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## **Hand in Paw's Signature Gala, Picasso Pets, Slated for Saturday, August 17**

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala.** — July 17, 2024 — Hand in Paw will host its signature event, Picasso Pets presented by VP Funds, on Saturday, August 17, from 6 to 10 p.m. at The Harbert Center. This year's theme is, "Wild Woof West," and guests are encouraged to incorporate country-western flair into their cocktail attire. Wrangler Duncan and the late, beloved therapy dog, Ryder, are this year's Face of Picasso Pets. They are the pets of long-time Hand in Paw volunteers Tracy and Bob Duncan.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual gala begins at 5 p.m. with a chic invite-only VIP Experience, sponsored by Cameron and Scott Vowell, featuring a signature Tito's cocktail, wine, and hors d'oeuvres. The main event opens to the public at 6 p.m. Highlights include a live auction, silent auction, wine pull, and more. Attendees will enjoy a seated dinner and a program highlighting Hand in Paw's mission in the greater Birmingham and Tuscaloosa communities. Lisa McNair will serve as the emcee for the evening. Bob Straka will serve as this year's auctioneer.

"Picasso Pets is truly one of the most unique annual events in Birmingham," said Hand in Paw Executive Director Margaret Stinnett. "From the original artwork created by talented local artists to the live and silent auctions to the parade of therapy teams, it's a one-of-a-kind celebration of our Animal-Assisted Therapy mission and the marvelous community that brings it to life."

The 2024 Picasso Pets Paintings will debut publicly at the event. Each year, generous donors commission paintings from prominent local artists who work with their pets to create exceptional pieces of art that will be treasured for a lifetime. This year's artists include Carol Carmichael, Linda Ellen Price, Charlotte Wilson, and John Lytle Wilson.

"Hand in Paw is sincerely grateful for the extraordinary artists in our community who give their talent to support the mission of Hand in Paw," Stinnett said.

Hand in Paw Therapy Teams will interact with guests throughout the evening and have a chance to strut their stuff during a parade of teams. The Tweety Lasker Award will be presented to Birmingham's Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center. The annual honor is given to an exceptional program partner for collaboration with Hand in Paw in providing Animal-Assisted Therapy visits to those they serve.

Picasso Pets celebrates animals' amazing ability to heal, help people have a brighter day, and realize their potential. Picasso Pets is made possible by many generous sponsors, including VP Funds (Presenting Sponsor), John 3:16, Tito's Handmade Vodka, Judge J. Scott and Cameron Vowell, Medical Properties Trust, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, and Land Rover Birmingham. The annual fundraiser is Hand in Paw's largest fundraiser, generating more than \$300,000 in 2023 to support the organization's mission to improve human health and well-being through Animal-Assisted Therapy.

General Admission tickets are \$250. Tables may be reserved through various sponsorship opportunities. For information about event sponsorships, contact Caroline Bundy at [caroline@handinpaw.org](mailto:caroline@handinpaw.org) or 205.320.5144 (ext.158).

Tickets and sponsorships may be purchased online at [picassopets.com](http://picassopets.com). For press inquiries and media sponsorship opportunities, contact Michael Hansen at [michael@handinpaw.org](mailto:michael@handinpaw.org) or 205.322.5144 (ext. 160).

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**Hand in Paw** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to improve human health and well-being. Hand in Paw's professionally trained volunteer handler and animal Therapy Teams help improve people's day-to-day lives in several medical centers, schools, and human service organizations throughout North Central Alabama and Tuscaloosa. At no time has Hand in Paw charged for its services. [www.handinpaw.org](http://www.handinpaw.org)