



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 7, 2019

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Pet Partners Announces New Animal-Assisted Crisis Response Program to Better Serve Communities During Times of Disaster

- Volunteer handlers who receive this crisis response training will learn basic disaster concepts and best practices in crisis support to assist individuals in the wake of local tragedies -

Bellevue, Wash. – Pet Partners, the nation’s leading organization in registering therapy animals for animal-assisted interventions, announced today the launch of its animal-assisted crisis response (AACR) training program, now available to Pet Partners therapy animal handlers. Handlers who pursue AACR credentials will receive instruction and credentials, aligned with the Pet Partners philosophy, on how to provide support and comfort to those who have been affected by natural, human-caused, or technological disasters.

“There’s no question that a therapy animal’s presence alone can bring incredible relief to someone in crisis,” said Annie Peters, President and CEO of Pet Partners. “To further connect with these individuals, our AACR volunteer handlers will be able to offer emotional comfort, reduce anxiety, and provide the opportunity for contact and engagement, making the visit even more impactful.”

Pet Partners’ AACR handlers must complete training which includes psychological first aid concepts, also referred to as mental health first aid. While AACR does not take the place of professional interventions, the credential program helps handlers provide an additional level of support through listening, empathy, and sharing the unconditional love of their therapy animal.

Pet Partners has therapy animal teams located throughout the country. Teams with handlers age 18 or older and who have been registered with Pet Partners for at least six months may pursue AACR credentials. In addition to canine teams, Pet Partners prides itself in being one of the few organizations to accept non-canine species for AACR, as these species can also benefit those in need.

Communities that have been affected by disaster and are interested in the healing power of therapy animal visits are urged to contact Pet Partners’ AACR specialist through the Pet

Partners website contact form [here](#). Upon initial contact, Pet Partners will send deployment invitations to participating AACR handlers using a radius search in the area of the crisis event. For more information on Pet Partners' AACR credential program, please visit PetPartners.org/act/aacr or contact Jamie Baxter at jamie@theimpetusagency.com.

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Pet Partners is the national leader in demonstrating and promoting the health and wellness benefits of animal-assisted therapy, activities, and education. Since the organization's inception in 1977, the science proving these benefits has become indisputable. With more than 13,000 registered teams making more than 3 million visits annually, Pet Partners serves as the nation's most prestigious nonprofit registering handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams. Pet Partners teams visit with patients in recovery, people with intellectual disabilities, seniors living with Alzheimer's, students, veterans with PTSD, and those approaching end of life, improving human health and well-being through the human-animal bond. With the recent release of its Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Interventions and international expansion, Pet Partners is globally recognized as the industry gold standard. For more information on Pet Partners, visit www.petpartners.org.