



## History of Josh and Friends

In August of 1994, the daughter of Knoxville veterinarian, Dr. Randy Lange, underwent a tonsillectomy at East Tennessee Children's Hospital. During this experience, Dr. Lange conceived the idea of writing I'll Be O.K. and of producing the plush Josh puppy to accompany children going into a hospital to help reduce their anxieties. Two years later, after interviewing families whose children had been hospitalized, physicians, nurses, psychiatrists, counselors, and teachers, Dr. Lange completed I'll Be O.K.

In 1999, Bayer Animal Health joined forces with Dr. Lange to help promote the Josh Project by purchasing the first 10,000 books and puppies and making a sizeable donation to the Children's Miracle Network. Bayer's advertising firm, Bernstein-Rein, developed the Josh Program as an advertising incentive for veterinary hospitals purchasing Bayer's Advantage, a topical flea-control product: purchase "X" units of Advantage and get "X" number of books and puppies to give to clients, staff, or local hospitals to benefit children. The following year, Dr Lange and his real-life Josh, a Golden Retriever, traveled throughout the United States visiting children's hospitals and attending meetings with Bayer's Chicago-based PR firm, Eddleman Public Relations. Dr. Lange also participated in an extensive array of TV and radio interviews from New York City to Los Angeles.

Also in 1999, Josh and Friends joined forces with the Children's Miracle Network (CMN). Josh is the only four-legged CMN Champion, the highest honor bestowed on friends and supporters of CMN. Champions are typically celebrities (both media and athletes), so Josh is especially proud of this distinction. Josh and Friends have raised close to \$500,000 to the Children's Miracle Network and its affiliated hospitals.

That same year, Josh and Friends initiated a relationship with the American Legion and continues working closely with its posts and divisions placing books and puppies in their local hospitals.

Since 2002, Re/Max Preferred Properties has been hosting the annual Josh Golf Tournament at Egwani Farms Golf Course in Rockford, Tennessee, with proceeds going to fund the pre-admission tours at East Tennessee Children's Hospital. Each year, between \$12,500 and \$15,000 has been raised to buy books and puppies so that children attending the tour receive a book and puppy at no expense.

Another important effort is the Josh Challenge, a program for North American Colleges of Veterinary Medicine Student Chapters of the AVMA (SCAVMA) competing to raise money for buying books and puppies for their local hospitals. Western University of California has won the award for each of the four years this competition has been held. Last year, over \$15,000 worth of books and puppies were purchased for two of their regional children's hospitals. Of this amount, the National SAVMA Association contributed \$5,000 to the winning school. This competition has proven to be incredibly exciting for the vet students while heightening their awareness of the importance of being good community members wherever they practice.

In its 100+ years, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has endorsed only one specific program: the Josh Project. The executive board unanimously adopted this project and is 100% behind its attempts to promote the human-animal bond. As a result, the Josh Project continues to look to the AVMA for support and guidance.

Since 2006, Josh and Friends has attended the American Academy of Pediatrics' annual convention as guests of Welch/Allyn, manufacturer and distributor of ophthalmoscopes, otoscopes, hearing diagnostic equipment, stethoscopes, and other high-tech equipment. Josh, the live Golden Retriever, has attracted large numbers of convention attendees to this company's booth; as a result, Welch/Allyn's show sales have increased significantly each year the Josh team has been present.

