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Media Contact:

Liz Thomas | The Impetus Agency

Liz@theimpetusagency.com

916-606-8795

Pet Partners Celebrates National Therapy Animal Day on April 30 with Virtual Therapy Animal Visits

Bellevue, Wash. – Pet Partners, the nation’s leading organization in registering therapy animals for animal-assisted interventions, is proud to announce its sixth annual **National Therapy Animal Day set for April 30, 2020**. The observance was created by Pet Partners to recognize and celebrate therapy animals, raise awareness of their role in enhancing human health and well-being, and honor the thousands of dedicated handlers around the world who volunteer their time and compassion during visits. With stay-at-home orders in effect around the world, Pet Partners’ registered therapy animal teams are now providing virtual visits. These virtual visits provide a form of animal-related engagement (ARE), which is an initiative that supports the use of pet-related stimuli even when the physical presence of an animal may not be possible.

“This year is especially unique because our handlers aren’t able to celebrate the holiday as normal but instead are hosting virtual events for people to interact with their therapy animal,” said C. Annie Peters, President and CEO of Pet Partners. “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.”

Pet Partners encourages people to show their support on social media by using their National Therapy Animal Day profile photo frame on Facebook and joining the conversation using the hashtag #NationalTherapyAnimalDay. Pet Partners will be hosting a Facebook Live event with three therapy animal teams, each with a different species of animal, on **April 30 at 3:00 p.m. PDT** so communities around the country can experience the incredible benefits of the human-animal bond.

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 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 visit college students during finals and midterms, and spent time with people who lost their homes due to recent wildfires.

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.

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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 petpartners.org.