

PAW PRINTS

Health benefits of animal therapy for older adults

By Jodi Schneider McNamee, Columnist

Anyone who has ever stroked a dog's soft ears or felt the gentle rumble of a cat's purr knows the calming feeling an animal can offer.

Animals offer companionship and unconditional love. They also have the ability to improve health and general well-being, especially in the older adult population.

The most serious problem for older adults is not disease; it's loneliness — especially during the holidays. Elderly people, especially those living in residential care facilities, are at a higher risk for developing depression. For these reasons, more and more often animals are being utilized for therapeutic purposes at senior facilities. Therapy animals are used to promote health and healing for seniors of any age range or health condition, whether they are depressed, chronically ill or have ongoing disabilities.

Seniors suffer from depression, usually as a result of loneliness or isolation, either because friends and family members cannot visit on a regular basis, or they aren't as active as they previously were. Or perhaps a loving spouse has passed away. Contact with therapy animals can bring some withdrawn seniors out of their shells, making them happier and more communicative.

Pet therapy for seniors, also known as animal assisted therapy, is a technique that uses animals to interact with seniors for numerous reasons to help improve their quality of life. Studies show that just 15 minutes spent bonding with an animal promotes hormonal changes within the brain. Stress levels drop as the brain produces serotonin (the "feel-good" hormone), along with prolactin and oxytocin.

Therapy animals and their handlers can make a resident come alive, bringing joy and laughter with every visit.

Dr. Michael McCulloch, a Portland psychiatrist, and Dr. Samuel Corson, of Ohio State University, are two active researchers and experts on why pets excel as therapeutic agents.

According to McCulloch, "Touch is one of our primary needs when we're born and one of our last needs to go." In long-term facilities, residents are often lacking the feeling that they



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Griffin the therapy dog at the Sisters Christmas Parade.

are needed. Pets allow them, even if for a short time, to be nurturers once again.

Pet therapy's benefits on physical health are abundant.

"We know from studies that interacting with pets can have a more direct influence on your health, from lowering your blood pressure and increasing levels of serotonin to helping you get more exercise," said Dr. Patricia McConnel, animal behaviorist and author of "For the Love of a Dog: Understanding Emotion in You and Your Best Friend."

Studies show that interacting with a dog or other animal releases the anti-stress, calming hormone oxytocin in animals and humans.

Pioneering South African researchers Johannes Odendaal and Roy Meintjes first demonstrated the reciprocal release of endorphins (oxytocin and dopamine) in studies they conducted with humans and dogs in 2003. Petting dogs also results in decreased levels of the primary stress hormone cortisol.

And Swedish researcher Linda Handlin demonstrated that when women interacted with their dogs, the oxytocin-promoting bonding was similar to that produced when mothers breastfed their newborns.

Having an animal in a senior's life can help improve their well-being and give new meaning to their life. Due to the numerous health benefits therapy animals provide, assisted-living facilities usually include pet-therapy in their regular senior-care programs. Being around animals makes people feel better, healthier, and happier.

Canyon Creek Pottery

If buying local — and handmade — means something to you, a gift from Canyon Creek Pottery is as local and handcrafted as it gets.

For 15 years, Ken Merrill has been at work in his pottery studio and adjoining gallery creating one-of-a-kind functional art.

Come to Canyon Creek for beautiful, handmade...

Mugs for your special cup of coffee. A pie plate for the baker in the house. A soup tureen. Candle-holders to spice up your holiday décor. A service platter for your Christmas dinner.

Ken has been a potter since 1983 and opened his pottery studio in Sisters in 1998.

He has won renown for his beautiful, functional handmade pottery. Each piece is hand-thrown on a potter's wheel then fired in a kiln to 2,400 degrees where it becomes stoneware. All of Ken's pottery is made of the finest clays available and makes a gift that gives each time it is used.



VA S+

Christmas Eve

IN THE PARK

FIR STREET PARK | STARTS AT 4:30 PM | VASTCHURCH.COM

An evening of hot cocoa, singing Christmas songs, hearing the Christmas story, and candle-lighting.

Essentials Skin Care Open House

Sunday, December 3 • 2-4 p.m.

Please join us for our 7th annual Customer Appreciation Event

Hot Buttered Rum • Wine & Snacks

Drawing every 10 minutes with chance to win a trip for two to Palm Desert Resort & Spa

Product Demos/Samples • 10% discount on any purchase

Holiday Gift Packs & Gift Certificates Available

Karen Keady, NCEA Certified Esthetician
541-480-1412 • 492 E. Main Ave.
Monday-Saturday Flexible Hours | www.SistersEssentials.com

LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED
BY WORKING MUSICIANS

AUTHORIZED DEALER FOR

Taylor Guitars
 Eastman Guitars & Mandolins
 Roland Amplifiers, Boss Pedals
 Yamaha Portable Digital Pianos
 Gold Tone Banjos
 Amahi & Kanaloa Ukuleles
 Accessories & Print Music

MusicMakers

Ask about our layaway plan. 2nd St. 3rd St. (Hwy 97)
 200 NE Greenwood Ave
 541-382-3245
 musicmakersofbend.com

Open Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5

Gobbling Up Holiday Food?

Don't let indigestion take your holiday joy!

Get fast relief with Bio-Design digestive formulas:

Enzy Flora - Heavy meal, no problem, break down proteins, carbs, fats and dairy.

Charcozyme - Get relief from stomach gas and reduce bloating.

Probio-10 - An effective probiotic for digestive & immune health.

800-822-6193 Call today - 10% OFF & FREE SHIPPING!
 (Phone orders only - valid through Dec. 31, 2017)

BIO-DESIGN®
 Trusted by Practitioners since 1979

bio-design.com • 742 SE Glenwood Dr., Bend

Canyon Creek Pottery

541-390-2449
 Visit our website at
 CanyonCreekPotteryLLC.com
 310 N. Cedar St.