

Pet Partners

Fall 2019

INTERACTIONS MAGAZINE

STORIES OF LIVES IMPROVED BY POSITIVE HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

Pet Partners® Animal-Assisted Crisis Response

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Pet Partners®
Animal-Assisted Crisis Response



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A Letter from the President & CEO Annie Peters

Wow. Does anyone else feel like time now flies faster than ever? So much changes so fast! Technology is good — usually. The same goes for social media. Every time a Facetime call drops, I'm annoyed...until I remember that if you told my generation as kids that we would one day be able to see someone while we talk to them on the phone, we would have scoffed: "No way!"

One good thing about social media is that it allows me to wake up every morning and see what's going on with you, our Pet Partners teams, all around the globe. If you're not currently following Pet Partners of Argentina @petpartnersargentina on Instagram, what are you waiting for? It will make your day!

And yet with all the information we have, the technology we have, the ways we have available to connect, we're possibly more tired and more stressed than we've ever been. What's up with that?

Perhaps there is no sadder indication of troubled times than the changing nature of what is considered a crisis. In our world of animal-assisted interventions, we have traditionally thought of crisis response work after natural disasters: hurricane, fire, or tornado. Now the news is full of grieving communities after acts of violence.

You and your therapy animal partners are increasingly being called upon to reach someone in need through the power of the human-animal bond in times of grief and crisis. Your community needs you, and Pet Partners is here to support you. That's why we've launched a new credential for handlers who are interested in animal-assisted crisis response (AACR) work.

While we hope you are never called upon to respond to a tragedy, we want to make sure that you can be prepared if the call comes. We believe in a neighbor helping neighbor approach — not putting a therapy animal on a plane, driving for hours to reach a destination, or taking up a hotel room in a community where residents have been displaced from their homes and need shelter. Prepared with education based on the latest in trauma-informed counseling, handlers will understand what you can do, and — perhaps even more importantly — what you shouldn't do while supporting those in crisis.

Why is Pet Partners creating an AACR credential when there are other existing organizations? Pet Partners recognizes that some of you are already doing these kinds of visits — some with other organizations, and some without any additional training or support. Given our commitment to education and to animal well-being, we felt it was important to create an offering that was aligned with the Pet Partners philosophy. We also recognize that other organizations don't necessarily accept non-canine species for AACR and believe that the non-canine species we register can also benefit those in need.

For those of you who are currently associated with an AACR group, we recognize the importance you place on



Pet Partners
Animal-Assisted Crisis Response

being there for your community in a time of need. Pet Partners therapy animal teams may be registered with another AACR group if that group carries its own liability insurance. However, especially following a crisis, it is often imperative that those on scene be easily recognized and that there is no confusion about who responders are representing. If you are on a Pet Partners crisis response visit and covered by Pet Partners' insurance, you as a Pet Partners AACR team may not wear or display any other group affiliations.

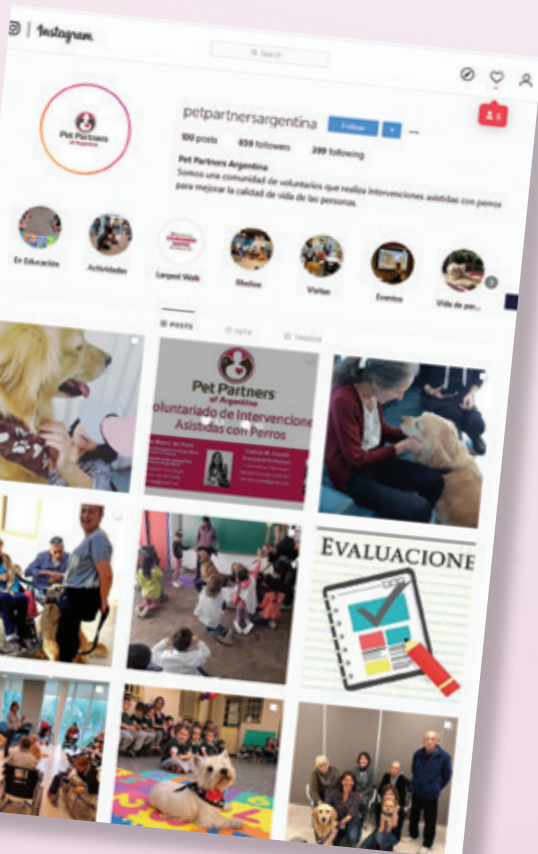
Want to be prepared to respond to your community safely and effectively if needed in a crisis? Visit petpartners.org and the Volunteer Center for more information about our AACR credential.

A final thought: Whether it's the stress of everyday life or you and your therapy animal have responded to a neighbor in need, it's important to practice self-care for you as the handler. Yes, YAYABA™, but you can't look after your animal if you aren't first looking after yourself.

For me, I'm working hard at this concept of mindfulness. Unless I'm engulfed in something at work, all too often my body is one place and my mind is somewhere else. Except, I've noticed, when I'm petting an animal. Not only am I in the moment, I'm relishing the moment. A belly rub for Gidget while we gaze into each other's eyes? Nothing makes me more relaxed, happier, or more present. I just hope she doesn't feel like the dog in the Instagram meme with the caption "The therapy dog after I'm done sharing all my problems." That dog looks comically freaked out. Have you seen it? Or are you someone who surfs the internet for cat videos? We all have our guilty pleasures, and for many of us, they involve technology that lets us enjoy people's pets.

Take care of yourself and your pets!

- Annie



Animal-Assisted Crisis Response



Expanding the Impact of Therapy Animals to Crisis Situations

The Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program has been devoted since the start to bringing therapy animals to people who can most benefit. For more than three decades our dedicated volunteer teams have been bringing the power of the human-animal bond to people in healthcare settings of all kinds. As the effectiveness of animal-assisted interventions has been demonstrated through research, we've watched that impact expand into other areas as well, including children's literacy with Read With Me™; physical movement for health and well-being with Walk With Me™; and reducing workplace stress through Animal-Assisted Workplace Well-being.

One of the things that has kept our Therapy Animal Program vital is our ability to respond to developments in the field of AAI and bring therapy animals to new applications. In recent years there's been increasing call for therapy animals to respond following crisis situations, including disasters resulting from natural forces or technological failures, and tragedies such as mass shootings or unexpected deaths in a community. Responding to crisis can also mean assisting people who have experienced trauma in many forms. Pet Partners determined that it was time for us to create an animal-assisted crisis response program, and to provide specialized training for our volunteers, so that we can better serve people in the wake of crisis, and provide additional support for the well-being of handlers and therapy animals.

The Evolving Role of AACR

Working dogs have been involved in responses to crisis situations for many years. Search and rescue dogs have long assisted in the wake of disasters such as earthquakes and the 9/11 attacks. This was the most common kind of animal-assisted crisis response for many years, and what many people would think of in terms of animals responding to disasters.

As animal-assisted interventions became more common, many professionals working in the crisis and trauma response fields started to see the value of canine-assisted responses that address the mental and

What is Animal-Assisted Crisis Response?

Animal-assisted crisis response (AACR) is a class of animal-assisted activities which provides comfort to those who have been affected by natural, human-caused, or technological disasters.

AACR is effective because the safety, familiarity, novelty, and interest in the animal have been found to be impactful when building rapport with a person affected by crisis. The therapy animal team can offer comfort, reduce anxiety, and provide the opportunity for contact and engagement, and when needed connect a client to emergency personnel and professionals for additional assistance.

AACR is not a professional mental health intervention. Pet Partners AACR handlers must complete training which includes psychological first aid concepts, sometimes also referred to as mental health first aid. Psychological first aid is a form of stabilization. Stabilizing individuals results in an environment where recovery can occur. AACR does not take the place of professional interventions, but provides support through listening, empathy, and sharing the unconditional love of a therapy animal.

emotional health of people affected by disasters. Professionals and volunteers trained their dogs and educated themselves about how best to address the psychological component of disaster response, and the overlap with therapy animals became obvious.

Over the past decade, AACR has increasingly come to mean the presence of therapy animals to help people dealing with trauma in the aftermath of a disaster or crisis. In many circumstances it means a large event like a hurricane or mass shooting. It can also mean assisting people

who are in personal crisis as the result of violence or abuse, as well as people who are themselves assisting others in crisis. The emphasis now is on handlers and therapy animals being able to provide what's called "psychological first aid," helping people deal with the initial shock and impact of a crisis event and providing comfort and calm through the presence of an animal and a reliable handler.

Pet Partners has seen an increase in recent years in our therapy animal teams assisting their communities in the aftermath of a variety of crisis and disaster situations. These situations cover a broad range, including support for communities after mass shooting events; working with insurance companies at mobile relief sites after hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires; comforting students and faculty after unexpected tragedies at schools; and collaboration with first responders, local law enforcement, and court facilities. Many of these responses take place in settings where our therapy animal teams already visit, including schools, hospitals, and workplaces.

The best way for Pet Partners to serve our volunteers in this realm is to provide training and education that supports them in bringing this vital work to their communities, which many teams are already engaging in even without such training. We also believe that animals other than dogs can provide the calm, comforting presence that makes AACR valuable; while AACR has typically involved only dog teams, Pet Partners teams of all our registered species will have the option to earn an AACR credential.

AACR and the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program

Our goal in developing our AACR credential was to bring the rigorous standards and excellent handler education that are already foundations of our Therapy Animal Program to the needs of AACR. Our commitments to safe and effective visits and animal well-being remain paramount in our AACR credential. We consulted extensively with subject matter experts to develop our coursework, curriculum, and requirements.



The Pet Partners AACR coursework covers the following information:

- Basic disaster concepts and best practices
- Key parts of crisis response visits
- Active listening and de-escalation techniques
- Stress management

By covering this material in role-playing style, we aim to give handlers the opportunity to think about the different ways they'll respond to different situations and practice those skills. Additionally, Pet Partners AACR teams will also complete the free online training offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), ICS-100.c: *Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS*, as part of their AACR application, to ensure they are prepared for the logistics of crisis response situations.

One decision made after consulting with experts and carefully considering our approach to AACR was to not require a second evaluation for AACR work. The majority of AACR work happens when the community is in recovery and the physical location is safe and secure. Many crisis response locations are settings that our teams already visit in. For that reason, we felt that intentional exposure to sirens and other extreme situations designed to elicit a stress response was neither necessary nor aligned with our philosophy of You Are Your Animal's Best Advocate (YAYABA™).

Dr. Leslie Stewart, a clinical therapist who has an extensive background in trauma-informed therapy and who works with therapy animals as part of her practice, notes that we sometimes overemphasize the animal in AACR and undervalue the work of the handler. According to her, training for

the handler is the most important aspect, because the handler will guide how people affected by crisis interact with the animal, which can determine how effective the interaction will be. (See the article by Dr. Stewart on page 8 for more information about clinical perspectives on AACR.)

The concepts and education covered in the coursework can also be valuable in non-crisis settings. Many Pet Partners teams visit in more typical AAI settings with clients who have experienced crisis in non-disaster situations. The education handlers receive for AACR can be useful in working with these populations as well.

Pet Partners registered teams who want to receive AACR credentials and training must already have at least six months of general visiting experience in order to register for AACR. This requirement helps ensure that teams already have a solid base of visiting experience in non-crisis settings and that handlers will know how to implement YAYABA effectively.

Deployment protocols for AACR also reflect our focus on rigor and team well-being. Pet Partners AACR teams should never self-deploy, but instead will be required to wait for invitation and details about the deployment. Teams will deploy only to settings that are in line with their team qualification ratings. The two-hour daily limit on visiting time remains in place for AACR deployments; the purpose of the time limit is to minimize stress and fatigue for animals and handlers, and reduce the risk of negative responses. Crisis situations can exacerbate these factors, so holding to the time limit will reduce the possibility of incidents and allow both handlers and animals more recovery time.

Another aspect of well-being is for handlers

to consider conditions and safe transit during AACR situations. There may be times when it would not be safe for teams to commute to crisis response locations, or where environmental conditions (such as smoke from wildfires or damage to infrastructure) would put the health of handlers or therapy animals at risk. Our AACR training reinforces that YAYABA applies to these situations as well; handlers should always consider these aspects when deciding whether to deploy, and should never put their own well-being or that of their therapy animal at risk by responding.

And teams will work within their communities for crisis response. The model in which therapy animals are put on planes and travel long distances for crisis response doesn't match our philosophy of animal well-being. We believe that teams who live in the area are best suited to know where they will be effective and how they can best support their community in a time of crisis.

"I am constantly amazed by the selflessness and dedication of our volunteers. That's why Pet Partners felt so strongly about creating training that would help prepare them for some of the most difficult visit situations by giving them the tools to keep themselves and their animals physically, mentally, and emotionally safe," says Mary Margaret Callahan, Pet Partners Chief Mission Officer. "While I sincerely hope these teams won't be called on in the aftermath of a crisis, I'm proud that so many wish to be prepared should they be called on to help."

The impact of therapy animal teams in response to the effects of crisis can be seen in many communities around the U.S. The following stories are just a few examples of how Pet Partners teams are assisting their communities during and after many kinds of crisis.

Finding Comfort in the Ashes

The November 2018 Camp Fire in Butte County, California was one of the most devastating wildfires in U.S. history. It took nearly three weeks for the fire to be contained, and thousands of people were affected. Pet Partners teams in central California responded to help support people whose lives were devastated by the fire, as well as first responders working on fire control and emergency management. The need for emotional support and stress management during this time was profound; a representative for one of the insurance companies responding to the fire told Pet Partners, "There couldn't be a greater need for what your teams do."

Kathleen Pennington and her cockapoo Sadie visited at a mobile relief site for an insurance company, offering their presence and comfort to victims of the fire. "I arrived and was immediately overcome with the immensity of the disaster that was still unfolding," she says. "Many victims were in a state of shock and so happy to have survived that they wanted to share their stories. They shared as they petted Sadie, and I listened."

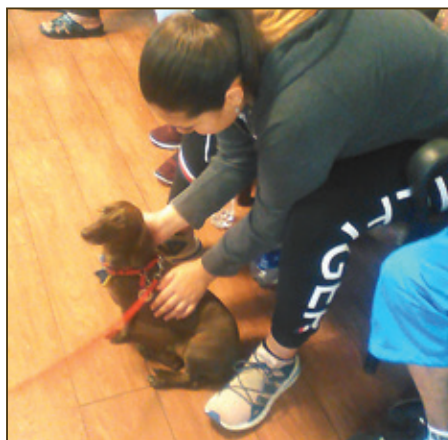
Amanda Templeton and her German shepherd dog Thorne also visited at the mobile relief site. "It was heartbreaking to talk to people who would tell me 'All I have left is what is in my car,'" she says. "Having my dog there broke the ice with several people who were still in shock but opened up and talked about what they had gone through and what they had lost."



They also spent time at the operations base camp in Chico, where they helped support fire fighters and operations staff. "We would greet men and women who had been out in the devastation and all they wanted to do when they got back to camp, covered in smoke and ash, was to get down on the ground with my dog and hug him, sometimes with tears involved," Amanda says. "There was an EXTREMELY high amount of stress in that environment and I know, and was told by many people, that we provided an invaluable amount of stress relief, even if only for a few minutes. It was very moving to me to be able to help these people who were risking their lives. Those days were some of my most memorable and heart-wrenching working as a therapy dog team."

Supporting Communities After Tragedy

On August 3, 2019, a mass shooting occurred in El Paso, Texas, with many people killed and wounded. The El Paso community was profoundly impacted, with shock and trauma rippling well beyond the immediate victims. Pet Partners teams in the area stepped in to help support their community. Karen Cowell with Community Partner group Paws for Love says, "Our teams were honored to be invited to visit the families in hospital ICU waiting rooms immediately in the days after the shootings, and victims in their hospital rooms a few days later."



The impact therapy animals had immediately after the shooting was apparent, as they provided comforting presence and nonjudgmental affection to families coping with the loss or injury of loved ones. "One especially touching experience for me was when a wounded lady at Del Sol Hospital asked for my miniature dachshund Pancho to be placed beside her in her hospital bed," Karen says. "He curled up next to her knowing instinctively he was there to heal, while she stroked him for ten minutes."

The effect of therapy animals also extended into the following days and weeks, as they visited with people recovering from their injuries and brought the power of the human-animal bond to people all over the community who had been affected by the shooting. Their visits have included children's groups; businesses whose employees were in proximity to the shooting location; and law enforcement officers and support staff who had to respond to the shooting. The presence of the therapy animals helped provide some moments of calm and hope as people dealt with the grief and trauma from the shooting.

The teams have also participated in public memorials that were held to help the entire community come together and support each other after the tragedy.



El Paso wasn't the first time Pet Partners teams were called on to support their community in this way. On October 1, 2017, Las Vegas also experienced the tragedy of a mass shooting. Pet Partners of Las Vegas—Love Dog Adventures is very active in the greater Las Vegas area, and their strong relationships with healthcare and education facilities in the community were vital in helping the community after this horrific event.

"Everyone in town was impacted by the event," says Sue Grundfest, director of Pet Partners of Las Vegas – Love Dog Adventures. "Our teams spent time in hospitals with the families of the victims, with police officers and first responders, as well as at churches, schools, and more."

One particular visit during this time had a huge impact. Teams met with the incoming class of medical students at the UNLV School of Medicine, right next door to UMC Hospital, which is where the most critical victims were taken. The college and the hospital work in tandem, and this proximity had a major effect on the students. Sue says, "They could not sit in class without hearing the sirens. They could not park their cars without going past reporters. And when they turned on the television, they saw their professors, the doctors and the surgeons who spent countless hours and days after the attack doing what they will be doing one day."

Five Pet Partners teams arrived for the visit, and it made a palpable difference in the mood of the class. "You could feel the tension lessen and as the students clamored around the dogs, they relaxed," says Sue. "We were told it was the first time since the shooting that they were smiling, breathing easily, and putting the weight of their future careers on hold."



And while the visit was clearly making a difference for the students, Sue also noticed how the handlers were seeing their work through new eyes. "Never forget how emotional volunteering is at both ends of the leash," she says. "Our animals feel the stress and so do our humans. I saw our amazing handlers reflect on why they were here. This was not just another college visit. This was important. They were important. As they cared for their pets, making sure they had water and breaks, I reminded the human end of the leash to take good care of themselves as well."

Community-Focused Ongoing Crisis Response

The sheriff's department in Pima County, Arizona was seeking new ways to respond to issues surrounding individuals in crisis in the communities where they serve, as well as concerns about mental health and suicide among first responders. They learned of another law enforcement agency in the state that was working with a crisis response dog and were inspired by the success of that program.

Pima County Sheriff's Department (PCSD) received grants to fund the purchase and training of three therapy dogs, which would be handled by PCSD deputies in order to bring the effects of therapy dogs into the community. PCSD also connected with Pet Partners of Southern Arizona (now part of the Arizona chapter of Pet Partners) to learn more about the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program and our standards for handlers and therapy animals. While our program is designed for volunteer participation, PCSD determined that our education for handlers, emphasis on animal

well-being, and standards for therapy animal teams were the model they wanted to use for the therapy dog teams who would be part of PCSD.

In August 2018, Officer Shawn Degan and Officer Leo became the first Pet Partners-registered therapy animal team with PCSD. Leo has since registered with another PCSD deputy, and two additional therapy dogs, Officer Luke and Officer Leia, registered with other deputies in 2019.

The work done by PCSD's therapy dog teams isn't meant to replace volunteer therapy animal teams; Officer Degan says, "Volunteers are vital in spreading out the response to crisis." The focus of the PCSD teams is to support individuals they encounter in the course of their duties, as well as to provide comfort and stress relief for fellow officers, PCSD staff, and other first responders.

"Suicide is epidemic among first responders," says Officer Degan. First responders experience extremely high levels of stress, and the culture of law enforcement discourages them from displaying or talking about mental health concerns. One obstacle the new PCSD therapy team faced was reluctance of officers to accept the idea of a therapy dog whose purpose is to provide comfort. Officer Degan notes that early on there was a lot of mockery about deputies being "soft" if they needed a therapy dog, which he had to get past.

But when they began to experience the positive effects of a therapy dog, opinions changed. Tara Barrera, Community Relations Specialist with PCSD, notes that dogs aren't judgmental, and they won't share secrets; this gives officers an outlet for stress relief and managing difficult emotions without worrying about the opinions of fellow human officers. The dogs have provided comfort for homicide detectives at

the end of days-long investigative shifts, and for dispatch staff who take the emergency calls but don't always get the closure of knowing how calls resolve.

The dogs also help change the relationship that deputies have with the community. "No one calls us when they're having a good day," says Officer Degan, and he notes that in many cases, law enforcement is the first line of response for individuals dealing with mental health crises. Therapy dogs help soften the interaction between the officers and the people they're responding to, and encourage collaborative, rather than combative, relationships. Officer Degan & Leo will assist with intake for court-ordered mental health commitments; Leo's presence gives the individual a kind, calm presence to focus on and makes the experience less overwhelming.

The PCSD therapy dog teams provide crisis-related support for the community in other ways. They can be present in situations such as family notifications of deaths through DUI or homicide, and provide post-testimony support for people who have been called to testify in trials. And they take part in community outreach, giving people the chance to become familiar with deputies in contexts outside law enforcement and have friendly interactions with the dogs. This can have powerful effects in how officers relate to the community.

Officer Degan says that some people have expressed concern that therapy dogs are a "distraction" from typical law enforcement activities. He emphatically says no to that idea. "The dogs are a resource for positive interaction and de-escalation," he says. Creating this environment helps prevent situations from escalating, which ultimately provides greater support for the entire community and helps better address issues of crisis in day to day interactions.



Clinical Perspectives on Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR)

By Leslie A. Stewart, PhD

According to Gerald Kaplan (1961), who is often credited as the father of modern crisis intervention, a crisis is an obstacle that is temporarily insurmountable through typical methods of problem solving. Crises may be individual or large scale in nature, and may be human-caused or environmentally-caused. Most importantly, crises are considered to be an inevitable occurrence of the human condition, meaning that all people and systems will encounter crises during a lifetime. Although the causes and outcomes of crises vary widely, the human stress response remains fairly consistent across different types of crises. To understand this, we must first understand the origins and the biology of the human stress response.

In nature, humans rely on hypervigilance to keep ourselves safe, as we are not particularly strong, fast, or ferocious in comparison to the other animals in our world. As such, early humans who were hypervigilant to potential danger were able to successfully avoid it, whereas less vigilant ones often were not. Fast forward a few millennia, and the result is a naturally anxious species with a brain that involuntarily bypasses a 'thinking' response and moves straight to an emotional or physical response. This system is highly efficient during acute stress when seconds count and our bodies must instantly prepare us to fight, flee, or freeze to avoid danger.

So what is the problem? Unlike other many other species, many of the modern stressors/threats in a human's world are psychosocial rather than purely physical. Embarrassment, shame, loss, and injuries to our self-concept are just a handful of examples of this type of threat. And since the human brain developed long before our current types of threats, it cannot distinguish the difference between a physical threat, a psychosocial/emotional threat, or a threatening memory. Our highly efficient brains respond the same way to all: preparing the body to fight, flee, or freeze by directing blood, oxygen, and glucose to fight/flight systems such as the large muscle groups, the heart, and the lungs. In exchange, that means those same biological resources are temporarily pulled away from other systems like the thinking part of the brain, digestion, and immune functioning. Unfortunately, that means the part of our brain that we need the most in modern crises (the 'thinking' part) is temporarily offline.

People in crisis often experience fear, anger, hostility, grief, hopelessness, helplessness, and a sense of alienation from others. They are temporarily unable to direct life effectively, and since they cannot access the 'thinking' part of the brain, have difficulty making decisions that are necessary for solving the crisis. This is what is known as the Impact Stage of crisis, and this is when volunteers, especially AACR volunteers, can potentially provide a great deal of help. During this stage, survivors need immediate anxiety relief, contact, and engagement with calm and stable others to help calm the fight/flight/freeze response and to help with feelings of alienation and helplessness. Establishing contact and engagement can be particularly challenging in the Impact Stage, as the person may appear highly emotionally distressed or 'checked out' and unresponsive.

Enter AACR. Many Pet Partners handlers are already familiar with some of the physiologically calming benefits of positive human-animal interactions. Further, the presence of an appropriately suitable and supported animal may be physiologically engaging through touch, comfort, and a sense of novelty. In AACR, there is another benefit that is particularly crucial. Humans effectively and responsively handling happy and well-cared-for animals are often unconsciously viewed as more trustworthy than a human volunteer without an animal. This potential increase in contact, engagement, and trust facilitates the most important task of a volunteer crisis responder: to get the survivor connected (either physically or attentionally) with the professional services or resources they need. The volunteer's role is to assist with establishing psychological contact, facilitating a sense of safety and comfort, and help encourage verbal communication between the survivor and essential professionals onsite.

Additionally, Pet Partners AACR teams can often provide much-needed support to the first responders, medical professionals, and mental health professionals who are attentionally and emotionally impacted by the demands of professional crisis response.

When applied with appropriate knowledge and skills, AACR teams have the potential to greatly enhance the effectiveness of crisis response efforts. It is important to note that the knowledge and skills required for this type of intervention are more specialized

than those required for more typical therapy animal volunteer visits. Before engaging in this type of intervention, handlers must have training and understanding of the following aspects of crisis response:

- Roles and goals
- Boundaries and scope of services
- Ability to respond ethically and effectively in chaotic circumstances
- Ability to identify signs of vicarious trauma in themselves
- Awareness of the stress response placed on first responders and other professionals

These skills aid a volunteer in being ethical and effective with human survivors, but are also particularly important for the increased YAYABA skills required in AACR.

As the current gold standard in handler preparation and YAYABA emphasis, Pet Partners is uniquely positioned to train, prepare, and facilitate high-quality AACR interventions that consider the unique demands on both the volunteer and the animal. As a mental health professional with expertise in both crisis and trauma interventions and animal-assisted interventions, I could not be more pleased with the professionalism and quality of the Pet Partners AACR program, and I am enthusiastic about the potential for Pet Partners AACR teams to positively impact the experiences of crisis survivors and first responders in our communities.

Leslie A. Stewart, PhD, is a licensed professional counselor and a faculty member at Idaho State University's Department of Counseling. Her research agendas and clinical specialties include animal-assisted interventions in counseling and supervision, trauma-informed counseling and counselor preparation, crisis and disaster response, and counselor training with experiential and expressive modalities. Dr. Stewart is the primary author of the American Counseling Association Competencies for Animal Assisted Therapy in Counseling while currently serving as the chair of Ethics and Standards for the Human-Animal Interactions in Counseling Interest Network of the American Counseling Association; a member of the Pet Partners Human-Animal Bond Advisory Board; and a subject matter expert consultant of the American Psychological Association's Human Animal Interaction Division.



Pet Partners
Animal-Assisted Crisis Response

BECOMING A PET PARTNERS AACR TEAM

Currently registered Pet Partners therapy animal teams can qualify for our new animal-assisted crisis response (AACR) credential



REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ Team has been registered with Pet Partners for at least six months
- ✓ Handler is age 18 or older
- ✓ Team is located in the United States
- ✓ Open to all registered Pet Partners species
- ✓ No secondary evaluation required



READINESS

- ✓ AACR deployment information will be sent via email from Pet Partners HQ
Note: AACR teams should never self-deploy
- ✓ Choose whether a deployment is right for you and your animal based on setting, location, and safety
- ✓ Wear your AACR gear and ID badge



REGISTRATION

- ✓ Decide if AACR is right for your team: Log in to the Volunteer Center and search for the AACR FAQ and Orientation Manual to learn more
- ✓ Submit an AACR application through My Registrations and pay the \$99 AACR fee
- ✓ Complete the online Pet Partners Animal-Assisted Crisis Response Course
- ✓ Complete the free online FEMA training course
- ✓ When your application is approved, you'll receive an acceptance letter via email, and an AACR kit including a Pet Partners jacket, shirt, backpack, water bottle, and pet water bowl

For more information and assistance with the AACR application, contact the AACR staff at petpartners.org/contact-us/

PetPartners.org | T. 425-679-5500



PARTNERING WITH A PURPOSE

Looking Back at the 2019 Pet Partners Conference

The 2019 Pet Partners Conference, **Partnering with a Purpose**, took place September 20-21 in San Antonio, Texas. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring together handlers, AAI professionals, practitioners and facilities, and Pet Partners staff to network, learn, and inspire.

Our thanks to our 2019 Conference sponsors, who helped make this year's event possible:

Elanco

Oakland University Center for Human Animal Interventions

PetSmart Charities

US Storage Centers



This year's conference was full of informative sessions covering a wide range of topics relating to AAI. Here are some of the topics that were presented during conference sessions:

- Keynote speaker Victoria Stilwell talked about how to inspire confidence and resilience in our dogs through giving them more choices. Her advice on methods for doing this was a topic of conversation among attendees throughout the weekend.



- Nancy Gee provided a summary of what we know about how animals help students learn, with a focus on the latest and strongest evidence available on the subject.
- Melissa Winkle talked about developing relationships between therapy animal teams and practitioners, and how to create healthy interactions and support animal well-being in these relationships.
- Steve Dale discussed how recent trends in treating our canine companions like their wild ancestors is detrimental to their health and learning, and to the human-animal bond. He also presented a session on ways to enrich the lives and health of our dogs and cats.
- Zenny Ng talked about the obligation of AAI providers and therapy animal handlers to protect the well-being of their animal partners, and why the animal's well-being is crucial to the success of AAI.
- Colleen Pelar presented strategies for improving resilience to help therapy animal handlers be more effective in visiting and advocating for their animals.
- Leslie Stewart discussed why the human end of the leash is so important in AACR, and why additional training for handlers is vital both in making AACR effective and in allowing handlers to protect themselves and their animal partners.
- Amy Showalter offered a workshop on effective advocacy strategies, providing information on what works in communicating with elected officials and opportunities for engagement.
- Steve Feldman, Executive Director of the Human Animal Bond Research Institute, provided a comprehensive look at pet-friendly rental housing in the U.S., including challenges and potential policy changes.
- Cynthia Chandler provided an overview of the science underlying human-animal relational moments, and the role of the handler in these interactions.
- Aubrey Fine closed the conference sessions with his talk about the importance of remembering our therapy animals who have passed away. He discussed why honoring and understanding the impact of therapy animals in the lives of both handlers and clients helps us all grieve.

The weekend wasn't only about the sessions. There were opportunities throughout both days for handlers, volunteer leaders, practitioners, and Pet Partners staff to network and learn from each other.

Colorful ribbons and species stickers on conference badges gave people ways to connect over their pets and the type of work they do.



The Wall of Honor offered attendees the chance to celebrate their therapy animal partners who have made such a difference in the lives of those they visit.



The Friday evening celebration dinner encouraged attendees to have fun with the San Antonio location by dressing up in their finest western wear, and Pet Partners Chief Medical Officer Dr. David Williams and Chief Mission Officer Mary Margaret Callahan led an enjoyable participation game to show the wide range of species, settings, and activities that conference attendees work in.



There were also some focused events before and after the main conference, as part of Pet Partners' dedication to supporting all facets of AAI.

- On September 19, Pet Partners National Director of AAI Advancement Taylor Chastain held a summit with AAI professionals working in a broad range of specialties to find out more about the challenges they face and to workshop ways to improve support for AAI practitioners. (See the sidebar for more about this innovative summit.)
- On September 22, Pet Partners President & CEO C. Annie Peters held a town hall meeting with members of Community Partners and Community Groups to discuss how Pet Partners can assist and support local groups in serving their communities.

It was a wonderful event full of learning and connection, and a powerful reminder of why the work we do in support of the human-animal bond is so important. Pet Partners is proud to support so many dedicated volunteers and skilled professionals in this work, and this year's conference demonstrated how all of us partner with a purpose to make our mission possible.

At the close of the conference, we

announced the location for our 2021 conference: Chicago, Illinois! We're looking forward to gathering with everyone in September 2021 and sharing how the field of AAI develops over the next two years. See you there!



Celebrating the 2019 Conference and looking forward to 2021: Pet Partners founder Bill McCulloch, Aubrey Fine, Mary Margaret Callahan, Annie Peters, and David Williams

To see more photos from the conference, visit the Pet Partners website.

Take The Lead: The Pet Partners Blog

Our new 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

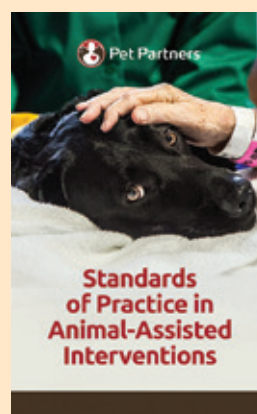
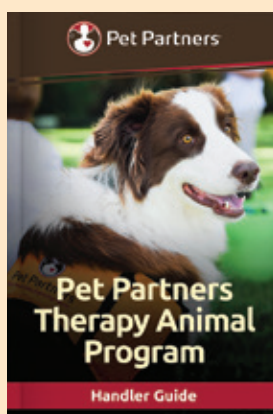
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2019 Pet Partners AAI Professional Summit



For decades, Pet Partners has focused on providing the best support to volunteer therapy animal handlers that bring animal-assisted activities to thousands of people across the globe each year. As we seek to expand the impact of our mission, we have been looking at more ways in which we can bring our expertise to the multitude of fields in which the healing power of animals is applied.

One area that Pet Partners aims to support is that of professionals who incorporate animal-assisted interventions (AAI) into their vocational work. A diverse body of practitioners can be found in this space, with professions such as mental health providers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and even law enforcement represented in the mix.

In order to best understand the needs in this space, Pet Partners decided to bring top practitioners from these various fields together to answer a vital question: *What could Pet Partners be doing to best support professionals who work with therapy animals?*

On September 19, in advance of our 2019 Pet Partners Conference, 25 experts came to San Antonio to participate in Pet Partners' first ever AAI Professional Summit. We conducted a preliminary survey of AAI professionals and members of the Pet Partners Human-Animal Bond Advisory Board, and that data was used to structure the summit so as to address the topics of greatest interest to professionals.

The summit was organized around five distinct activities, focusing on topics including continuing education, animal well-being, professional liability insurance, and best practices in AAI. Attendees spent

six hours together engaged in meaningful discussion, ultimately providing 271 distinct data points to suggest ways in which our organization could rally around these professionals and work together to advance both standardization and professionalization in AAI.

Here are some of the major findings from the summit:

- AAI professionals need more access to education that is specific to their work with therapy animals. This curriculum should address topics such as animal well-being, public health considerations, best practices, and empirical support of the intervention.
- One of the primary ways to showcase the power of our interventions is to support research on AAI, especially within professional contexts. The work that Pet Partners does by investing financially and assisting logistically in promoting empirical investigation on this topic is significant, and the more we focus on these objectives, the more traction we will experience within our field.
- AAI professionals must find ways to come together, share resources, and support new practitioners who aim to bring the healing power of pets to their work. There are many ways in which practitioners desire to collaborate, both online and through in-person networking opportunities, such as the Pet Partners Conference.
- Professionals in the field are calling for increased understanding surrounding professional liability insurance when working with therapy animals.

- There is a tremendous need for standardization within this field, both in promoting widescale implementation of best practices and in developing common terminology related to the ways in which we describe our work with therapy animals.
- Practitioners who have a rich history of pioneering the implementation of therapy animals into their treatment plans have noticed a tremendous positive impact on the clients who participate in the intervention. We need to shine a light on this work so that more people around the world have access to this holistic and effective form of therapeutic intervention.

Professionals who attended the Summit also agreed on one more fact: **Pet Partners is uniquely positioned to step in and provide leadership in this arena, supporting the professionalized implementation of AAI.** As we move forward from this summit with extensive data and a wealth of ideas, our staff and board will be working hard to determine the best ways that we can support this field going into the future.

We are so excited to see what comes from the momentum that we've been able to collectively generate with these professionals, and we are deeply appreciative of all of the people who participated in this inaugural Pet Partners Professional Summit. As advocates of the incredible power of the human-animal bond, we are all in this together, and we look forward to increasing our collaborations as we grow both organizationally and within the field of AAI.

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

BY THE NUMBERS

\$18,000+
 raised to support our
 growing Therapy Animal
 Program

Hundreds
 of walkers signed
 up to participate at
worldslargestpetwalk.org

40
 states with registered
 walkers, as well as
 international participants

6
 known therapy animal
 species walked



World's Largest Pet Walk 2019 Steps into Success

The 2nd Annual World's Largest Pet Walk brought animal lovers together around the world! On September 28, walkers in hundreds of communities hosted events in support of Pet Partners. The World's Largest Pet Walk is an official Pet Partners event held each September to celebrate the health benefits of being active with pets.

In 2019, Pet Partners introduced a fundraising component for the walk. In addition to taking steps with their pets, walkers created online pages outlining why they took part the World's Largest Pet Walk and sent this page to friends, family, and colleagues to raise awareness of the health benefits of walking with animals, while also supporting Pet Partners. Our incredible participants raised over \$18,000, which will support the Therapy Animal Program, Walk With Me, and other exciting initiatives.

Feet, paws, and hooves walked in communities all around the United States, and in international locations including Argentina and Canada. Some supporters held large meet-up events in community parks, such as one coordinated by the new Pet Partners of Southern California chapter. This event educated attendees on the benefits of therapy animals on human health, introduced new people to Pet Partners, and got their community excited about walking with their pets.

Some of our walkers took an informal approach and 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. No matter how walkers participated, their activities made a difference.



Check out #WorldsLargestPetWalk on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to see all the amazing photos from participants.

And be sure to mark your calendars for next year! Our 3rd Annual World's Largest Pet Walk will take place on Saturday, September 26, 2020. We can't wait to have you walk with us!





ADVOCATE

What You Can Do as a Pet Partners Advocate

One of the goals of Pet Partners is to educate the public about therapy animals and the power of the human-animal bond. Our volunteers do this through their therapy animal visits and through educational presentations; but confusion still exists, with news articles regularly confusing the terms therapy animal, service animal, and emotional support animal. One area where this confusion can be particularly problematic is with local, state, and federal lawmakers.

Well intentioned efforts where terms are misused can create negative impacts for our Therapy Animal Program volunteers, either by limiting their access to clients who would benefit from animal-assisted interventions, or undercutting the standards so important for client safety and animal well-being. Our grassroots advocacy program has all

the information and materials you need to help educate your lawmakers about therapy animals and the positive impact they have in your community.

Here's what you can do:

- Use our action alert system to send a message to your state lawmakers about the impact of therapy animals. You can personalize the message to share how you've experienced the benefits of therapy animals.
- Help educate the public by reaching out to your local media. We have a letter to the editor template available that can be tailored to your community to raise awareness about therapy animals.
- Call or visit your lawmaker's district office and share some information about therapy animals. We have talking points

and a leave-behind item available to help summarize the key points and make even a brief interaction impactful.

- Never made a visit to your state lawmakers? Worried you won't know what to do or how to do it? Consider signing up for our next Advocacy Bootcamp webinar where we cover the basics of how to get started. Can't wait that long? A past recording is currently available on our website.

All the information and tools you need for any of these actions are available on our website at petpartners.org/advocacy.

The human-animal bond is worth defending and promoting. Join our grassroots advocacy program today where you can share your story, use your voice, and gain a seat at the policymaking table. Together, we can make a difference.



GIVING

Seasons are changing, leaves are dropping, and some of us are digging out sweaters for the cooler days. One topic that doesn't change with the seasons is philanthropy. It's always the right time to donate; but perhaps during this season, individuals become more aware of donating before the end of the year to take advantage of tax savings.

Pet Partners is deeply appreciative of contributions from our dedicated supporters. Here are several opportunities to donate to our organization.

Delta Giving Society

When you join the Delta Giving Society, you honor the legacy of the Pet Partners founders by advancing the power of the human-animal bond. Your generous financial contribution of \$1,000 or more per year will help Pet Partners continue to innovate and improve the field of animal-assisted interactions through new program offerings such as Animal-Assisted Crisis



Response, while continuing to provide life-changing therapy animal visits more than three million times each year.

Members of the Delta Giving Society will receive a commemorative pin to symbolize their connection to the Pet Partners mission. To make your gift, you can mail a donation in the enclosed envelope, donate online at petpartners.org/donate, or call 425-679-5503.

IRA Charitable Rollover

If you are 70-½ or older you may also be

interested in a way to lower the income and taxes from your IRA withdrawals. An IRA charitable rollover is a way to help us continue our work and also benefit you this year. A transfer from your IRA can satisfy the required minimum distribution for the year and reduce your taxable income, even if you don't itemize. The transfer must be made from your IRA administrator. For more information visit petpartners.giftlegacy.com.

Stock Gifts

If you have owned stock for more than one year and if the value of the stock has increased, consider donating a portion of your shares to Pet Partners. You benefit by receiving a deduction equal to the fair market value of the stock on the day of the transfer. Transferring stock is a simple process. Contact maryb@petpartners.org so we may assist you with the transfer instructions.

If charitable giving is on your to-do list this season, consider one of the giving strategies above. Your thoughtfulness will be appreciated by the thousands of individuals who will be reached through therapy animal visits this year.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

NBA and Pet Partners team up for a slam dunk of a partnership

It's been all smiles and tail wags as Pet Partners has partnered with the NBA for a series of recent events.

In June 2019 Pet Partners teams were invited to join the Golden State Warriors as they unveiled the newly refurbished NBA Cares Learn & Play Zone at the Ira Jinkins Recreation Center (IJRC) in Oakland, CA. Pet Partners therapy animals were on site to cuddle up with kids as Golden State players took turns reading children's books in IJRC's renovated reading room. NBA commissioner Adam Silver was even seen enjoying some time with registered Pet Partners therapy dog Sonny.



NBA employees have also had the chance to meet some Pet Partners therapy animal teams during some Workplace Well-being events. Teams in North Carolina, New York, and New Jersey have visited with NBA employees, sharing the many benefits of workplace visits including improved morale and reduced stress.

VA and Pet Partners sign agreement that will bring benefits of the human-animal bond to more veterans

We're pleased to announce that Pet Partners has signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to improve veterans' health, quality of life, and social engagement through animal-assisted interventions (AAI).

Pet Partners and VA will collaborate to support and encourage VA medical facilities to establish and expand therapy animal visitation programs to give patients the sense of connection, comfort, and joy that comes from spending time with animals.

The partnership will also provide veteran



communities with the opportunity to become therapy animal teams themselves as well as integrate veterans and their families into Pet Partners activities and events, such as the World's Largest Pet Walk.

"Veterans are valued members of our communities and can benefit from greater access to AAI," says Mary Margaret Callahan, Pet Partners Chief Mission Officer. "Pet Partners looks forward to finding more ways to serve those who have served our country."

Pet Partners teams already visit with veterans in some areas, and their impact on veterans

is apparent. At an event sponsored by VA in Connecticut, one particular veteran found a special bond with Pet Partners therapy dog Beau. The veteran had recently lost his own dog, who strongly resembled Beau, and who had been a companion for him as he dealt with homelessness. He spent an hour cuddling and petting Beau, remembering his own dog and taking comfort in Beau's affectionate presence. This veteran was about to start a new phase of his life, moving into housing and beginning treatment for his health issues; his interaction with Beau offered a symbolic transition to this phase.

We look forward to working with VA to bring therapy animal teams to more veterans and provide them with the positive effects of the human-animal bond.



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Shirts come in a variety of styles, colors, and sizes. Order by **December 6** for holiday delivery!

(Orders can be made after this date but are not guaranteed for holiday delivery.)

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