



the FLAME®

Healthcare News and Tips

July 10th, 2024

Last week, I read a story about [Beacon, a cuddly 4-year-old golden retriever](#) whose job was to be the therapy dog during Olympic trials for the U.S. Gymnastic team.

As a long-time cat owner, I know that it's highly unlikely that cats will ever displace dogs from the top of the therapy pets' pile, and certainly won't join the Olympic team as a therapy animal, but c'mon, who doesn't love a kitten or two?

Therapy animals, typically dogs like Beacon, play a special role in providing comfort and affection to individuals. Traditional settings include hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, hospices, schools---and now, we can include Olympic trials!

Dogs are also used as service dogs and emotional support animals as well, but those are different than the therapy role. So in this summer



The concept of pet therapy, also known as animal-assisted therapy (AAT), has a rich history that traces back centuries. In Egypt, dogs were often used in healing practices, and their companionship was considered beneficial for health and well-being. The Greeks also recognized the value of animal companionship; they documented the positive effects of horse riding on individuals with various ailments.

issue of *The Flame*, we'll explore the benefits of having a canine "therapist." We'll be back in September!!



Have a great summer!

Betty

Betty Long, RN, MHA
President/CEO



Annual Awards Gala to be Held at New Venue

[Check with your friends! Call your colleagues! Get your tickets early!](#)

Make sure you will be at the best night in Pennsylvania nursing---taking place on Friday, October 25th in Harrisburg, PA at our new hotel venue, the **[Harrisburg Hilton!](#)**

Jefferson Health returns this year as the Presenting Sponsor and Fox Chase Cancer Center comes on board as the Reception Sponsor. Thanks to both organizations for

Even nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale observed that small pets, such as birds and cats (yes, cats!), could provide comfort and alleviate anxiety in patients, particularly those suffering from chronic illnesses.

In 1942, the American Red Cross introduced a program that allowed recovering soldiers from World War II to interact with dogs, which significantly boosted their morale and aided their recovery. In the 1960's, Dr. Boris Levinson, an American child psychologist, is often credited with pioneering the modern field of pet therapy. **[Levinson discovered that his dog, Jingles,](#)** had a remarkable ability to connect with his young patients, particularly those with autism and other developmental disorders. Dr. Levinson's observations and subsequent research laid the groundwork for the scientific study of animal-assisted therapy. He coined the term "pet therapy" and published several influential papers on the subject.

In recent years, the concept of pet therapy has gained significant recognition for its remarkable ability to enhance human health and well-being. Below, read about some of the key clinical and mental health benefits of this heartwarming practice.

Emotional and Psychological Benefits

- **Stress Reduction:** Interacting with animals can trigger the release of endorphins, the body's natural stress relievers. Petting a dog or cuddling a cat can lower cortisol levels, reducing stress and promoting a sense of calm and relaxation.
- **Improved Mood:** Pets have an uncanny ability to lift our spirits. Their unconditional love and companionship can alleviate feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. In fact, studies have shown that spending time with animals can increase the production of serotonin and dopamine, neurotransmitters associated with happiness and pleasure.
- **Enhanced Social Interaction:** For individuals who struggle with social interactions, pets can serve as a bridge, facilitating communication and connection. Therapy animals can help break the ice, making it easier for

their leading support of nursing in the Commonwealth!

This year, there were more than 142 nominations for 14 award categories!! Winners will be announced at the Gala. Proceeds of each year's gala fund the next year's scholarships.

In addition to the scholarships and awards, Guardian Nurses has sponsored the Nightingale [Entrepreneurial Award](#) which will award \$5,000 to a nurse who is in the first two years of starting or owning their own company.

Remember, Friday, October 25th in Harrisburg! Be there!!

people to engage with others, share experiences, and build relationships.

Physical Health Benefits

- **Lower Blood Pressure:** Regular interaction with therapy animals has been linked to lower blood pressure and heart rate. The soothing presence of a pet can help individuals relax, leading to improved cardiovascular health and reduced risk of heart disease.
- **Pain Management:** Pet therapy has been shown to alleviate pain and discomfort in patients suffering from various medical conditions. The distraction and comfort provided by therapy animals can reduce the perception of pain, making it easier for individuals to cope with chronic pain or undergo medical procedures.
- **Increased Physical Activity:** Pets, especially dogs, require regular exercise, which can encourage their owners to stay active. Walking, playing, and caring for a pet can help individuals incorporate more physical activity into their daily routines, leading to better overall health and fitness.

Cognitive and Developmental Benefits

- **Enhanced Cognitive Function:** For individuals with cognitive impairments, such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease, pet therapy can stimulate cognitive function and improve memory recall. Engaging with animals can provide mental stimulation, encouraging individuals to stay alert and engaged.
- **Development of Empathy and Responsibility:** Children and adolescents can benefit greatly from pet therapy, as it teaches them important life skills such as empathy, responsibility, and compassion. Caring for a pet can help young individuals develop a sense of purpose and improve their emotional intelligence.

With all of these health benefits, [what you are waiting for?](#) There may be a Jingles out there waiting for you!

Lighting your way
through the
healthcare maze.®

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