve active participation with Ava. Therefore, I was only able to successfully complete fifty percent of criteria.

**KEY:**

Blue - goals that were obtained

Black - goals that were not met.

**Criteria for success:**

- Positive responses of patients and staff of health care facilities;
- Gaining access for therapy dog visitation to at least one new facility;
- Being asked to come back for more visits;
- Positive responses of students and staff of schools;
- Display of pet therapy brochure in at least three animal care facilities;
- Successful completion of an advance obedience class;
- A visitation schedule to at least two facilities/schools per month;
- Visits to web page;
- Positive responses from rottweiler breeders, veterinarians, and dog trainers; and
- Positive responses from handler volunteers.

(Fink, 2003a, p. 2).

**Time line:**

One of the developing steps before implementation of my project was creating a timeline. Following the timeline helped me pace my work and complete the project within the required time frame.

**September 2003**

- worked on and submitted draft of concept paper.
- turned in final draft of concept paper.

**October 2003**

- informal discussions, collecting, and sharing information to formulate what should be included in the final products and resources for research.
- started a journal.

- used an affirmative judgement tool to rationalize project selection.
- began web searches.
- communicated via Black Board with partners, classmates and advisor.
- conferences with CBIR manager regarding project to assist in making connections for CBIR annotations.
- purchased and ordered some books from bookstores.
- read library books on therapy dogs, dog training and rottweilers.
- began incorporating some newly learned techniques from personal dog training into my daily routine with Ava.
- developed a system to collect and store notes from readings using different colored self-adhesive note sheets.
- met with videographer and web site distributor to discuss ideas for website and video.



*Ava taking a break from playing in the snow to pose for a photo.*

#### November 2003

- continued research.
- **Annotations** **Time: 4 hours**
- e-mailed CBIR manager for approval of resources for annotations.
- wrote annotations.
- e-mailed CBIR manager for approval of annotation draft.
- **Design of brochure** **Time: 16 hours**
- wrote out criteria using an informal form of Ladder of Abstraction.
- continued to ask myself “What do people need to know about therapy dogs?”
- continued to ask myself “What do I plan to do with this brochure?”
- sketched out a website story board.
- searched for clip art.
- reviewed notes from research.
- developed text without looking at notes to insure originality.

- designed front and back of brochure.
- had partners and family members including graphic designer son-in-law view and critique brochure.
- edited brochure.

**- Video production**

**Time: 5 hours**

- sketched out video story board.
- set up appointment with videographer and discussed story board.
- edited story board because of weather conditions for photo shoot.
- shot footage.
- designed special effects.
- observed editing process and adding of special effects at videographers studio.

**- Web site design** *Most challenging part of project.*

**Time: 50 - 60 hours**

- sketched out a web site story board.
- researched about purchasing website templates and managers.
- purchased a website.
- selected a web site template and customized it to meet my needs.
- wrote text for web pages in a word processing application then imported text to web pages.
- had partners and family members including graphic designer son-in-law view and critique website.
- edited website based on feedback.
- read about importing images to web page then added photos to site.
- researched on how to add 'hot spots', links, and 'return to top of page' link.
- solicited additional feedback after editing web site.
- *need to publish and maintain the website.*

December 2003

- met with advisor for preview of products.
- edited brochure based on feedback from advisor.

**- Presentation****Time: 4 hours**

- developed criteria based on 'How to have an interesting presentation for class?'
- designed evaluation form for products to be completed by classmates.
- practiced presentation.
- meeting with CBIR manager to secure and practice using media presentation equipment.
- developed and followed packing list for materials.
- arrived forty-five minutes early to set up.
- made presentation and solicited feedback from classmates.
- followed up with an e-mail to encourage return of evaluation form.
- continued collecting feedback on products from a variety of sources.
- continued editing of products.

**Introduction**

The finished products, along with the knowledge that I acquired, were far beyond my expectations. I found myself engulfed in a quest for more and more information about therapy dog/pet work. There were just so many interesting and unique testimonies about how these dogs had helped people through crisis after crisis.

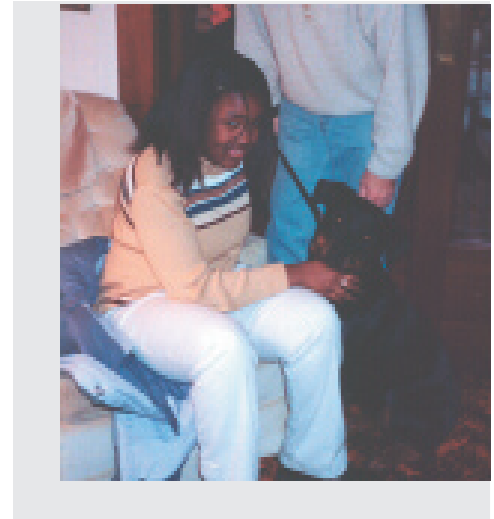
Understanding the intricacies involved in website design proved to be a tremendous stretch goal that required me to really dig deep for the strength to endure the stress, disappointment and frustration associated with a tremendous learning curve.

I almost talked myself out of doing this project within the first two days of its inception. “This is not a graduate level project.” “Why don’t you choose a more conventional topic to work on?” “Everyone probably thinks your idea is silly.” These were just a few of the thoughts I had to overcome and resist entertaining. My passion for desiring to do something that I thought was unique and different than the norm kept me on course and helped me to move forward with my project.

As I began to gather information, I realized that my project was not elementary and that the level of academic meaning one brings to a project depends on the amount of work an individual is willing to invest. I thought of Jane Goodall spending her life researching chimpanzees and how valuable her studies have been to zoology. I realized that the most important issue was my passion needed to make sense and have value for me. Maybe someone else would be interested, but that was secondary.

**Evaluation procedures**

My first step was to do a PPCO (Plusses, Potentials, Concerns and Overcomes), an affirmative judgement tool to establish reasons for choosing this project. The results of the PPCO (see Appendix A) and the concept paper (see Appendix B) I developed prior to starting the



*My cousin, Courtney pretends to be a veterinarian with Ava.*

project assisted in keeping me focused. The next step was to consult with a physician for suggestions in obtaining information about therapy dogs use in health care facilities. The physician, my sister-in-law, suggested I begin with a general search engine and then start reading some of the information I found on the web.

In my journal writing, I found myself writing down questions about how to have successful and interesting therapy dog visits for Ava and myself:

- How to incorporate creativity in routine visits?
- How to encourage clients to use their imagination?
- What basic skills are important to include?
- How to develop a routine visit that is safe and beneficial for a variety of age groups?
- How to use Ava's guard dog instinct to our advantage?

It was difficult to scan for key ideas because of the superior quality of information in the resources. Instead, I found myself reading book after book from cover to cover, visiting every link connected to web sites,, and talking about my investigation to anyone who would listen. The new information I gathered on how dogs and humans communicate and dog body language helped my husband and I to adjust our behaviors which in turn, corrected some of Ava's negative behavior.

The question was posed in one of the first master's project seminars about how to know when you've done enough research. I have to admit that I thought the question was geared more toward students who were preparing for a thesis rather than for project. However, it didn't take long before I found myself wondering when would I ever feel like I had gleaned enough information. Time constraints helped me to stop researching and begin development of my products. Without the extrinsic motivation of meeting a time line, I would have continued to dig deeper and deeper.

I developed a coding system to keep track of my resources. Notes were recorded on a different color self-adhesive note for each resource. This system made it easy to group notes into categories and avoid confusion about citations. The self-adhesive note sheets were arranged according to categories on large sheets of newsprint and hung on my office walls. I believe that



writing and manipulating the notes helped me to internalize the information to such a degree that there wasn't a need to refer to my notes when I wrote the narrative for the brochure and website.

Producing the video was the simplest of the products to complete. I arranged for a friend to tape interaction between our dog and us. We set a date, designed a story line and did one take. My husband and I went into the studio and observed the editing process.

The brochure needed to be eye catching and cost effective. The first draft had colored photos, but I decided to make the brochure grey-scale to save on printing cost. My target audience was dog owners so I tried to present pertinent information using a user friendly format: bulleting key points, using bold type, photos, and including a list of references for additional information. References were not listed using APA format since I considered the brochure to be a popular press publication. The brochure became a community outreach for our leadership consultant business.

My biggest challenge was designing the website. After developing a mental picture of the look and content for the website, I did a mock up. Now I was hooked, since I have a need to make my visual images a reality. I began designing the website under the misconception that website design and desktop publishing were very similar. It was quickly evident to me that there were very few similarities, and I had committed to learning a totally new foreign language. It was necessary for me to search and search the help section of the Homestead Site Builder software to produce the finished product.

Most of the text for each page of the website was developed in a Microsoft Word® and then pasted on to the web page. I proof read the text numerous times and asked several family members and colleagues for feedback. I would visit other web sties and observe subtle details that made websites user friendly - hot links to top of page, links to help a visitor navigate easily from page to page and find information quickly, and use of color to highlight important information. Colored photos were added to enhance the overall look of some of the pages and to make the story about Ava come alive. Sounds and animations were enhancements I chose to exclude.

To my surprise, a website is very much like a book; no one will know it exists if it is never published. I learned this by trial and error, oops, trial and discovery. After many attempts

to find my site using a search engine by typing in key words that I'd linked to each page, I asked my website design coach for help. He directed me to the Help section of the web builder service I had purchased for information on publishing. As with a book, you pay to have search engine sites list your website address. Publishing on the web requires maintaining the site including responding to inquiries. I didn't have the time while completing this paper and other course work, so I chose to wait and publish later.

Along with the emotions, anxiety and stress that were probably normal when embarking on a research project, I had additional feelings about being one of the first two students to complete a project under the guidelines of the new creative studies curriculum. I would describe some of these sensations as 'walking on eggshells', entering a dark room and waiting for your pupils to dilate so you can see where you are going and reading a technical manual without an 800 number to call for help. These emotions became even more prevalent during the writing and literally immobilized me. In all honesty, these were self imposed emotions that I invented for myself. Somewhere in there was the teacher part of me saying I had to set a good example for others to follow.

Having an understanding and wise advisor helped me put things in perspective and relax enough to resume working on the final write up. I stopped being concerned about the quantity of information and began to allow myself to be free flowing and write as thoughts came to mind. I would skip from the literature section to the outcome and then jot down some notes to add to the introduction. I needed to free my mind of all the thoughts roaming around without a place to call home. The passion I had collecting information and developing the products began to return and writing became an exciting venture, rather than a required task. Chaos became organized chaos, which became disjointed but organized thoughts, which hopefully have become an organized account of the many facets of my master's project.

**Sample of cover page of brochure**  
*See Appendix C for complete brochure*



*A most rewarding service*



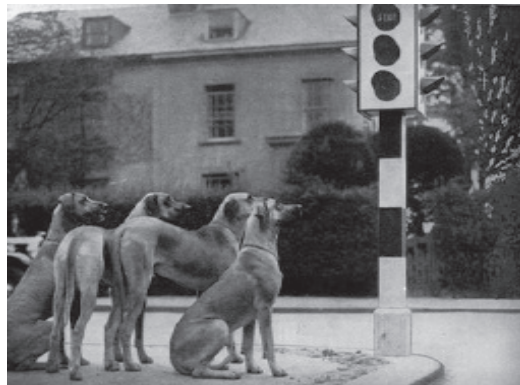
*you*

*and*

*your  
dog  
can*



*give to your com-->mu-->ni-->ty*



**Sample of home page of website**  
*See Appendix C for colored sample page*

**AVA'S PAGE**  
**Therapy dog and Rottweiler information**

**WELCOME**

<b>Home</b>	This website is a tribute to our rottweiler, Ava, who successfully passed her therapy dog certification test. We have information here for others who might be interested in therapy dog training and/or hosting therapy dog visits. If you visit Meet Ava, you will find information about rotties and having one as a family member.
<b>Resources</b>	
<b>Contact Us</b>	At the end of your visit, we'd love to hear from you, especially other TD handlers.
<b>TD Handlers</b>	Enjoy and let us know if the information on our site was helpful to you.
<b>Meet Ava</b>	Patrick and Sandra Fink, Ava's proud handlers
<b>Therapy Dog</b>	
<b>Contact Us</b>	

**Sample of video title page**  
*Story board notes located in Appendix A*

# **AVA [FINK]**

## **The Therapy Dog**



**Destined to be a Star!**

## KEY LEARNINGS

I learned so much about the topic, my learning and problem solving preferences, and web design. My original goal was to design a very well polished presentation for our therapy dog visits. As I researched and became more involved in the project, my focus changed to ‘How can I encourage more people to train their dog for therapy work?’ The video was a tool to enhance our therapy dog visits. The other products were primarily public relations and informative tools about therapy dog visits.

**Problem solving preference:** My FourSight™ scores indicate that clarifying is my least favorite preference. Ideation and implementation are my favorite preferences with ideation being a point or two higher. Developing a problem is a bit lower but not as low as clarifying. That gives me a *driver* tendency in breakthrough thinking.

My topic choice and the information I gathered fell in line with my desire to know the *how to* rather than the history and facts associated with therapy dog visits. My plan of action developed as I worked. I really didn’t have a step-by-step procedure for the research, development of products nor the writing. There was a big picture in my head as to how the finished products should look, and I developed portions of the picture as they became a priority to me; sometimes day by day and sometimes changing in the middle of a task just because something else was occupying my thought process. My thoughts were not linear. They were all over the place so I took notes of new ideas to clear my head so I could continue focusing on the current idea.

Working in this manner was sometimes confusing to me but I have developed faith in my thinking process that tasks will be completed and I will be pleased with the results. The concept paper was a life-saver for me. I could always look back and get some idea as to what in the world I was suppose to be doing. I think I am better able to explain to clarifiers what I’m doing and why I operate so differently than they do. Jumping from one idea to another worked beautifully for me on this project because I was working alone. However, I know it would be difficult for most people to understand what I was doing if I had to explain my thought process from day to day as this project, especially the writing, was evolving.

My strong need to share my project with everyone might be indicative of the *pushy* part of being an implementer. I'm not sure, but I think the implementer in me would not allow me to give up on completing the website.

I could have used my time and energy more effectively if I wasn't such a driver while creating the website. Spending time reading through the website design procedure before designing it would have saved me a lot of frustration and time. I learned a great deal about the importance of incubation time and allowing your brain to pause so you can think.

### **Of the 4P's - Person, Product, Process and Press**

Press is essential for me to be creative. I have to create the right environment for me to be productive.

And for my own personal creative style, I'd like to purchase for my office this slanted desk top to be used with a chair that leans back. It was so comfortable and practical for how I would prefer to work for long hours at the computer. For reading and studying I've found out that my preference is to lean back and have my feet elevated. We found the perfect chair in the same store as the desk accessory. It's a slender leather chair that can be adjusted to multiple settings by your body weight. Your entire body is supported and it's not clunky like the traditional recliner chair. (Fink, 2003b, p. 3).

Along with my seating preference described above, I made note that I am more productive after ten in the morning, in a silent house with the door open to my office. Crunchy snacks and juices are an added incentive in the day and coffee with something sweet in the evening. Temperature is very important. I can work on the cold side but find it difficult to tolerate too much heat. Clutter does not bother me at all! In fact, I have books, notebooks, and papers stacked in front of me right now while I'm using the computer.

### **Intrinsic motivation**

People will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, enjoyment, satisfaction, and challenge of the work itself - and not by external pressures. (Amabile, 1989, p. 51).

I chose a topic that I was interested in digging deeper into and learning more about to achieve specific goals. My desire to influence other dog owners to consider therapy dog training and to develop products to assist my husband and me in having successful therapy dog visits with Ava was far more important than completing the course requirements. The goal was to strive for excellence, not an A in the course. Challenging yourself to reach the highest potential you can achieve at a particular interval in life results in intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. There is a scripture that I used quite often to encourage my children during their college years, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' Philippians 4:13 (New King James Version). I found myself relying on that same scripture throughout the process of completing this project.

### **Change leadership**

A change leader's effectiveness increases as her knowledge and passion increases. I am in a much better position to effect change in dog owners now that I have a cadre of information and have developed a true passion for this service.

Change leadership initiatives can take many forms; direct or indirect change leadership. I didn't think of this project as being one of change leadership. It wasn't about a major breakthrough in creative thinking. As I talked about my findings with people and answered questions about therapy dog visits, I began to realize that there was an opportunity for me to effect change in dog owners. The verdict is still out. "Ultimately, your leadership in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective not by who you are as a leader by what leadership you produce in others." (Fullan, 2001, p. 137).



### **Learning to let go and celebrate**

As I approached completion of this project, the writing of my findings and reflections, I found myself resisting completion; not wanting to let go. To complete the writing meant it was over. How could I allow all my work and energy to come to a halt? What would I do next? There was so much more to learn, to do, to let go.

The two factors that motivated me to complete the written portion of this project was knowing that my advisor wanted to use my project as an example for the next class of master's project students and fulfilling my time line to graduate in May 2004.

As I began writing and reflecting on the process, I realized that this was only one step on a life long journey. I did not have to stop my quest for more knowledge on therapy dog training by completing the written assignment unless I chose to do so. I still had ownership of this project. Once I realized that, I was able to write with joy and not feel the depression of losing something of great value. My focused shifted to next steps in the process which, by the way, will be driven by intrinsic time lines.

### **The Creative Studies curriculum comes alive**

Here is a list of some of the connections I made to previous creative studies course work. The suggested course sequence made sense to me as I saw assignments from previous classes *come alive* while completing this project.

#### **CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING & FACILITATION STRAND**

##### **CRS 559: Principles in Creative Problem Solving**

- understanding and using the Creative Problem Solving model.
- how to expand a thought, an idea.
- appropriate selection and usage of creative problem solving tools.
- how to assist someone in developing their creative ideas.

##### **CRS 610: Facilitation of Group Problem Solving**

- appropriate selection and usage of creative problem solving tools.
- how to assist someone in developing their creative idea.

- developing personal presentation skills (in all courses).
- drawing distinctions between a teacher, a leader, and a facilitator.

### **CRS 670: Foundations in Teaching & Training Creativity**

- appropriate selection and usage of creative problem solving tools.
- knowledge about intellectual property.
- developing stretch goals.
- reflecting, purpose and passion.

### **CRS 680: Designing & Delivering Creativity Education**

- appropriate selection and usage of creative problem solving tools.
- developing stretch goals.
- being able to share ideas and receive feedback from partners.
- reflecting, purpose and passion.

## **FOUNDATIONS OF CREATIVITY STRAND**

### **CRS 560: Foundations of Creative Learning**

- creativity ideas, theories and people.
- keeping a personal bibliography.
- becoming familiar with using APA format.
- importance of collaboration.
- being able to share ideas and receive feedback from partners.

### **CRS 625: Current Issues in Creative Studies**

- knowledge about intellectual property.
- becoming familiar with using APA format.
- reflecting, purpose and passion.
- selecting and researching a personal passion.
- writing annotations for CBIR.

**CRS 635: Change Leadership**

- refining research and writing skills.
- looking to the future and personal goal setting.
- being an effective change leader.
- reflecting, purpose and passion.
- refining research and writing skills.

**RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT & DISSEMINATION STRAND****CRS 580: Creativity Assessment: Methods and Resources**

- understanding my personal style and preferences.
- ability to identify and use adaptive creativity.
- understanding and evaluating a research study.
- refining research and writing skills.
- making connections to style and preferences.

**Insights on products**

There were many questions and problems to be resolved for each product. I've listed them as problem statements.

## Website design

- How to select appropriate fonts and point size for a web page?
- How to select complementary colors?
- How to create hidden links (hot spots)?
- How to create a fast loading web page?
- How to design a web site that flows?
- How to purchase a website?
- How to purchase a URL?
- How to publish a website?

### Brochure design

- How to select important information for a targeted audience?
- How to design an inclusive visual for brochure cover?
- How to give myself literary credit?
- How to write citations for a nonacademic audience?
- How to design a cost effective brochure?

### Video production

- How to write a story board?
- How to communicate problems with others during shoots?
- How to add script and photos to a video?
- How to edit a video?

There were challenges and successes throughout the entire process. The insights and learning gained from every challenge kept me encouraged and increased my determination to complete each product.

### **Things that worked**

- Collecting information from a variety of sources.
- Using the colored self-adhesive note sheets to develop an organizing system for notes.
- Having family members and colleagues critique work.
- Continuous sharing of ideas and receiving feedback from partners and advisor.
- Developing and following a time line.
- Reviewing the concept paper at various points during the process.
- Talking about my project to acquaintances and strangers.
- Taking time to incubate, especially when frustrated.
- Careful observation of progress on products.
- Not yielding to self-judgement.

### **Things to change or do differently**

- Collect data and work on development of products simultaneously.
- Begin tasks I'm least familiar with first instead of last.
- Provide time for more than one take when developing a video.
- Be more consistent and detailed of reflections of process in journal writing.
- Set more realistic goals.
- Record dates and locations for all retrievals from the Internet.

### **Next steps "What I see myself doing next is . . ."**

- Volunteering to speak for Therapy Dog International (TDI).
- Making connections with the criminal justice system and writing a proposal for Ava's assistance abuse victims to court and interview sessions.
- Continue training Ava and teaching her tricks' to use during visits.
- Arranging for therapy dog visits at a homeless shelter.
- Encouraging creative studies students to do a master's project.
- Designing websites for my two business ventures.
- Editing the video and website.
- Having brochures professionally printed.
- Distributing brochures to local veterinary offices, dog trainers, and pet stores.
- Designing a multimedia presentation of Ava at work and play to add to website.
- Writing a booklet on the rewards of therapy dog volunteer service.

### **Ideas that can be taken further:**

- Write a book honoring 9/11 Canine Heroes.
- Create a quarterly therapy dog newsletter for Western New York.
- Collect information on therapy dogs as I travel.

## Conclusion

There were many nights that I tossed and turned with idea after idea. I learned to keep a pen and PostIts® notes on my night stand to capture these ideas, clear my head and hopefully fall to sleep. One night I had a thought that kept ringing in my head around 2:00 a.m. when I didn't have the PostIts® next to the bed. I got up, went to my office and jotted down the following:

**The thin line between love and hate shares space with creativity and reality.**

Finally, as I approach the culminating courses of this program, I am now wrestling with more possibilities to concentrate on for a master's project. My goal is to select a topic that I have passion for and connect my learnings in the three strains to further my career goals. (Fink, 2003b, p. 3).

When I wrote this statement, I had no idea how interrelated and intertwined the three strands are. As you read this paper, I hope you were able to see, as I experienced, the fulfillment of my goal.



*This project is over!  
Now Ava and I can rest!*

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