

We need volunteers!!!

Greater Derry Humane Society,  
Inc.

## Pet Therapy Program



603-434-1512

GDHS@mediaone.net

[www.derryhumanesociety.com](http://www.derryhumanesociety.com)

### How much of a time commitment must I make?

To be a participant in the program, volunteers are required to commit to spending a minimum of two hours per month visiting with residents in one of the centers. A typical schedule is one-hour visits twice per month.

### What is required of my pet?

Your pet must be well-behaved and current on all vaccinations as well as free of parasites. Pets should be preferably freshly groomed, or at a minimum, freshly brushed. Nails should be short and sharp edges filed.

### How do I work with my pet on a visit?

Volunteers will work with a program coordinator or another volunteer at the outset. They should plan on visiting during times that work around the normal daily nursing home schedule. Any day between 10AM and 11:30AM or 1 PM to 4:30PM are usually good times to visit.

Volunteers can walk through the halls and knock on doors to see if people wish to see the animal(s) that they have with them. A small pet can be put on the bed or in the resident's lap. Larger pets can sit on the floor beside the person.

### What type of pets can I bring?

Volunteer pets are most often dogs, but other house pets can also make suitable therapy animals. Cats and rabbits are also acceptable depending on their temperament. Special arrangements can be made to allow larger animals like ponies, pigs, goats and llamas to visit.

### Does your pet have the right personality?

The people your dog visits must be absolutely safe from your dog. The dog must be forgiving of both accidental and intentional pain that may be inflicted. It is your job to prevent injury to your dog, but the dog must not retaliate for your failure. Dog bites are not the only concern. Many of the people your dog visits are very fragile. Frail skin tears easily. A friendly paw on an arm can cause ugly red welts and your dog will be blamed. A "pet me" shove with nose or body can easily topple someone who is unsteady on their feet.

### Is your dog both calm and friendly?

In deciding whether or not to take your dog on visits, honestly evaluate your dog's personality and social skills. A good prospect for therapy work will enjoy meeting strangers, will actively approach, but in a calm manner. A dog that is so happy that it jumps up or pushes with feet, nose or body will need some work before visiting can begin. A

dog that is fearful or aggressive probably should not be considered for therapy work.

### **Does your dog take unusual events, sights and sounds in stride?**

How does your dog react to unusual events? What happens when an alarm clock rings? Or the smoke alarm? Or some books falling off a shelf? Your dog should show interest in these unusual events, but calm readily. If your dog barks when someone knocks at the door, it should be quiet and under control when you open the door.

### **Does your dog have basic good manners?**

Your dog must be reliable around dogs and other animals as well as people. In some situations it is not unusual to encounter a pet belonging to another visitor. Your dog must accept the presence of cats, guinea pigs, rabbits, birds and other animals as well as other dogs. You cannot count on the good manners of these other visiting animals.

### **Do you think you and your pet would like to volunteer?**

If so, please contact us at the phone numbers listed on the reverse side of this brochure. Thank you for your interest. It will be a rewarding experience for both you and your pet.

The Greater Derry Humane Society sponsors pet therapy programs at the Birchwood Nursing Home and the Integrated Health Services (IHS) Center.

Visiting with animals can help people feel less lonely and less depressed. Visits from dogs can provide a welcome change from routine, or the renewal of old friendships. People become more active and responsive both during and after visiting with animals.

An animal visit can offer entertainment, or a welcome distraction from pain and infirmity. People often talk to the dogs and the people who visit with them. They share with them their thoughts and feelings and memories. Animal visits provide something to look forward to. Stroking a dog or cat can reduce a person's blood pressure. Petting encourages use of hands and arms, stretching and turning.

The pet makes it easier for two strangers to talk. It gives people a common interest and provides a focus for conversation. Many people in hospitals or group homes have had to give up pet ownership and they miss the casual acceptance a pet gives them. A dog pays little attention to age or physical ability but accepts people as they are.

The benefits continue even after the visit. Pet Therapy offers something for people to share with their pets and with other people. Everyone's lives are enriched by the time spent.



Residents of Birchwood Nursing Home enjoying time with some of our Pet therapy animals



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