What are (some of) the benefits of Therapy Dogs?

For mental health

- The simple act of petting releases an automatic relaxation response
- Lowers anxiety and helps people relax
- Provides comfort
- Reduces loneliness
- Reduces a child's distress in a doctor's clinic
- Reduces boredom
- Decreases feelings of isolation and alienation
- Brightens emotional outlook
- Stimulates communication
- Increases mental stimulation
- Provides physical contact
- Decreases agitation in Alzheimer's units
- Can provide an escape or distraction from the mundane nature of hospitals and doctor's offices
- Can act as catalysts in the therapy process
- Decreases use of medication and medical services in the elderly

For physical health

- Lowers blood pressure and improves cardiovascular health
- Reduces the amount of medications needed for many people
- Breathing slows in those who are anxious
- Releases many hormones such as Phenylethylamine which has the same effect as chocolate (but not as tasty!)
- Diminishes overall physical pain

For cancer patients

- Therapy dogs can decrease anxiety and sympathetic nervous system arousal by providing a pleasant external focus for attention
- Levels of epinephrine, a hormone the body makes under stress, dropped 17% when visited by a Therapy Dog team
- Allows patients and counselors to have difficult conversations
- Loneliness is one of the most damaging risk factors in people recovering from cancer. Studies have shown that cancer patients that own pets have five times the survival rate of patients who are not pet owners

In physical therapy

- Encourages increased movement in joints & faster recovery
- Assists in maintaining & increasing motor skills
- Patients exercise longer
- Stroke patients walked up to 35% farther and 35% faster with Therapy Dogs than with their human therapists
- Relax more during exercise
- May increase the benefits of occupational therapy

RILEY'S ANGELS

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Riley's Angels is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that trains Therapy Dog teams to work with counselors and teachers in our local schools and to visit in hospitals and other healthcare settings. Donations made to Riley's Angels are tax deductible and support our community outreach programs and education.

www.rileysangels.org