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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Pet Partners Announces its 2025 *Pet of the Year* Winner: River the Golden Retriever**  
***Top fundraiser brings in \$14,141 to support therapy animal visits nationwide***

(Bellevue, Wash. - April 18, 2025) – After six weeks of an exciting fundraising competition, River, a golden retriever who lives in Rowayton, CT, has earned the title of 2025 Pet Partners *Pet of the Year*. With support from his human, Katy Rahe, River has not only captured hearts nationwide but also raised more than \$14,000 for Pet Partners, the nation's leading organization registering therapy animals for animal-assisted interventions.

River is one of 134 pets that participated in the competition. Pets from 34 states, the UK, and Romania competed with the support of over 215 loving humans for the *Pet of the Year* title. While 100 of the competitors were dogs, there were also 18 cats, five rabbits, three llamas/alpacas, three guinea pigs, one equine, one bird, one pig, one mouse, and one domestic rat vying for the top honor. Their efforts raised vital funds to support the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program, which brings unconditional love, happiness, and healing to millions of seniors, patients, veterans, children, and others in need around the world. River and Katy are registered with Pet Partners, and River is Katy's second therapy dog. Katy has been a Pet Partners volunteer since 2019 and is also an evaluator. The Community Partner Katy volunteers with is Pet Partners of Fairfield County (CT) which was established four years ago. Many of the volunteers participate in the World's Largest Pet Walk and numerous dog festivals.

River and his fundraising team garnered donations by asking friends and family for support, held a raffle, and partnered with a local boutique to host a shopping event. Koda from Bangor, ME and Ruby from Newington, CT raised an impressive \$12,567.36 combined. This remarkable achievement positioned them as second and third place winners, respectively, in the competition.

"I am both deeply humbled and excited that River was named 2025 Pet Partners *Pet of the Year*," said Katy Rahe. "Being a volunteer with Pet Partners both as an evaluator and handler with River, I see firsthand the connection of the human-animal bond and the impact it makes. Raising funds for an organization that is dedicated to increasing the human-animal bond was easy to talk about and to ask for donations. I am grateful for everyone who contributed to and supported Pet Partners on behalf of River. River and I are committed to being the 2025 Ambassadors for Pet Partners in support of the important work they do."

The competition, which kicked off on March 3 and ran through April 14, raised over \$80,000 to support Pet Partners. It was open to all pets, including those that have crossed the Rainbow Bridge, and not just therapy animals. Many people who entered their pets wanted to share their personal stories about the benefits of the human-animal bond while fundraising for a mission they believe in.

"We are continually amazed by and grateful for the dedication shown by our Pet of the Year participants," said C. Annie Peters, President & CEO of Pet Partners. "Their commitment to supporting all our wonderful therapy animal

teams embodies the spirit of our organization. Congratulations to River and Katy Rahe and thank you to everyone who helped make the 2025 *Pet of the Year* a success.”

As the winner, River not only claims the national title, but also thousands of dollars’ worth of prizes for his exceptional fundraising skills. River will participate in a professional photoshoot, be interviewed on the national *Oh Behave!* show on Pet Life Radio and the *Four Legged Life* Podcast and receive a wide variety of pet-focused treats, services, accessories, and other prizes.

For more details or to request interviews with the national winner, please contact Pet Partners at [communications@petpartners.org](mailto:communications@petpartners.org).

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### **About Pet Partners**

Pet Partners is the leader in the therapy animal field for registering volunteer teams. Since 1977, we have supported thousands of teams in making millions of meaningful visits across the country and around the world. Through the human-animal bond, we can improve the physical, social, and emotional lives of both the people and animals involved. Pet Partners supports volunteer teams by offering the highest quality preparation, an unmatched approach to evaluation and registration—for nine different types of animals, and a focus on connections. We elevate the importance of therapy animal visits, and our teams help build a healthier and happier world for us all. Whether or not you have a pet, learn more about sharing the human-animal bond by visiting [petpartners.org](https://petpartners.org).