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MEET KISMET, A DENTIST'S TOOTHLESS THERAPY DOG



Of course, some patients are scared of dogs. In those cases, Kismet relaxes behind a closed gate. But over 98% of patients happily take Kismet on their laps while they undergo their dental procedure.

Cameron Garrett told CNN, "Quite honestly, as a dentist, I'm as much a psychiatrist or psychologist as anything else. Kismet has allowed us to have another tool in our toolbox." They can even use the toothless pup's story to teach patients about the effects of periodontal disease.

Getting love from patients also helps Kismet. "She just wants to be with us," Debra Garrett explained. The new owners suspect that she was abused in the past and is still recovering from that trauma. "When she is on a patient's lap, she's providing them comfort, but she's also getting comfort. It's hard for me to describe how nice it is for me to be looking at her while I'm working. It's just a win-win all the way around."

Our hearts are officially melted. It's only fitting for a pet hero to have heroic owners, too!

Therapy pets can have a powerful impact on dental patients, especially if those patients have anxiety.

"The studies are very clear: People who sit and pet animals have lower blood pressure, and that's what it's all about," Dr. Cameron Garrett told TODAY when the world found out about Kismet. Garrett's dental practice employs the adorable 13-year-old Chihuahua rescue as a therapy animal that patients can hold and pet while they get dental work done.

Kismet's life has not been easy. The Mutville Senior Dog Rescue has invested thousands of dollars into Kismet's health — they diagnosed her with heart disease, removed a cancerous tumor, treated a hernia, and removed all of her teeth due to periodontal disease. Yet, Kismet remains a very sweet dog. She never barks and loves back scratches and being held.

It's especially amazing that the toothless Kismet found such a perfect new home with dental professionals! This past July, Cameron Garrett and his wife, Debra Garrett (a hygienist), adopted Kismet into their home as well as their dental practice. The serene dog has provided a special experience for patients who come for exams, cleanings, and even root canals.

A LETTER ABOUT LETTERS

Writing Our Gratitude Is a Great Way to Show It

The holiday season is the time of year to think about gratitude. In some cases, it's easy to recognize what's good in our life. For example, my rescue pup, Karlee, has given me so much joy that I'm so grateful for! But after the year we've had, mustering deeper feelings of thankfulness can be hard. And it's even harder to figure out how to appropriately show that thankfulness to others. When it comes to patients, team members, and family, what's the truest way to let them know how grateful you are for them? I've always found it to be by putting pen to paper.

When it comes to celebrating the holidays with your team, everyone's first inkling is to plan a party. As wonderful as that can be, times are stressful right now, and planning a party can add to that stress. A better way to show just how much you care about them is by taking the time to create a handwritten note and mail it to their homes. It only takes a few minutes to write down all the reasons you're grateful to have them on your team and in your life, but those few minutes will end up meaning so much to the recipient far down the road. For those team members who may go above and beyond or have been with you for a long time, additional sentiments like a carefully selected gift card add another personal touch, too.

For your patients, bigger offices might have a hard time individualizing handwritten notes to every patient. Even though it doesn't speak quite the same sentiment, at least email a letter as a substitute. Smaller offices, however, should take the time to write notes out to each of their patients. They deserve to be personally thanked for their continued support of your practice. Taking time to write just a few lines in a card telling them you appreciate them, thanking them for their referrals, and letting them know their loyalty does not go unnoticed will make them feel as important as they are. And if you have patients who have been

especially dedicated to your practice, consider sending them some flowers along with that card.

And finally, expressing our gratitude for our family is perhaps the most important thing we can do this holiday season. And yet again, there's nothing quite like a handwritten letter to let them know how much they mean to you. Putting a letter in the mail for someone to open this year can be even more impactful during a time when many family members won't be able to gather together in person for the holidays like they traditionally do. A few years ago, I wrote several of these kinds of letters to my brothers and my parents. I shared with each of them some of the memories we've made together that are so special to me and the wonderful things each of them has brought to my life. My father carried his letter with him until the day he died. My next oldest brother, who passed away last year, would read his letter every night before bed. When he no longer could, his girlfriend would read it to him, instead. Our words can truly bring us closer together as few other things can.

Now more than ever, it's so important to let the people in our lives know just how much they mean to us. Writing thoughtful notes doesn't take a lot of money — just a little bit of sentiment and some dedicated time. But the end result can do a world of good for both the recipient and the writer.

Here are some of the things I am thankful for. I am grateful for my friends, family, and my pup Karlee. I'm also appreciative for the support of the PDTA members, the students in my Pediatric Dental Assistant School, my instructors who use their knowledge and skills to train students, and for my colleagues around Atlanta who support me by seeking out graduates to hire.



It was also so wonderful to receive all the information presented at the recent virtual PDTA sixth annual conference. I know it was a challenge for some of you to try and see patients and attend the conference at the same time. We have the recordings available for purchase by PDTA members until Nov. 15 for anyone who wanted to get the information but were unable at the time. I want to thank those who have already purchased the recordings and let you know you can reach out to me directly with any issues you may encounter.

We get out of this world what we put into it. So, please take some time to fill it with compassion and care, and you'll receive it back for a lifetime to come.

Rhea
Rhea M. Haugseth, D.M.D.

P.S. If you would like more information on the Pediatric Dental Assistant School program, please don't hesitate to send me an email with your questions!



Sustainability is the gift that keeps on giving, so if you'd like to give a gift to the environment this December, make your holidays anti-plastic! Here are five ways that you can use the latest eco-friendly technology to make sure your Christmas is just as convenient as ever.

SET UP RECYCLING BINS.

Nobody wants to sort through trash on their holiday, especially if you're hosting all the parties! To avoid dealing with the waste, set up recycling and composting bins before any home holiday festivities. It'll make your next trip to a local recycling center so much faster because everything will be organized and easier to manage.

USE PAPER CONTAINERS FOR LEFTOVERS.

Give your celebration a restaurant-from-home feel by storing and giving away leftovers in paper containers rather than plastic. Paper will dissolve and leave behind much less chemical residue than plastic. Want to make it look extra posh? Stamp the exterior with the family initials!

5 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOLIDAY EXTRA ECO-FRIENDLY THIS YEAR

CHANGE UP YOUR GIFT WRAP.

Why use wrapping paper every year when you can make your packaging extra interesting, colorful, and creative? Use newspapers, magazines, comics, posters, maps, or even art by your kids to conceal your gifts this year.

RENT, BORROW, OR RETHINK YOUR TABLEWARE.

If you're missing proper tableware for your holiday celebration, don't despair — some companies will actually let you rent out their dishes for your special evening! You can also borrow tableware from friends and family. But you don't have to use metal tableware. Try following another culture's customs and serve your food on local ingredients, like palm leaves, coconuts, or wood.

LOCALIZE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

If you can buy ingredients like fresh meat or vegetables from local farms, you won't use as much plastic packaging and you'll support small businesses at the same time!

Never buy single-use plastics if you don't have to. For every holiday tradition, ask yourself: Can I reduce, reuse, or recycle any components to this? We hope you have a happy, eco-friendly holiday!

NOT JUST A CORN COB PIPE AND BUTTON NOSE

The Surprising History of the Snowman

Building a snowman is one of the most picturesque winter activities, which is why snowmen have become a wintertime cultural icon. A snowman appeared on the very first postcards, was the subject of some of the earliest photos, and even starred in silent movies. Frosty may be a happy snowman now, but his ancestors have a much more varied — and sometimes dark — history.

THE MIDDLE AGES

Snowmen were a phenomenon in the Middle Ages. They were constructed with deep thought and great skill because, during a time of limited means of expression, snow was a free art supply that literally fell from the sky. These artistic feats were popular winter attractions for well-to-do couples who wanted to get their fix of temporary art. Snowmen were often created by famous artists, including 19-year-old Michelangelo who, in 1494, was commissioned by the ruler of Florence to sculpt a snowman in his mansion's courtyard.

THE MIRACLE OF 1511

In Brussels in 1511, during six weeks of subzero temperatures called the Winter of Death, the city was miraculously adorned with hundreds of snowmen. The spectacle told stories on every street corner — some political and some demonstrating anger with the church, many too risqué to speak of. For the people of Brussels, this Miracle of 1511 was a defining moment of artistic freedom. But when spring came and the snow thawed, the Belgians were left with damaging floods.

THE SCHENECTADY MASSACRE

Not all snowmen have an innocent history. In 1690, former Fort Schenectady in upstate New York



was home to a remote Dutch settlement, which was under the constant threat of attack. Soldiers guarded the gates at all times because they were frozen open, but during a blizzard, they left a pair of snowmen to protect the gates while they sought shelter. That's when 200 French Canadian soldiers and Native Americans approached. Naturally, they were unfazed by the snowmen and ruthlessly invaded the settlement.

Building a snowman seems like a simple and charming activity, but after learning about its surprising history, you might find those piles of snow seem a little more complicated and a lot more meaningful than before.

SITUATION OF THE MONTH

THANK-YOUS ARE IN ORDER

DEAR PDTA PRO,

There are so many team members who have stepped up to make our office a safer, healthier place this year. But because some don't interact with patients as often as others, they don't get as much recognition as they deserve. How can we acknowledge them without making a big spectacle of it?

Sincerely,

—Share the Love

DEAR SHARE THE LOVE,

First, give yourself a pat on the back! It's always wonderful to see team members looking for ways to recognize others. Truly playing as a team means appreciating everyone's role and finding opportunities to lift people up. That kind of mindset leads to stronger relationships and better work.

It's true that folks like X-ray technicians and sterilization specialists play valuable roles in many dental offices, but they are sometimes forgotten about because they are not as face to face with our patients like dentists, dental

assistants and hygienists are. But as you said, their work deserves to be recognized just like anyone else's.

One way to acknowledge someone on your team doing something great or going above and beyond in their job is to create a communal place to leave notes of appreciation. Hang a bulletin board in the break room or in the lobby for patients to see where people can leave shout-outs to team members who have gone above and beyond. This way, everyone has the opportunity to say something nice, and everyone has the opportunity to recognize it.

Another way is by letting someone verbally know how much you appreciate their work. Just some quick recognition in passing goes a long way, and if you do morning huddles with the team, thanking them in front of others can be great validation and encourages others to be looking for the good things your team does instead of focusing on when someone does something incorrectly. Recognizing something good can strengthen a positive outlook in the entire team, which is something all practices strive for.

Gratitude goes a long way, and there's always a way to give it if we're willing to try.

All the best,

—Pediatric Pro

HAVE A LAUGH



FESTIVE APPLE CIDER

If you're cutting back on calories, skip the eggnog and buttered rum this year and fill up your mug with this delicious mulled cider!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lemon
- 1 gallon pure apple cider
- 1 large orange, thinly sliced crosswise
- 2 tsp whole cloves
- 2 tsp allspice berries
- 1 inch fresh ginger, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp honey
- 3 cinnamon sticks

DIRECTIONS

1. Using a paring knife, shave the lemon peel off in curls. Reserve the curls and save the lemon for use in a different recipe.
2. In a large slow cooker, combine the lemon peel with all other ingredients. Cook on low for 3–4 hours.
3. If desired, use a sieve to strain the spices. Serve and enjoy!

Inspired by BoulderLocavore.com