

# Animals' love: It teaches us how to be more humane



REV. KATE THORESEN

**MORAL PERSPECTIVES**  
Do dogs go to heaven when they die?  
That question popped up on the last day in the life of our beloved Blaize, our family's 14-year-old golden retriever.

I wouldn't say that pets go to heaven, but I would say without a doubt that our Blaize has sure brought a bit of heaven to us over these years. We've learned a lot from this kind and gentle companion.

We learned about UNABASHED UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. No matter how we looked, Blaize always warmly welcomed us at the door. There were times when we didn't look so good to other folks. Those times when our kids went through their blue, spiked hair stage, or when I had an eye operation, Blaize was always there for us. She never judged on outward appearance. She accepted us for what we were. She also never shunned us when we made mistakes, never lectured or blamed. She simply kept loving us — no matter what.

And she loved anyone she met — rich, poor, young, old, African-American, white, Japanese, Indian, female, male, noted theologians, custodians, teachers, rock musicians, outstanding students, kids who repeated school, people who warmly petted her, and kids who pulled on her ears. She had no doubts about anyone.

It was beyond her to view any person with eyes of mistrust or suspicion. She simply went up to everyone she met and openly greeted them as her long-lost friend. In short, she gave us a kind of "sensitivity training" in what it means to embrace diversity.

We learned a lot about ASKING FOR WHAT WE NEED. Blaize was never shy about stiling an extra pat on the head or scratch on the back. Her favorite theme song was, "Slow Hands." She asked in clear terms. She was direct and to the point. And she second guessing, no expecting us to be mind-readers, no putting, if she didn't get what she wanted or needed. She was forthright and

enthusiastically appreciative when she received. Blaize taught us a lot about being a FAITHFUL COMPANION. She was always there for us — no matter what. If we were eating dinner in the kitchen, she had to be there — usually right under the table. If we watched television in the family room, she'd plug her old body down as close to one of us as possible. In her younger years, she was the self-appointed walking bean bag pillow for our

children. Many an afternoon we'd see this golden girl stretched sideways in front of the TV with three heads propped up on her. She simply loved to be with us and let us know that all the time. How often do we human beings convey that message to our own family and friends? Joy! Let her go outside and chase after a squirrel, or walk around the green grass with all its promising smells — and she'd have a

good-natured grin wrapped around her face for the rest of the afternoon. Simple things made the old girl happy. Her gusto for an extra dog biscuit showed us what it means to give thanks for all things. Good ole Blaize. Our days are richer for her presence with us. Isn't it amazing how an animal can teach us how to be more humane? With showing us another this kind of unconditional love, forthrightness, faithful com-

panionship and joyful appreciation, perhaps we, too, might simply begin to bring a little bit of heaven right here on earth . . . today!  
The Rev. Kate Thoresen is director of the Partnership Ministries at the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham. If you have a question or comment, call her at (313) 553-2047, mailbox number 1882, on a Touch-Tone phone.



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## Transition seminars begin soon

Oakland Community College's Transitions Seminars are five-session weekly programs offering support, direction, educational guidance, and career planning advice to adults thinking about their futures.

Participants will examine personal, academic and career goals, and identify the methods for achieving their objectives with the help of counseling professionals.

Starting in late February, the winter series of Transitions Seminars will be offered at four OCC campuses. Participants may choose from morning or evening sessions. Admission is free, but advance registration is required. Participants must also meet income eligibility requirements.

- Auburn Hills Campus, 2900 Featherstone Road. First session: Monday, Feb. 21, 9:30 a.m. to noon. Gail Bryan, counselor/facilitator.

Highland Lakes Campus, 7350 Cooley Lake Road, Waterford. First session: Wednesday, Feb. 23, 1994, 9:30 a.m. to noon. Roxanne Allen, counselor/facilitator. Orchard Ridge Campus, 21055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. First session: Tuesday, Feb. 22, 1994, 5:30-8 p.m. Darlene Currier, counselor/facilitator.

Royal Oak Campus, 739 S. Washington. First session: Wednesday, Feb. 23, 1994, 9:30 a.m. to noon. Polly Bachrouche, counselor/facilitator.

Call 340-6802 for further information and to reserve a spot in the Transitions Seminar of your choice.

## Sample delight of 'Apple Tree' at OCC Friday

OCC's Highland Lakes Campus continues its Highlights Arts Series with a musical theater production of "Apple Tree" in the Student Center Arena on Friday, Feb. 18.

Performed by TAP Productions, this original show takes a comical look at the Garden of Eden through music and story.

This offering is part of the fifth consecutive season of the Highlights Arts Series, which features year-round, quality entertainment for the community's enjoyment. General admission is \$8; \$6 for students and senior citizens. For ticket information, contact Performing Arts Coordinator Sue Warner at 360-3057 or 360-3041.