

Soft Bunny Strokes for Kids at Sandy Hook Elementary

by Nancy Laracy

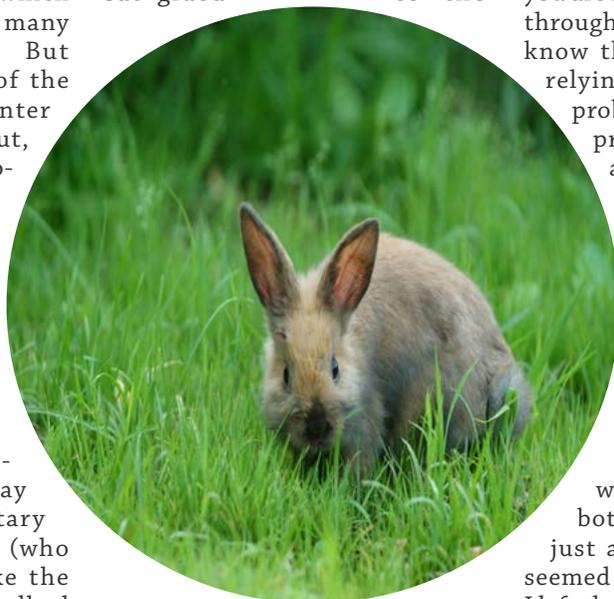
Now well into the new year, we can reflect upon some of the tragic events of 2012 and hopefully recover while learning something from them. With stress being a major trigger of fibromyalgia, we came off of a busy holiday season and plunged into flu and cold season (which no doubt has already sent many of us into a flare-up). But Judy Sims, the director of the Children's Adventure Center in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, who also suffers from fibromyalgia, should be an inspiration to us all.

I had the honor of being invited to bring Muffin, my therapy rabbit, to Judy's magnificent pre-school and day care center that literally shares the driveway with Sandy Hook Elementary School. My brother Jack (who was kind enough to make the long trip with me) and I walked into the center with Muffin in her basket. We looked out the window at the elementary school and the firehouse where the parents received their devastating news. Judy showed us around and explained how she had 60 students that day and took me to the small area where the students and her staff were in lockdown. I was in awe of the love and pride that radiated from Judy, and of her strength. She lost seven alumni students and two of her best friends who were teachers at Sandy Hook.

The children were absolutely adorable, well behaved, and enamored with Muffin. The atmosphere was casual and loving, and I immediately felt my own fibromyalgia pain begin to melt away. The children all took turns stroking and holding Muffin. They sat glued to the

as the stress subsided from Judy's face and some of the children as the minutes ticked by.

Just imagine being Judy, trying to get up every day on these cold, dark winter mornings when you are in pain and have just lived through such trauma and yet you know that so many people are relying on you. Most of us probably know that our body produces cortisol when we are under stress, which in turns suppresses our immune system. But when we are happy, we produce serotonin and the "feel good" hormones.



edge of their colorful mats as I read to them from bunny books, which each had a different a lesson. I brought the little angels an adorable bunny craft to make so that they could each go home with their own "Muffin," and then they all snacked on heart shaped cookies and candies from Muffin. What was supposed to be a 90-minute visit turned into three and one-half hours as the children responded remarkably to Muffin, who was calm, endearing and engaging. I was on cloud nine

Judy and I talked about our journeys with fibromyalgia, and we both agreed that the day was just as beneficial for us as it seemed to be for the children. As I left the center Judy and I hugged tightly, sensing the lightness in both of our bodies. We were both beaming. Judy said that Muffin was just the therapy that they all needed, and she asked us to come back in the spring if not sooner. What better therapy for pain than sheer happiness, if only for a few moments!

Please visit my website www.nancy-laracy.com for research and information on FM and chronic pain as well as pet therapy. Bunny hugs to you all. Nancy

