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Benefitting from the Human-Animal Bond When Personal Interaction Isn't Possible

- Pet Partners Offers Virtual Therapy Animal Visits as Research Supports Efficacy of
Animal-Related Engagement -

Bellevue, Wash. – Pet Partners, the nation’s leading organization in registering therapy animals for animal-assisted interventions, is offering a new form of therapy animal interaction in the form of animal-related engagement (ARE). As the current landscape changes daily and personal interaction with therapy animals is not as accessible, Pet Partners and its therapy animal teams are organizing virtual visits, animal-related reading programs, and other forms of animal-related activities that allow people to continue to benefit from the powerful effect of the human-animal bond during these times.

“While nothing can replace the emotional connection that we share with animals during face-to-face interactions, existing literature supports the claim that pet-related stimuli can also be very impactful in many ways,” said C. Annie Peters, President and CEO of Pet Partners. “We’ve been thrilled with the overwhelmingly positive response to our teams’ virtual therapy animal visits.”

As part of Pet Partners’ efforts to increase awareness of the efficacy of ARE, they are also making available a [white paper](#) which outlines the benefits of engaging with animal-related activities and explores ideas for the continuation of services from some of the field’s top leaders. According to the white paper, watching animal videos has been empirically correlated with a more positive affect on the viewer, leading to enhanced mood and increases in general feelings of positivity.

“Companies and schools can incorporate pets into their video conference calls, we can all watch animal videos online, read animal-related books, or learn animal origami, and all of it is fueling our overall health and well-being and making us happier people,” added Peters.

While a majority of Pet Partners therapy animals are dogs, the Therapy Animal Program is open to cats, horses, rabbits, pigs, llamas and alpacas, birds, guinea pigs, and even rats. Pet Partners' registered therapy animal teams typically assist in their communities in a wide range of settings, making visits to hospitals, schools, businesses, and more. In addition to their regular visits, teams conduct visits under special circumstances and after crisis events. For example, they may visit deployed National Guard personnel, and spend time with healthcare workers on the frontlines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pet Partners has thousands of teams across the U.S. and is piloting programs internationally. To learn more about therapy animal team stories, visit www.petpartners.org. Follow Pet Partners on Facebook and Instagram to see more ARE content including virtual therapy animal visits, and children reading to their pets as part of the We Are All Ears reading initiative.

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 petpartners.org.

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