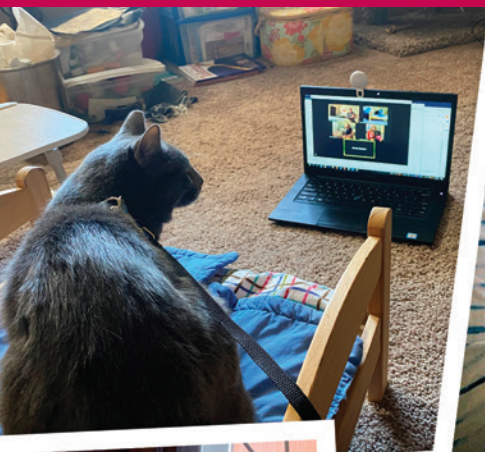


Pet Partners

INTERACTIONS MAGAZINE

STORIES OF LIVES IMPROVED BY POSITIVE HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTIONS



Animal-Related Engagement:

Developing New Approaches to AAI



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A copy of the latest financial report, registration filed by this organization, and a description of our programs and activities may be obtained by contacting us at: 345 118th Ave SE, Suite 200, Bellevue, WA 98005, 425-679-5500. Pet Partners was formed in Washington. If you are a resident of one of the following states, you may obtain financial information directly from the state agency:

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A Letter from the President & CEO C. Annie Peters

I hate to think I'll look back at this issue of *Interactions* and consider it the "COVID-19 issue," but there's really no way around it, is there? This is certainly not the year my daughter and I anticipated when we joked that we were glad to see 2019 end and 2020 was going to be our year. We're not alone in that sentiment; but for myself, many of our wonderful volunteers, and perhaps even more importantly, the people on the receiving end of a therapy animal visit, I suspect many of us have never felt more alone. In times of crisis we typically turn to each other, we help our neighbors, we check in on the sick and lonely; yet because of the very nature of this crisis, these actions became impossible. At the very time the healing and loving presence of a therapy animal was desperately needed, we stayed home. And that was the right thing to do. Our world was upside down.

I think of the pandemic in two stages: the acute stage from mid-March to early May when we started to learn more about the virus but the airwaves were full of fear, confusion, and information that turned out to not be scientifically valid; and the chronic stage that we're still in now, where we struggle daily to live with the virus safely. The most important message I have is: Thank you. Thank you to everyone who recognizes how committed and innovative your Pet Partners staff team has been in trying to navigate these unwelcome waters with you. When you've taken the time to share your appreciation with us, it helps us get through the day, week, month, and year, too. We feel that we're all in this together.

Once we started to get our bearings, our first action was to extend all therapy animal registrations for 12 months. Our north star for decision making was that we did not want your therapy animal volunteer work to add more stress or risk to your life. At the time of this writing, there is still uncertainty about March 2021. I'm going to heed my mother's admonishment to not borrow trouble; we'll assess the landscape early next year when we have more information.

Next, we increased communication with our Community Partners and our wonderful handlers. Together we focused on *what we could do*. Dr. Taylor Chastain Griffin, our Director of AAI Advancement, published a white paper and coined the term *animal-related engagement*, based on the already understood science that even a nice memory about a human-animal interaction can provoke positive feelings. You responded in multiple ways: setting up virtual visits, sending trading cards and letters from your therapy animal partners to their friends who were missing them, making window visits outside facilities, delivering large cardboard cutouts of your therapy animal partners, and participating in the World's Largest Pet Walk.



We also responded with more education through webinars and Facebook Live events. Many of them focused on what we could do for our therapy animal partners who were missing going to work! All these offerings are archived on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/petpartnersorg.

Many of you are using this time to earn your animal-assisted crisis response credential, or to pursue a license as a volunteer instructor or team evaluator. These roles will all be important in providing therapy animal visits going forward.

We also continue to promote the need for new handlers. When we truly start to emerge from this difficult period, communities are going to need therapy animal visits more than ever. Many people have a rocky road ahead.

Lastly, we've accelerated our plans to provide more education and services for professionals looking to practice animal-assisted interventions. From psychologists to school counselors, these individuals lack a professional home. We have long known that many of them seek out Pet Partners because of the unparalleled level of our education; but our offerings, rightfully so, have so far been created with volunteer handlers in mind. We're now able to create more options tailored to the needs of professional AAI practitioners.

For all of us to be able to process the emotional trauma caused by 2020, it's going to take all of us working together while not forgetting about the needs and welfare of the wonderful animals who make this work possible.

You can learn more about these efforts in this issue's feature article. My most fervent wish is that there is only *one* COVID-19 issue of *Interactions*.

Stay safe. Stay healthy. Stay happy.

— Annie

Animal-Related Engagement:

Developing New Approaches to AAI

How Pet Partners has responded to the effects of COVID-19

by Elisabeth Van Every

At the start of 2020, Pet Partners had numerous plans in the works to advance our work in animal-assisted interventions (AAI) and support our volunteers and the communities they serve. These plans included a town hall meeting with all of our community-based groups; a second Meet the Pets event on Capitol Hill; multiple team evaluator practicums scheduled in locations across the U.S.; and ambitious events for National Therapy Animal Day and World's Largest Pet Walk. And of course, we would continue with the daily work of educating, screening, and registering therapy animal teams and animal-assisted crisis response (AACR) teams to make the more than three million visits annually that are the heart of our Therapy Animal Program.

And then March brought COVID-19 and shutdowns, which disrupted our plans and regular activities, as it has for much of the world. As the scope of the pandemic became clear, we canceled all plans that involved travel and large groups of people. We advised our volunteers to comply with local health guidelines and suspend all Pet Partners-related activity that involved in-person visits until the risks from the pandemic could be more accurately gauged. And we decided to extend all current Pet Partners registrations by 12 months, so volunteers wouldn't need to worry about renewing their registrations during the pandemic or face the risk of holding and attending in-person evaluations.

But we still had one big issue to address: How could we continue to provide the healing effects of the human-animal bond when in-person therapy animal visits aren't an option? We realized we had to think creatively and find new ways to bring the benefits of pets to people.

The Impact of COVID-19 on AAI

Our therapy animal teams are dedicated to their visits, and began developing new methods to continue bringing the impact of AAI to their clients. When in-person visits were suspended, many handlers started making visits on the outside of the facilities they would normally go into, giving people the opportunity to see and interact with the teams through the windows.

"Pet parades" are another variation on this idea, with groups of masked handlers and therapy animals walking or driving past facilities, while staff and clients watch from sidewalks or through windows. Handlers often make signs with encouraging messages for these kinds of visits.

The opportunities to use technology to support AAI were quickly apparent. Almost immediately, our volunteers began using email, social media, and video meeting services to maintain



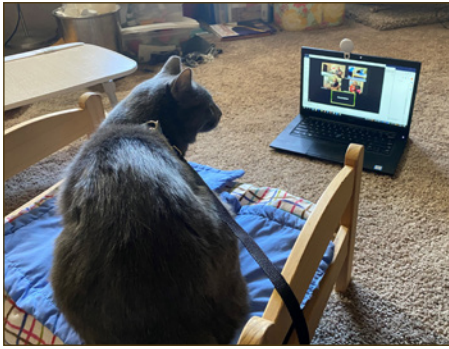
Wendy Hitch and Getty make a "window visit" with a special sign for their clients



The mini horses and handlers of SOUL Harbor Ranch do a group virtual visit

connections with their facilities and clients. Teams sent photos and videos to their facilities on a regular basis through email or through their social media accounts. Many of them made special signs and collages, video presentations, and fun animations to share with clients and staff.

Facilities worked with their regular teams to do "virtual



Therapy cat Roger Sterling takes part in a virtual visit for staff at Phoenix Children's Hospital

visits" through video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Some teachers and libraries scheduled virtual Read With Me™ visits, both live and through recorded reading sessions. Some hospitals even used their internal TV networks to broadcast

virtual visits throughout the facility and give clients the opportunity to ask questions or request special tricks from therapy animal teams.

In order to provide a central location for all of these wonderful projects and virtual visits, we created a special group on Facebook called Virtual Visits with Pet Partners. This group offers facilities, clients, and Pet Partners volunteers the opportunity to connect and share their photos, videos, and other media. We also created

guidance for facilities and volunteers on how to hold successful virtual visits, with recommendations on best practices and technology considerations.

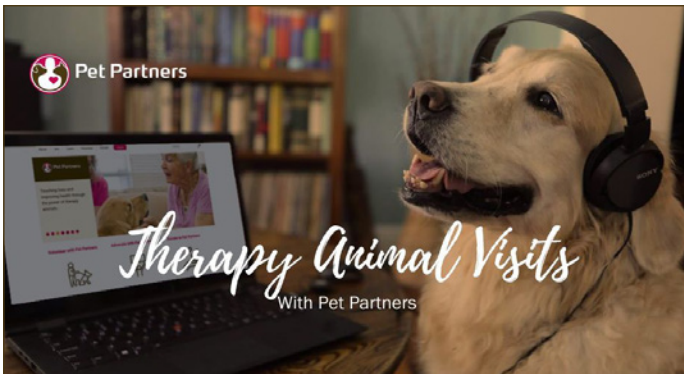
We've also made use of technology to maintain connections with our volunteers and supporters, and to provide education and vital information.

Our Learning Experience Team is using an online meeting platform to hold virtual "office hours" with our volunteer instructors and team evaluators, to provide support and continuing education for these valuable volunteer leaders. And Pet Partners leadership is holding virtual town halls to engage in conversations with our local volunteer groups, providing them with support, information, and resources to help them determine how they can serve their communities during this challenging era.

We're holding an average of two to four Facebook Live events per month with live presentations and question & answer opportunities about relevant topics. These sessions feature subject matter experts, professionals in AAI, and Pet Partners volunteers and staff. Recordings of these sessions are available on our YouTube channel so that everyone has the opportunity to view them.

Beyond the individual options made possible by technology, we also wanted to look at the field broadly. Even when therapy animal visits aren't prohibited broadly by a pandemic, there can be circumstances in which in-person visits aren't possible. As an organization with a commitment to supporting our mission with data, we knew it was important to learn more about the effects of virtual visits and other interactions relating to animals. Could engaging with animals through other means still have a benefit for human well-being?

After a thorough review of the existing research on this topic, we determined that there is measurable benefit to human well-being from these other types of interaction. With this information in hand, we launched a new initiative in support of these kinds of activities.



Animal-Related Engagement

Animal-related engagement is any engagement opportunity that allows participants the benefits of the human-animal bond by encouraging the remembrance of feelings that are commonly associated with interaction with an animal.

While nothing can replace the impact of visiting with a therapy animal in person, Pet Partners is built on the knowledge that the power of the human-animal bond far exceeds any single circumstance. When therapy animal programming simply isn't available, there are still creative ways in which animals can positively influence our wellness. These opportunities can be defined as **animal-related engagement (ARE)**.

This new initiative is supported by foundational research on the topic, as well as by some of the top leaders in the AAI field. ARE is widely applicable, both in settings in which it is called for and in populations in which it might be well-received.

ARE can be a worthwhile option in many situations where traditional AAI isn't feasible. These situations could include the following:

- There may be a lack of available therapy animal teams to meet demand in the area.
- Infection control concerns may prevent therapy animal visits, whether on a case-by-case basis or due to a widespread public health issue (such as the COVID-19 pandemic).
- Existing AAI services might have to be terminated suddenly, which can have negative effects for people who were benefiting from therapy animals.

These are opportunities to bring ARE into facilities and treatment plans to provide additional support until therapy animal visits are possible.

There are numerous options for ARE depending on the audience and the circumstances. We've outlined these options below.

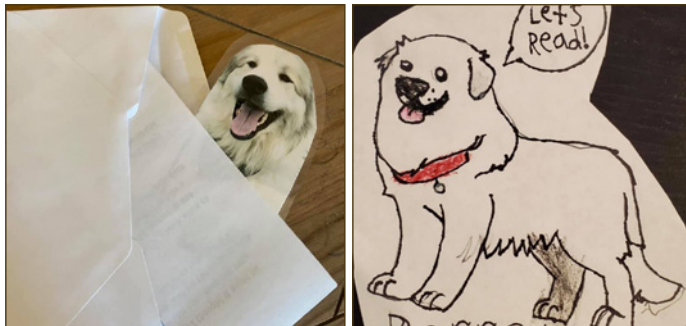
Virtual therapy animal visits: These are real-time digital interactions with therapy animal teams. These visits allow for personal interaction via means such as video calling and other interactive video platforms.



Niki Vetel and Calvin host a group therapy session via Zoom

Pet Partners' We Are All Ears project. This new project, an extension of our Read With Me initiative, encourages children to read to pets at home, which can support virtual learning efforts. (See page 12 for more details on this new project.)

Animal-based arts and crafts. Some people experience improvements in mental wellness by coloring a picture of an animal or using their creative skills to make things like greeting cards and clay models.



Katy Cavanaugh, a teacher, made "Flat Barrett" images of her therapy dog and mailed them to her students, and in response, one student drew their own picture of Barrett

Video content focusing on animals. Many of us can attest to feeling strong positive emotions while watching online videos featuring animals. Videos focusing on animals and interactions between people and animals can provide great engagement opportunities.

Work with local animal organizations. This option gives people the chance to provide positive support for the community in addition to ARE. Activities could include making kennel cards and pet toys, or helping with adoption listings.

Pet Partners[®] of Las Vegas
Love Dog Adventures

LOVE DOG ADVENTURES - WORD SEEK - HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR DOG

BATH	BED	LEASH	COLLAR	BOWL
WATER	FOOD	BRUSH	TREATS	LOVE
HUG	SHOTS	WALK	NAME TAG	VET
GROOM	TRAIN	MEDICINE	SWEATER	POOP BAG

S	W	E	A	T	E	R	E	J	T
H	B	S	H	B	X	A	S	R	R
O	P	E	N	G	G	Q	A	Z	E
T	O	B	A	T	H	I	U	G	A
S	O	F	M	W	N	A	U	G	T

Sue Grundfest of Pet Partners of Las Vegas-Love Dog Adventures created word search games that help kids learn about therapy dogs and animal care

Education related to animals. This option helps engage clients with materials that teach them about different kinds of animals. This will not only yield new knowledge, but also stir up passion for animals.

Pet Partners has published a white paper on ARE which includes an overview of relevant research, opinions from leaders in the field, and details on how ARE can be implemented in a variety of settings. You can read the white paper on our website at petpartners.org/animal-related-engagement.

ARE won't replace therapy animal visits, but it can offer some of the benefits of the human-animal bond and provide a way to keep people engaged with the positive effects that animals can have on human well-being. As we deal with ongoing effects from the pandemic, ARE is a valuable addition to the tools available to Pet Partners in delivering our mission even in extraordinary circumstances.

Pet Partners

WHITE PAPER
Animal-Related Engagement
BENEFITING FROM THE POWER OF THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND WHEN PERSONAL INTERACTION IS NOT POSSIBLE

Looking Beyond the Pandemic

We don't know how long it will be until activities can return to something more like normal. We do know that we must be prepared for an even greater need for therapy animal visits. The pandemic has meant widespread stress and trauma, and the healing effects of the human-animal bond will be vital in helping people begin recovery. We have also taken steps to prepare for activity beyond the initial effects of the pandemic, to ensure that we can provide appropriately trained and credentialed therapy animal teams in communities everywhere, and that they can make visits safely.

As communities begin to ease their shutdowns, we've created detailed safety guidance for our therapy animal teams who are ready to resume visiting; for team evaluators who



may be ready to hold evaluations again; and for facilities preparing to welcome teams back for visits. This guidance emphasizes infection control protocols and best practices based on our program standards that will minimize risk for in-person activities. And it includes the flexibility for facilities, volunteer leaders, and teams who are not yet ready to resume activities to make the decisions that are best for their local and individual circumstances.

We're working with currently registered teams to train and credential them for animal-assisted crisis response. Our AACR training provides crucial education in mental health first aid, which can be an important step in supporting people who have experienced trauma. AACR training will help our teams support people more effectively, even in settings that aren't in the immediate wake of a crisis.



Being able to evaluate new therapy animal teams will be a critical part of offering more therapy animal visits in more communities, which means that we need to have more licensed team evaluators available. Before the pandemic, we would assess new evaluators at geographically-specific in-person practicum events; but holding these events isn't viable for the immediate future. So our Learning Experience Team developed a virtual practicum, which enables us to assess prospective team evaluators in an interactive live format without the risk of an in-person session that requires travel. This virtual training has been well-received by our volunteers.

We've also created a virtual version of our popular Volunteering with Your Pet mini-workshop, which introduces prospective volunteers to our Therapy Animal Program and the registration process. This virtual option allows our volunteer leaders to present this information widely and safely, without requiring in-person attendance.

The decision to extend all current volunteer registrations for 12 months will mean a significant reduction in revenue that would otherwise come from registration renewal during that time. We're pursuing a number of ways to address this, including exciting new partnership opportunities, do-it-yourself fundraisers that allow people to create customized giving events, and expanded options for planned giving, along with increased emphasis and creativity for our signature fundraising events.

We continue to be active in grassroots advocacy around the country, since legislation is an ongoing process and standards for safe visits are even more crucial now. The current emphasis for our advocacy program is to educate lawmakers on the state and local level about the importance of these standards, eventually encouraging states to adopt minimum standards that will support safe and effective visits. Our handler advocates are active all across the country educating legislators. We are particularly proud to have played a role in shaping proposed legislation in several states including Connecticut, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Utah.

And we have prioritized plans that were already underway to expand our support for professionals incorporating AAI in their work. Many AAI practitioners choose Pet Partners registration as a way of demonstrating their pets' suitability for AAI work; but our program has historically been geared towards volunteer efforts and doesn't always meet the specific needs that AAI professionals have. The professional summit we held at our 2019 conference in San Antonio demonstrated that there are a number of areas in which practitioners with therapy animals are looking for more support, and that Pet Partners is well-positioned to provide a home for these professionals.

We've been engaged for the past several months in developmental research to determine the needs and priorities of AAI professionals and how Pet Partners can serve them. We're in the process of creating educational courses specifically targeted to professionals. This is an initial step in our plan for providing services for professionals who wish to work with therapy animals. We're still in the early stages of this work, but we're excited about the opportunities in this area. More information about our efforts will be available in the coming months.

The effects of COVID-19 are still with us, and likely will be for many months to come. We know that our mission will remain important to supporting human health and well-being, especially in the wake of the pandemic. We are committed to finding ways we can continue bringing the human-animal bond to people, even in these extraordinary circumstances.





AAI
Advancement

A Professional Testimony to the Power of Animal-Related Engagement

by Taylor Chastain Griffin, PhD

In the midst of what has turned out to be one of the most challenging years in recent history, we have often found ourselves collectively standing in awe as we witness the incredible work of responders in the health and human services fields. Medical providers, mental health practitioners, and many other professionals quickly answered the call to action, assuming critical positions of leadership to help us face the unknown and respond to hardships with resiliency and strength.

Not only have these professionals managed to provide services in the new global landscape, many of them have also continued to find ways to include the power of the human-animal bond. As soon as Pet Partners began to research and define our new animal-related engagement (ARE) initiative, we encountered numerous professionals who went right to work finding creative ways to involve therapy animals in their COVID-19-affected treatment plans.

Niki Vettel, a mental health clinician out of Massachusetts, is one such professional. Having personally witnessed the positive impact of ARE long before the pandemic hit, Niki was uniquely prepared to incorporate the benefits of the human-animal bond for her clients despite the fact that they could not physically interact with one another.

As a dedicated Pet Partners handler, Niki partners with her guinea pigs to inspire wellness, in both professional and volunteer AAI efforts. Her work with guinea pigs began in 2015, when she and her partner Ralphie became the first registered therapy guinea pig team in New England. At that time, Niki and Ralphie volunteered at a forensic psychiatric hospital where many of the patients dealt with long-term mental illness and were being evaluated for pre-trial competency hearings.

"The patients looked forward to visits with Ralphie. Many of them had never been up close and personal with a guinea pig, and they enjoyed petting and feeding Ralphie," says Niki. "They were encouraged to talk about pets they had enjoyed over the years,



and the staff feedback was overwhelmingly positive."

After three years of working together in this capacity, Ralphie unfortunately passed away unexpectedly. Realizing that the therapy animal visits had become such an integral aspect of the group schedule, Niki was inspired to find a way to continue sharing the love of animals with this population. She continued her visits with the facility's patients, incorporating various activities that allowed for dialogue about animals.

Niki provided videos, recalling how footage of unlikely animal companions fostered conversations with patients about how we can get along with others who we might not naturally associate with. She also created friendly quizzes for the patients, challenging them to learn about the species of therapy animal that they had all become

so enamored with during their time with Ralphie. "A quiz activity can be adapted to your animal's species and breed, and it's a fun exercise that allows you to teach about your pet and animal care," Niki says.

When the pandemic started, Niki immediately began to think of ways in which therapy animals could be brought in to video calls for virtual visits, and how other ARE activities could be adapted to provide a continuation of services for clients given the times. "You are limited only by your imagination when it comes to animal-related engagement!" says Niki. "Nothing will ever replace the experience of having a loving guinea pig in the lap—or a loving dog putting a paw on a lap—but ARE can still become an important part of your work."

Niki's testimony provides a stellar example of how ARE is not only a valuable approach in response to the COVID-19 crisis, but also an intervention that can be called upon any time we find ourselves limited in our ability to provide physical interactions with therapy animals.

Pet Partners is fortunate to work with such a dedicated network of handlers and advocates in finding innovative ways to share the love of animals at a time when the world needs it most. As the human-animal bond is further established as a versatile, powerful source of support, we will remain steadfast in our promotion of the work of professionals like Niki. Together with our animals, we can improve health and well-being in more ways than ever before.

Take The Lead: The Pet Partners Blog

Our blog, Take The Lead, provides in-depth coverage of Pet Partners programs, AAI research, mission-focused events, stories about the human-animal bond, and more.

petpartners.org/blog



The Protective Power of Therapy Animals in Times of Crisis

by Taylor Chastain Griffin, PhD

There is no doubt that 2020 has brought with it a global experience of crisis that has impacted the world in countless ways. Physical health has been challenged, the economy has suffered, and many of us have dealt with difficult emotional states such as fear and loneliness in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To best respond to the circumstances, Pet Partners turned to Dr. Leslie Stewart (LCPC), an associate professor of counseling and director of a graduate certificate in animal-assisted interventions at Idaho State University, and a member of Pet Partners' Human-Animal Bond Advisory Board. With expertise in crisis response and trauma-informed counselor preparation, Dr. Stewart has played an important role in the development of several Pet Partners initiatives relating to animal-assisted interventions and crisis. In conversation with Dr. Stewart about the pandemic, she was quick to define the event as a global crisis that is capable of generating symptoms of both crisis and trauma for all of us who are experiencing it.

While it can certainly be daunting to consider the profound implications of the pandemic, there is also tremendous hope to be found in the intervention that brings us together as advocates for the power of the human-animal bond. We know from the education that Dr. Stewart has provided that crisis does not always become trauma, and the difference between the two terms depends greatly on our subjective response to the precipitating event.

By comparing the definitions of these terms (Stewart, 2019), it's possible to understand why we are all in need of responsive, encouraging interventions as we deal with current circumstances:

- Crisis occurs when a specific, identifiable event leads to our perceived environmental demands impacting and potentially outweighing our perceived coping resources.

- Trauma occurs when the crisis experience leads to our perceived environmental demands outweighing our perceived coping resources **AND** a loss of meaning/sense of reality occurs.

By stepping in to provide contact, connection, and resources in the face of crisis, we often serve one of the most crucial roles in successful crisis response: facilitating connections between an impacted individual and a crisis-response professional. When skillfully aided by an animal-assisted crisis response team, this often difficult-to-establish connection may better allow the professional to support a person's preservation of their own sense of meaning and reality, thus potentially improving the outcome of the crisis experience. While experiences of crisis may develop into traumatic symptoms for some, an appropriately coordinated and supportive crisis intervention may serve as prevention

for many. Since the start of the Pet Partners AACR program in fall 2019, our handlers have been equipped with knowledge of how to assist in the wake of crisis, and fueled by a passion to share their therapy animals in a way that aids general crisis response efforts.

When the pandemic hit, the Pet Partners community immediately stepped up in an impressive way to inspire healing and prevent further trauma in a time of shared, ongoing crisis. Handlers found creative ways to visit virtually and share other animal-related engagement opportunities not just within their existing relationships but with larger audiences as well. In some locations, AACR teams have even managed to safely respond to additional crises in their communities, providing emotional comfort and support that has truly made a tangible difference to the survivors involved in the programming.

"In a hurricane of global uncertainty, fear, and crisis, our animals stand before us—unchanged, consistent, and ever attentive. It is as if their dependability and devotion shine as a beacon of familiarity, comfort, and support to guide our navigation through this storm. They are our allies, our teachers, our companions, our rocks," says Dr. Stewart, speaking to how animals can support professional crisis responders during times of crisis.

Now more than ever, the power of the human-animal bond has the ability to not only inspire wellness, but also to serve as a protective agent in overcoming the circumstances that surround us. Our relationships with animals can bring healing on so many different levels, in so many different ways. From simply enjoying the benefits that come with sharing our lives with our personal pets to responding to the outside world by stepping up with our animals during times of crisis, we are proud to be standing beside so many advocates who bring the Pet Partners mission to life.





Angie Zapata & Sam: Bringing AACR to Healthcare Workers

Angie Zapata has been a Pet Partners volunteer since 2006. In addition to being a handler with three dogs over the years, she's also a volunteer instructor and a team evaluator; and she leads the Community Partner group Pet Partners of Columbus (GA). Her commitment to bringing the benefits of the human-animal bond to her community is strong and long-standing.



As part of this commitment, Angie chose to take Pet Partners' animal-assisted crisis response (AACR) training when the program was launched in fall 2019. She and her current partner Sam received their AACR credentials and were ready to provide additional support to their community should there be a crisis. And while no one ever wants to be deployed in response to a crisis, being prepared for it meant that Angie and Sam were ready for the challenge that came with COVID-19.

Angie and Sam have been visiting at St. Francis-Emory Healthcare in Columbus for more than two years, bringing the benefits of a therapy dog to staff and patients at the hospital. "He loves the staff and is always excited to see everybody," Angie says of her partner. When COVID-19 arrived, their regular visits had to be paused indefinitely. But Angie knew that the strain of dealing with the pandemic would take a significant toll on the hospital staff, and she wanted to help if possible.

Equipped with her AACR training, she made a proposal in April to start a series of AACR-focused visits to support the staff in dealing the effects of the pandemic. Healthcare workers have been facing extraordinary levels of stress and crisis in working with COVID-19 patients. Having the benefits of a trained AACR team to help ease some of that was a way for Angie and Sam to support their community in this unprecedented time. The hospital's relationship with Angie and Sam, along with Pet Partners' high standards, gave the hospital confidence about being able to do these visits safely. Hospital staff then worked with Pet Partners to create the parameters of the AACR visits and set up an ongoing deployment.

There are strict safety protocols for these visits. Before entering the hospital, Angie receives a temperature scan and a symptom survey to confirm she is healthy. Everyone wears face coverings. Angie requires everyone touching Sam to follow Pet Partners' hand hygiene protocols and clean their hands before and after, which is standard for minimizing infection risk. And they keep the number of visitors at one time small and maintain social distancing between the humans. These measures all help reduce the risk of infection. "There was no unease about catching the virus," Angie says.

The training Angie received for AACR credentialing was vital in preparing her for this extraordinary experience. Pet Partners' AACR training includes in-depth information on providing mental health first aid, which is an important aspect of supporting people affected by crisis. The training also educates handlers in techniques to help support their own mental well-being when providing crisis response, and in knowing when they aren't equipped for a particular circumstance. "It prepared me in how to be comfortable in stressful situations, when to walk away from a situation and more importantly what to say in different situations," Angie says. "It also made me feel comfortable in knowing how to protect myself and Sam."

The positive effects of their visits were apparent right away. Angie recalls what

it was like to go on one of these AACR deployments: "It was announced over the loudspeaker that we were here. We got to a floor that looked like an anthill. Everybody was busy, running around. When they saw Sam, they took turns to stop, sit on the floor with him, pet him and love on him." She remembers one particular time when her social, active partner clearly understood why he was there: "We had a staff member



just sitting on the floor and holding him tight and Sam just sat there as if he knew it was important to let them hold on to him."

For Angie, being able to support essential healthcare workers in her community during a time of crisis is the core of why she and Sam became an AACR team. "We enjoyed every minute of each visit," she says. "There was no better reward for me than to see the joy displayed by each of the staff members, to be happy to see Sam, to give him love, kisses, and treats. To ask us if we could come back the next week is the best reward for Sam and me."

When Pet Partners launched our AACR program, we had no idea that six months later the world would be facing one of the largest crises we've experienced. But we knew that preparing teams like Angie and Sam for crisis response was vitally important to our mission and to those we serve. And we are training more teams in AACR each day, so that more people can benefit from the healing effects of therapy animals as we move through this extraordinary crisis.



Giving

Honor. Remember. Celebrate.

If there's one thing that 2020 has made crystal clear, it is just how important our loved ones are—including our pets. The human-animal bond is such a powerful thing and here at Pet Partners, we like to celebrate it every day!

That's why we created a NEW "Do It Yourself" fundraising site that can be used by anyone who would like to ask friends and

family to donate to Pet Partners. This site lets you create a fundraiser that is specific to anything you choose to recognize. You can get creative, have fun, and schedule it during a time that works best for you. You can customize your fundraising page by adding stories and photos to celebrate the person or pet these donations will honor.

Who will you honor, remember, or celebrate?

Here are some great ideas for participation:

- Create a fundraiser to celebrate a pet-loving friend or colleague's accomplishments!
- Remember a beloved friend, family member, or pet after their passing by creating a customized memorial fundraising page.
- Set up a birthday fundraiser and ask your loved ones to donate in lieu of gifts.
- Donate your wedding celebration to therapy animals!

Beyond these ideas, participants can completely customize their fundraiser through this site. Any activity, any passion, any hobby, and anything that brings people together can be a successful way to fundraise for Pet Partners, allowing us to improve people's health and well-being through the human-animal bond.

Please visit petpartners.org/fundraise to get started!



HONOR. REMEMBER. CELEBRATE.

Benefits of a Charitable Gift Annuity

This fall, along with planning for the holidays, consider adding a new task that will benefit you for years to come, well after the holidays are over.

Pet Partners offers charitable gift annuities (CGAs) that can provide the following:

- Fixed payments for life
- Partially tax-free payments for several years
- If appreciated stocks are used, avoid a portion of capital gains tax
- Support Pet Partners after your lifetime

Considered to be a "life income" gift, money, certificates of deposit (when they mature), or appreciated stocks are appropriate assets to be irrevocably given to Pet Partners in exchange for a written agreement to pay a fixed amount for the lifetime of one or two individuals. Payments to the annuitant are made quarterly, semi-annually, or annually, with the contracts fully backed by the financial assets of Pet Partners.



The payout rate is based on the age of the annuitant(s). Pet Partners follows the rate schedule from the American Council on Gift Annuities.

Although Pet Partners does not yet offer CGAs in all states, this may be an option for you. If you are over the age of 60, contact maryb@petpartners.org for a sample illustration tailored for you. To learn more,

visit the How To Give page at petpartners.org and click Charitable Gift Annuities, where you can read more about this life income gift, watch an informational video, and use the calculator provided to run your own illustration of this gift.

BECOME A PET PARTNERS ADVOCATE

Join our advocacy efforts

It's easy! Register today
to be an advocate:

petpartners.org/advocacy



Partner
Spotlight

Elanco Joins Pet Partners in Promoting Youth Literacy Through We Are All Ears



"Elanco and The Elanco Foundation is committed to philanthropic investments and strategic partnerships connected to the human-animal bond," said Julie Lawless, Senior Vice President, Corporate Affairs and Administration at Elanco. "Through our donation to Pet Partners' We Are All Ears initiative, we see the value and role pets can play in children's virtual learning during the pandemic."

When a family takes the pledge to read at home to their pets, they can determine a reading goal that is right for them, whether that's reading a certain number of books, pages, chapters, or minutes. From there, families can also access great resources to support children as they participate in We Are All Ears including a reading log, bookmark templates, and a special Bingo card, all to help encourage regular reading. A Certificate of Completion is available for parents to present to their child and pet upon reaching their goals. There is also an official We Are All Ears T-shirt for sale, with proceeds benefiting Pet Partners.

Learn more at petpartners.org/allears.

Through a new initiative, **We Are All Ears, a Worldwide Read with Pets Project**, Pet Partners and Elanco are encouraging families and children to read to their pets. Reading to an animal can significantly impact student reading rates. Research shows that when reading to pets, children achieve higher end-of-year reading scores, and improve reading rates, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. They also are better able to stay on task when a furry, feathered, or scaled companion is involved.

"Reading to pets is an amazing way to get children excited about reading and engaged with the content," said C. Annie Peters, President & CEO of Pet Partners. "Children who are learning to read are often hesitant about their reading abilities. Many kids

feel more at ease reading to pets, who are simply there to listen—not to judge how well they are reading."

With communities across the country experiencing educational disruptions, and more and more parents educating their children at home, this new initiative is designed to bring the power of the human-animal bond to youth literacy. With most Pet Partners' registered volunteer therapy animal teams across the country unable to conduct their regular therapy animal visits due to COVID-19-related restrictions, Pet Partners is leading this already-proven animal-assisted activity, which is based on our Read With Me™ initiative involving children reading to therapy animals.



Tips for Reading to Your Pets

- Set up a comfortable spot for the reader and pet to sit.
- Make sure the reader will be able to show the pet pictures from the book.
- Pets can get distracted, so have a favorite pet toy on hand to keep the pet engaged if needed.
- Encourage your child to pause and pet your animal to keep them settled down and comfortable during the reading session.
- Reward your pet for their good listening behavior with a treat at the end of the reading session!
- Share photos and videos online using #WeAreAllEars and #PetPartners.

Purina® Cat Chow® and Pet Partners Team Up to Promote Therapy Cats

Purina Cat Chow has teamed up with Pet Partners to help increase awareness and advocacy for the therapeutic benefits of cats. To help fund the recruitment and registration of therapy cat teams, Purina Cat Chow donated \$30,000 to Pet Partners. Purina Cat Chow recognizes the benefits of cats as therapy animals and, like Pet Partners, wants to improve human health and well-being through the human-animal bond.

“While most people tend to associate therapy animals with dogs, cats also provide a variety of mental and physiological benefits,” said Annie Valuska, PhD, senior feeding behavior expert at Purina Cat Chow. “Cat owners often have lower stress levels than non-pet owners, which can cause blood pressure to drop and improves cardiovascular health over time. Cats can also boost our mental health, decreasing feelings of loneliness and increasing a sense of purpose.”

Because of Purina Cat Chow’s generous



support of Pet Partners, a special registration discount will be available for all new therapy cat teams through March 31, 2021. Together, Purina Cat Chow and Pet

Partners are working to enhance the well-being of local communities with the help of cats. Visit petpartners.org/catchow for more details.

CAN YOU DO MORE? BECOME AN EVALUATOR



- ✓ Are you a handler with 18 months of volunteer experience? If so, you are eligible to apply and may already have the basic aptitude to successfully evaluate other teams.
- ✓ Can you give a few days a year to make it possible for more volunteers to share their wonderful companion animals with their communities?
- ✓ Pet Partners team evaluators play a critical role in growing and sustaining therapy animal visits in their communities.
- ✓ We have designed accessible, innovative, and supportive coursework that will prepare you to take on this role.

If you're ready to be a volunteer leader, get in touch at petpartners.org/contact-us



Advocacy

The One Health Act



Grassroots Advocacy

While COVID-19 might be curtailing traditional visits right now, Pet Partners knows that advocacy continues to be vitally important. Legislation that supports safe access to therapy animals will always be a priority.

One Health, the transdisciplinary effort to achieving optimal health outcomes by recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment, is a topic we've been engaged on in the past. Within the Therapy Animal Program, One Health is relevant when considering the prevention of zoonotic disease transmission during visits. Addressing this issue requires not only caring for the health of humans who are or might be infected, but also taking steps to manage the health of animals that could potentially spread the diseases.

For this reason, our advocates across the country have been mobilized to support the One Health Act, H.R.3771, legislation specifically designed to better prevent, prepare for, and respond to zoonotic disease outbreaks. COVID-19, like all coronaviruses, began in an animal and was passed on to humans, making it a zoonotic disease. We've seen other cases of severe zoonotic disease outbreaks in the past, including SARS and Ebola. We know the terrible human and economic impact of these outbreaks and the importance of responding effectively. This is why we are advocating on the One Health Act.

For more information about advocacy for the One Health Act, visit petpartners.org/advocacy; you'll find the One Health Act listed under our Action Alerts.

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Events

Keeping the Mission Moving: World's Largest Pet Walk 2020

 **Pet Partners**
WORLD'S LARGEST PET WALK

Sponsored by:



The 3rd Annual World's Largest Pet Walk, sponsored by VCA, brought animal lovers from around the world together in a common purpose, despite the pandemic. On Saturday, September 26, walkers from hundreds of communities hosted socially distanced walk events to support Pet Partners. The World's Largest Pet Walk is an official Pet Partners signature event held annually on the fourth Saturday in September to celebrate the health benefits of being active with pets. This event is open to people of all ages and abilities (not only Pet Partners volunteers), and of course, all species of pets are welcome!

The World's Largest Pet Walk has always been focused locally, with walkers and walking teams choosing their own times, routes, and locations for walking. This year, with large gatherings not possible in most places and social distancing so important, the format for this event was ideal for the extraordinary circumstances, meaning walk events could be held with minimal changes. And our walkers showed more enthusiasm for the World's Largest Pet Walk than ever before!



Feet, paws, and hooves walked in communities all over the United States, and in international locations including Argentina and Canada. Some supporters

held socially distanced events in community parks, such as one coordinated by handler and evaluator Shirley Lieb in Illinois. Some of our walkers walked solo, educating people they met along the way about therapy animals. Others invited family, friends, and neighbors to join in and walk with their pets. And a few took to Facebook and Instagram for live videos of their fun day. No matter how walkers participated, their activities made a HUGE difference.



This year, our incredible walkers, teams, and sponsors, including VCA and Blue Shield of CA, really came together to show the power of the human-animal bond by raising more than \$70,000, which will support the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program, Walk With Me™, and other initiatives that bring the healing effects of the human-animal bond to so many people. The need



World's Largest Pet Walk: By the Numbers

\$70,000+

raised to support our growing
Therapy Animal Program

Hundreds

of walkers signed up to participate
at worldslargestpetwalk.org

44

states with registered walkers, as
well as international participants

8

known animal species
participated



for life-changing therapy animal visits has increased significantly with the effects of COVID-19, and these funds will help greatly to keep the mission moving forward.

Please check out [#WorldsLargestPetWalk](https://www.facebook.com/WorldsLargestPetWalk) on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to see all the amazing photos from participants.

Be sure to save the date for our 4th Annual World's Largest Pet Walk, which will take place on Saturday, September 25, 2021. We can't wait to have you walk with us!



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***New Shirt Design
Available For
a Limited Time!***

Many folks don't realize that Pet Partners proudly registers nine species of therapy animals. Help spread the word with our fun Fall 2020 shirt design! Shirts come in a variety of styles and colors, and all proceeds benefit Pet Partners. Visit petpartners.org to order yours today!