

Animals help us in times of crisis

By **Jodi Schneider**
Correspondent

The Centers for Disease Control and the American Veterinary Association have recently stated that pets are NOT a risk for spreading COVID-19. The World Health Organization has also recently reported that there is “no evidence that companion animals/pets such as dogs or cats can be infected with the coronavirus.”

The virus is believed to have originated from exotic animal food markets in China – but domestic dogs and cats themselves do not appear to be carriers.

Pets are the unsung heroes for many of us amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We are being required to work from home and to self-isolate during the pandemic to prevent further spread of the coronavirus. Take advantage of the time that you have at home to establish a bond with your pet or pets. Social distancing is an important step to curbing the virus, but you don’t have to do it alone.

Research suggests pets can make you happier and healthier. Other studies have shown that having a pet in the home helps you respond better to stressful situations. It’s not only safe to have pets in your home but also beneficial as they can serve as a source of comfort during any crisis.

The outbreak of coronavirus COVID-19 may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about the virus can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. The companionship of pets has been shown to lower anxiety, helping people to feel calmer and more secure when the news from the outside world is distressing.

Jeanette Pilak, volunteer coordinator for Harmony

Farm Sanctuary, a nonprofit dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating farm animals, had several therapy dogs over the years and knows firsthand how animals can help people feel better.

She said, “My work with therapy assist animals started when I adopted a retired guide dog for the blind from their campus in Boring, Oregon, in 1998. While I was well aware of the studies done about the physiological changes humans go through when they pet a dog (decreased blood pressure and breathing, etc.), I witnessed this particular dog seek to calm crying babies or agitated elders. I became trained as a Pet Partner with my therapy assist dogs, and for years I heard from family members of nursing home patients that they could always tell when the dogs had visited because their family member was so much happier and calmer.”

Pilak and her therapy dog Sally were also R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistant Dog) partners and assisted more than 200 children to relax and to practice reading aloud to her dog.

Pilak noted that children too shy to speak in class would gladly read a story to a dog.

She added, “Animals are comforting and nonjudgmental.”

Sisters resident and animal trainer Monica Rendon is a pet

parent and understands how companion animals help calm humans.

“Petting a dog releases oxytocin, and that in itself promotes a sense of bonding, love, happiness, Rendon said. “Having a pet to care for takes some of the focus off of what’s going on and redirects it towards behaviors that are incompatible with sitting by ourselves and feeling lonely and despondent. Our pets are oblivious to the fears of the pandemic, they teach us to seek joy in the moment and to be calm and carry on.”

Dogs can help you keep a routine and stay active, which is important to your mental and physical health during these trying times. There is a lot of evidence that daily exercise can also help promote feelings of well-being and boost immunity, so walking your dog is a physical activity that can protect you against symptoms of stress and anxiety.

Harmony Farm Sanctuary founder Robine Botts created a safe place for rescued farm animals and humans to connect and heal. She told *The Nugget* that she knows that this is a stressful, isolating and unprecedented time for all of humanity.

She said, “We are being asked by our government and medical professionals to stay at home as an attempt



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER

The touch of an animal companion is soothing, especially in tough times.

to flatten the curve against the coronavirus. As a mental health therapist who practices animal assisted therapy, I have witnessed how animals can help heal our hearts. I have noticed a lot of my clients, and my friends, have experienced increased stress, fear, confusion and isolation. I’ve noticed folks reporting an increase in symptoms of depression and anxiety. All animal lovers know that animals provide companionship, joy and unconditional love.”

“There is also a plethora of scientific evidence regarding the psychological and physical health benefits from having two- and four-legged animals in our lives during the best of times and especially now. Playing with an animal can boost levels of serotonin and dopamine, which calm and relax. They also encourage exercise and playfulness which reminds us to enjoy the simple things in life and be mindful of our beautiful surroundings.”

You meet the nicest people... ..at The Hair Caché!

152 E. Main Ave. • 541-549-8771

We're Open With An Epic Take-Out Menu!

THE COTTON WOOD CAFÉ

See our take-out menu on Facebook for special epic dishes created for all the people keeping a low profile out there. Don't let the quarantine keep you away from deliciousness. Stay healthy out there everybody!

541.549.2699 | 403 E. Hood Ave.
Serving Breakfast & Lunch 7 days a week, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

AUTHENTIC JAPANESE, SUSHI, ASIAN

OISHI
Japanese Restaurant

WE ARE OPEN FOR TAKE-OUT ORDERS ONLY

Tues.-Fri. 11 a.m.-3 p.m., 4-8:30 p.m.
Sat. & Sun., 12-3 p.m., 4-8:30 p.m.
Closed Monday

DOWNTOWN REDMOND
511 SW 6TH ST.
541-548-3035

WE ARE THIS CLOSE TO ENDING POLIO

Now is our chance to change the world. To make sure no child is disabled by polio ever again.

Join in. Speak out. Donate. Be a part of history.

endpolionow.org

Rotary

Join Rotary Club of Sisters and create your legacy. Be our guest for dinner. Call Hal Darcey at 808-864-5683.

YEAR-ROUND FIREWOOD SALES
KINDLING

SISTERS FOREST PRODUCTS
541-410-4509
SistersForestProducts.com

the Jewel
SISTERS
549-9388

Caribbean Blue Apatite & Diamond