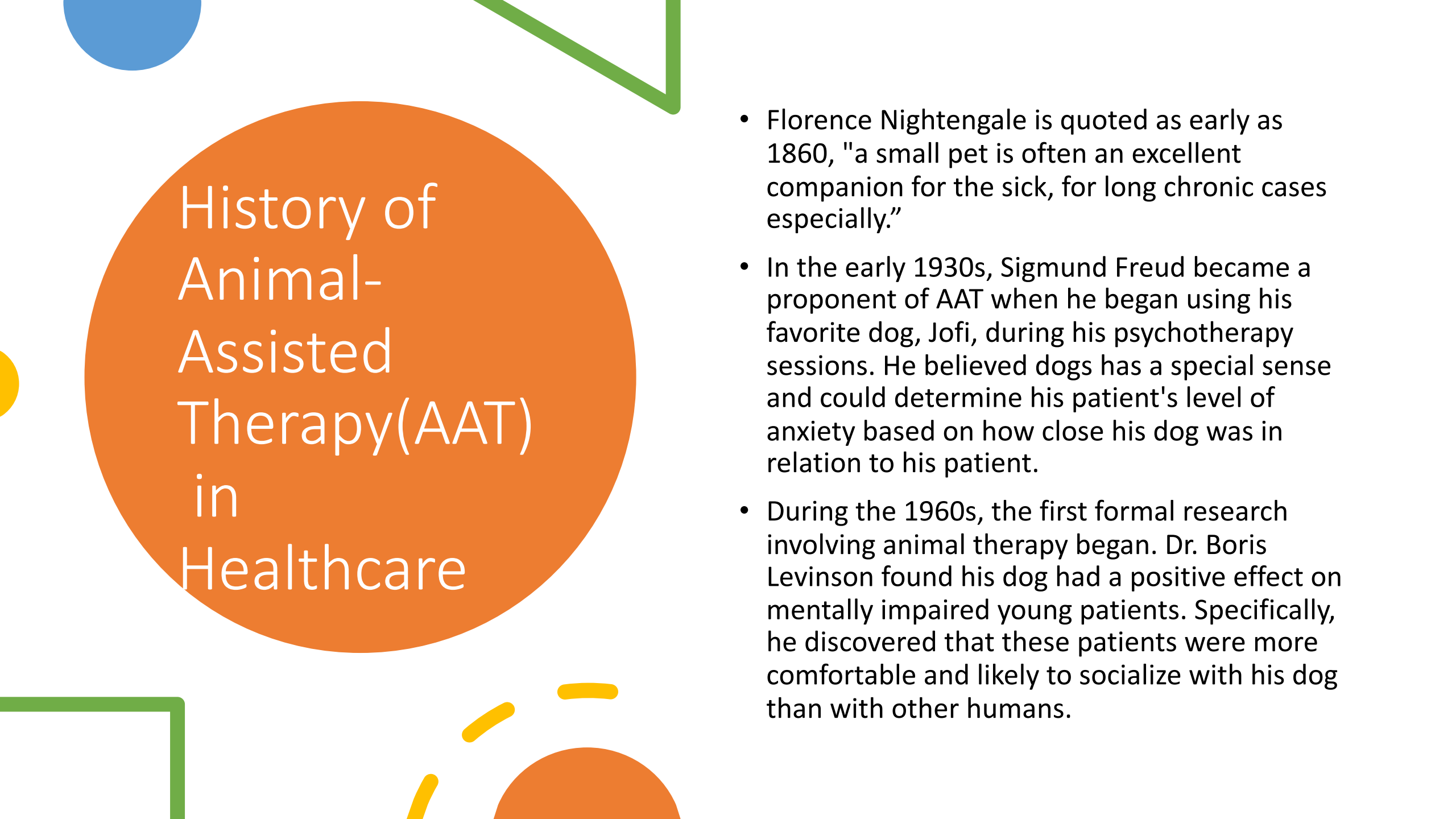


Facility Dogs in Hospice Care

2023 MHPCA Midwest Conference



History of Animal- Assisted Therapy(AAT) in Healthcare

- Florence Nightengale is quoted as early as 1860, "a small pet is often an excellent companion for the sick, for long chronic cases especially."
- In the early 1930s, Sigmund Freud became a proponent of AAT when he began using his favorite dog, Jofi, during his psychotherapy sessions. He believed dogs has a special sense and could determine his patient's level of anxiety based on how close his dog was in relation to his patient.
- During the 1960s, the first formal research involving animal therapy began. Dr. Boris Levinson found his dog had a positive effect on mentally impaired young patients. Specifically, he discovered that these patients were more comfortable and likely to socialize with his dog than with other humans.

History of Animal- Assisted Therapy (AAT)

- In 1989, the Delta society, an animal education group now named Pet Partners, developed a certification program. Many AAT certification programs are now available throughout the United States.
- AAT has evolved to become a part of the services offered by many healthcare facilities, including nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, and hospitals, where it has shown numerous benefits and become a respected therapy.

Benefits of AAT: Physiological

- Studies show decreased catecholamines when visiting with an animal. Catecholamines are important in stress responses. High levels cause high blood pressure which can lead to headaches, sweating, pounding of the heart, pain in the chest, and anxiety. The American Heart Association has found that working with therapy animals improves the health of heart failure patients in the hospital.
- AAT visits improve quality of life by increasing oxytocin, the "love hormone." The release of oxytocin impacts the immune system and helps raise the pain threshold, helping people heal more quickly. Releasing these "happy hormones" also helps lower anxiety, so people will relax during their treatment or therapy. They also experience less loneliness while in the hospital. The presence of an animal provides comfort and a needed distraction from an otherwise challenging time.
- Some researchers have found an increase in salivatory immunoglobulin A, which indicates a healthy immune system function, after people spend time petting a dog for less than 20 minutes.

Continued Physiological Benefits

- Regular visits with therapy animals can reduce the amount of medication some people need to manage medical conditions. The research shows, AAT has better outcomes for patients with improved medication management and non-pharmalogical interventions.
- While the science of AAT is rich and developing, Michael J. McCulloch, MD, co-founder of Pet Partners says, “In an age of research when it is tempting to reduce emotions to biochemical reactions and to rely heavily on the technology of medicine, it is refreshing to find that a person’s health and well-being may be improved by prescribing contact with other living things.”

Benefits of AAT: Physiological

- AAT has proved to be effective in reducing symptoms of depression in institutionalized elderly. A 2009 study said pets were linked to higher perceived energy levels, lessened pain and anxiety, improved respiratory rates and better moods. Animal interaction provides patients not only with a welcome distraction, but also a sense of purpose and a comforting reminder of home.
- Long-term care residents with dementia experience limited social interactions due to their inability to successfully communicate. Animal therapy provides social interaction not dependent on the resident's level of cognitive functioning. AAT will provide companionship regardless of a resident's ability to reciprocate. A dog listens to repetitions of the same phrase or story without judgement.
- Some patients, after months of silence, will talk to an animal. An animal that sparks memories of an elder's past can prompt him or her to speak where he or she might previously have been disengaged and silent ((Boltz, Hart, & Rogers, 1993).

Continued Physiological Benefits

- One study showed residents had positive social behaviors increased and agitation decreased in the presence of the dog relative to the control condition. The interaction was also linked with less confusion. It helped facilitate reminiscence and memories, distracting the participant from agitation during the sundowning hours.
- Emerging research shows dogs have mirror neuron activity as well as have disease perception through their olfactory sense. Mirror neurons give us the ability to empathize; to understand actions or goals in relation to our own.
- Dogs can read subtle body language and respond appropriately. They are able to initiate interactions and show genuine affection and pleasure. They engage even if interactions are sparse or repetitive, which gives them an advantage working with cognitively impaired patients.

AAT in Hospice and Palliative Care

- People with chronic and terminal illnesses experience a variety of emotions and concerns. These include: fear of the unknown, loneliness, sorrow, pain and suffering, loss of self-control, loss of identity, and all of the physical and debilitating losses associated with their condition. Palliative medicine can help some of the pain and stress these patients are experiencing; however, more and more frequently, hospitals, hospices, and other health-care organizations are supplementing their treatment with diverse forms of "alternative medicine".
- Studies have showed favorable results with AAT in palliative care. Improved communication, positive emotional responses, enhanced physical relaxation or motivation for physical activation have all been cited. Talking about death and dying can be very difficult. Many times, patients are expressing their acceptance or rejection of their diagnosis during a visit with AAT.

Continued...

When patients become unable to care for pets who were their companions for years, the presence of a visiting pet can add to the quality of life and provide the companionship they crave and miss. Including an animal as part of a hospice program is beneficial for patients because the terminally ill face the realization of their impending death on a daily basis.

When working in a long-term care setting or hospice, the involvement of significant others in the lives of residents is essential to promote quality of life. The end of an individual's life not only changes that individual's life, but also the lives of those that have emotional ties to the patient. AAT assists families and loved ones by easing the tension and facilitating communication.

Continued...

People have different reactions to the impending death of a loved one. Some find themselves withdrawing or avoiding the dying patient. Studies have found that family members are less likely to have conversations with dying patients to find out how they feel when death is imminent, leaving patients emotionally isolated and unattended in the dying experience. As a result, pets have the opportunity to provide the comfort that dying patients both long for and deserve. "The animals quiet, accepting and nurturing presence strengthens, and frees the patient to resolve his or her final experience successfully". Muschel

A study conducted in New York, Missouri, and Texas showed that, in nursing homes that have animals and plants as an integral part of the environment, medication costs dropped from an average of \$3.80 per patient per day to \$1.18 per patient per day (Montague, 1995).



Patients and Families Benefit

- For patients, animal-assisted therapy reduced the depression, anxiety, and stress associated with their terminal illness. For the family members, animal-assisted therapy provided them with a respite from worry, a physical and emotional means of comfort, and a safe outlet for grief. Families may also benefit from seeing their loved ones smile or play with a dog. Those moments can provide hope, relief, or a chance to share happiness during difficult times.

Facility Dog Vs. Therapy Dog: What's the difference?

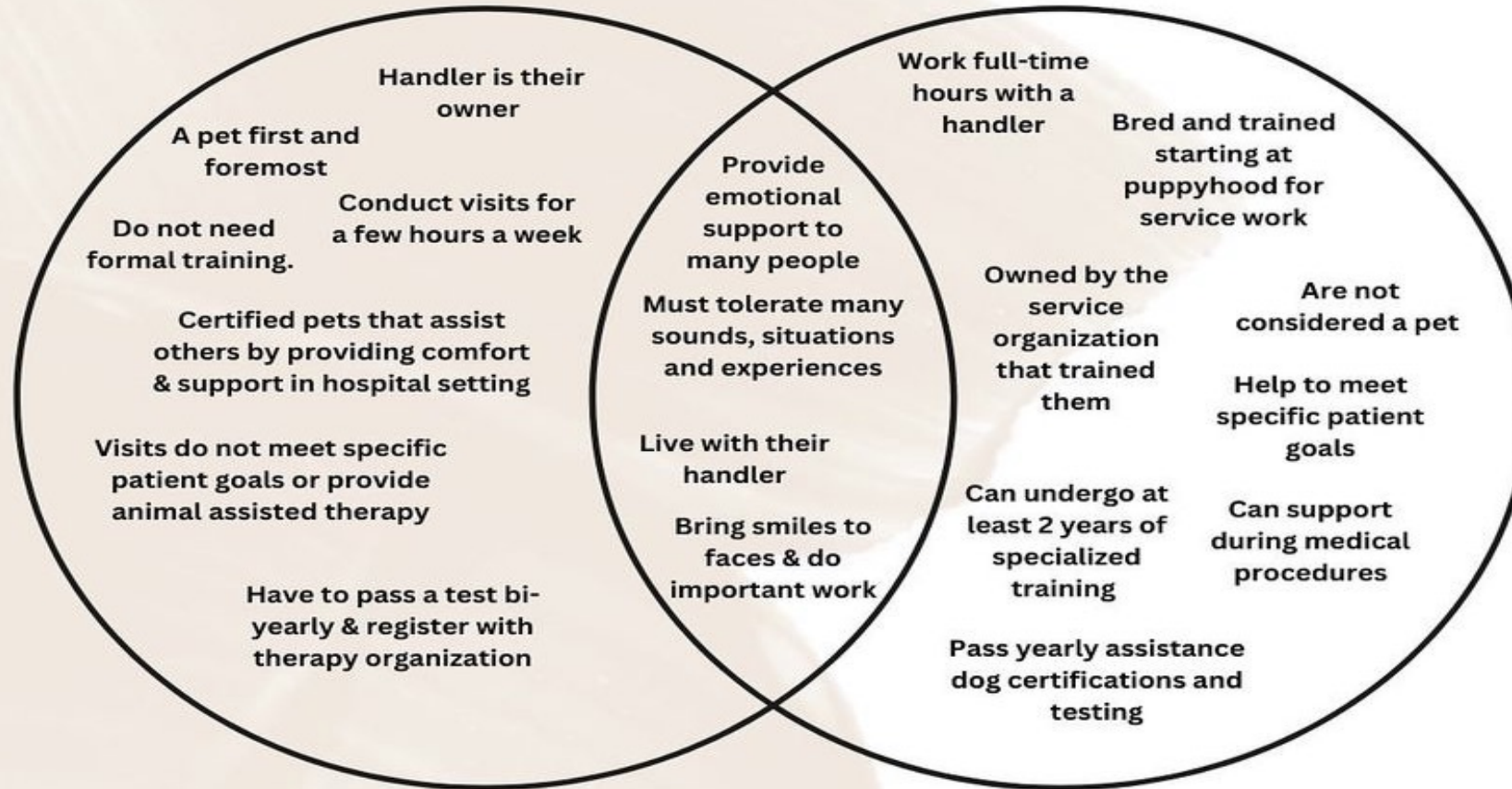
- A facility dog is handled by a designated colleague and utilizes their special skills and training in animal-assisted interventions to help providers achieve specific treatment or program goals.
- A facility dog is similar to a therapy dog, but unlike a therapy dog which may visit patients accompanied by their handler for a few hours a week, a facility dog works full-time at the facility under the care and supervision of a staff member.
- Therapy dogs begin as someone's pet. The idea for them to become a therapy dog is made by their owner because they believe either their dog would make a good therapy dog or because they themselves would like to participate in this form of volunteer activity - or both.

Continued Differences...

- Most Assistance Dogs International (ADI) dogs have been specifically bred to be able to possess the demeanor and temperament needed for interaction with vulnerable populations. Despite these careful breeding practices, sixty percent of puppies entered into an ADI training program "flunk" out as trained professional dog trainers observe them over time and determine that their individual personalities make them unsuitable for professional work and unable to pass the rigors of the public access certification.

Therapy Dog

Facility Dog



Current Practices in Hospice Pet Therapy

- Therapy Dogs in hospice are most commonly used on a volunteer basis. A therapy dog handler becomes a volunteer through a hospice organization and visits with patients when requested.
- While volunteer therapy dogs are beneficial, visits are limited to the volunteer's availability. Scheduling visits with a patient are dependent on the volunteer.
- Most therapy visits are done with the patient in their home or where they reside and directed toward the patient. They are limited by time constraints of the volunteer and scope of practice. Facility dogs who are placed with licensed professionals, have a much larger impact on the patient population, the organization's colleagues and family members visiting the patient.

Benefits of a Full- time Facility Dog



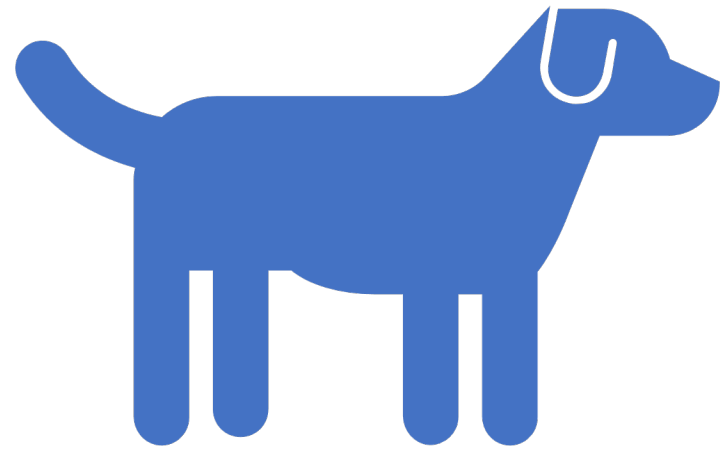
Facility Dog works full- time with their handler



The impact is exponentially larger as the dog is able to visit with hospice colleagues in the office. ---- burnout etc



Visit with facility staff and assist with bereavement and stress reduction



But what does a facility dog do??

- A Facility Dog is a dog trained for general obedience, but also for behaviors specific to the needs of the organization.
 - Lay down next to a patient going through a procedure, providing comfort and security and helping to keep the patient still and calm.
 - Retrieve objects in a senior care facility.
 - Sitting beside someone on a couch or chair to provide compassion.
 - Visit during times patients generally are more likely to have higher agitation or anxiety.

Facility Dog in Your Program?

- Mars is a Champ Facility Dog. CHAMP Facility Dogs live with their primary handlers and may also partner with an additional trained handler at the work site.
- Off-duty, these dogs are much-loved members of their caregiver's family. CHAMP Facility Dogs must have daily exercise and playtime sessions in order to maintain their health and well-being.
- Facility dogs have been proven to impact patient outcomes, facilitate communication and help colleagues with bereavement and stress relief.

Who should apply?

- Handler/Caregiver candidates should have a long-established relationship with the facility, a position that allows them to handle the dog when working at the facility, be willing to participate in placement and follow-up training, and a stable housing situation suitable for the Facility Dog. When selecting a handler/caregiver candidate, we suggest the facilities keep in mind that dogs will typically work until they are 10+ years old.
- The facility/handler/caregiver must be able to physically, financially and emotionally meet the needs of their facility dog. Other staff and visitors must be respectful of the dog's professional status, and allow the dog to do its job.
- The facility must provide the dog with ample opportunity to perform the skills it has been trained to do.

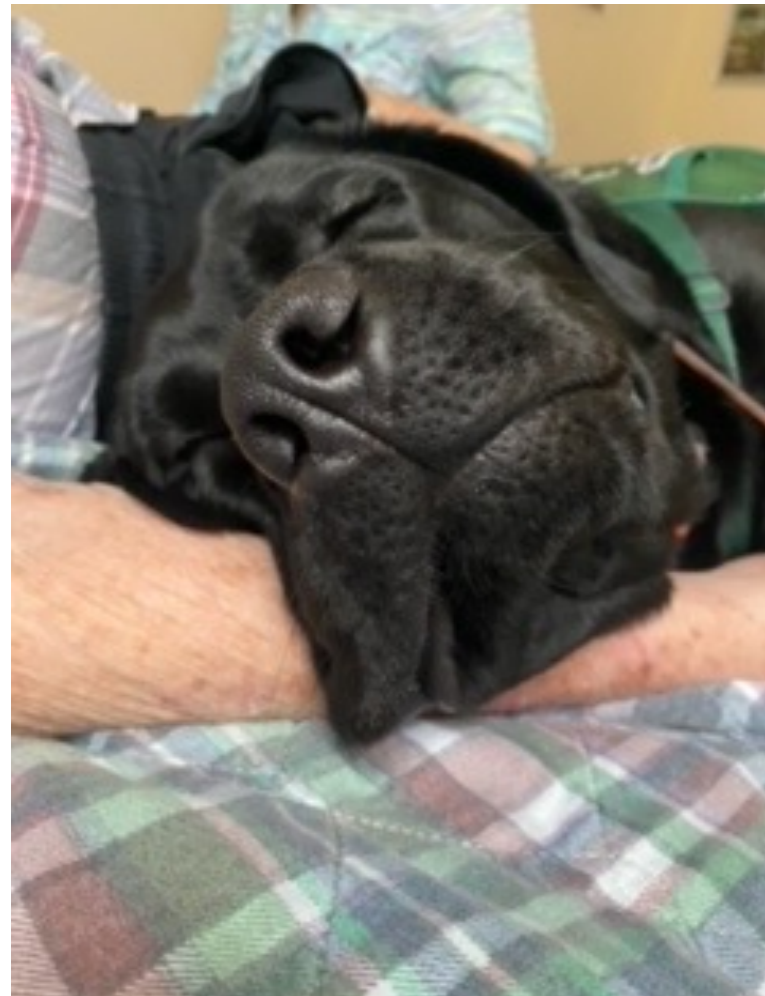
Limitations

Allergies

Other animals in the home

Fear of dogs

Financial and liability concerns



Mars in the Field: Visiting a patient at Boone Hospital, resting in bed with a resident of the Veterans Home in Mexico and showing off with the residents of Memory Care at Heisinger Bluffs

Field Experience

- During a routine visit to a partner facility, I was approached by a facility nurse who thought our shared patient, "**Mary**" (named change for privacy) would enjoy a visit with Mars, if we were available. This patient had recently started declining and was beginning to transition.
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- Upon learning the residents name, I had a moment of recognition, sadness then determination. I recognized her name because she had recently moved to the facility from out of our service area and was transferring from another hospice. I had been asked to meet with her and her family at that time to assist in filling out explanation of benefits and informed consent paperwork. When I introduced myself and Mars to her and her family, they were immediately smitten with Mars. This resident had shared her life with K-9 companions and her daughter had a black lab, "just like mars", who had passed in the last few years. In addition, the patient's daughter had used our hospice services 5 years prior with her father-in-law.
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- She asked if we still had the nurse with dark curly hair. I was able to share, not only does she still work with us (**Kelly Echertnacht, RN**) but, she would be her mom's case manager. This was a relief and pleasant surprise for them both to have a familiar face. We completed the paperwork, visited about her last facility and what brought her to our area. Mars was a perfect gentleman and had the opportunity to meet a few more family members. When it was time to go, I shared his business card and promised to return for future visits. I continued to stop in to visit with her over the few months she was on service. She was always excited to see us and we grew to enjoy our time together.
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Continued...

- So, when I happened to visit the facility on a routine visit and learned she was transitioning, I had a mix of emotions. As we entered the room, I saw several familiar faces. Our patient, her daughter and her husband. Plus, several grandkids and the patient's sister right beside her. "Mary" immediately recognized Mars as did the family we had previously met. Mars made his rounds to each person in the room, sniffing their shoes and then looking up to meet their gaze. They each gave him pets and scratches and murmured among themselves about their experience with him and the dogs they had growing up. Once he had a chance to greet each person, I guided him toward "Mary" and gave him the command to go down. He curled up beside her feet and went to "work".
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- "Mary" was cognitively aware of her family and our visit **yet**, she was having decreased level of consciousness due to her disease process and acute illness. Despite her inability to maintain consistent conversation, she would periodically arouse, bend down, pet Mars and say a few words regarding him or to contribute to the conversation in the room. Mars was integral in maintaining fluency in the conversation with "Mary" and the family.
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- Many times, families are at a loss for what to say and how to act when watching **a loved one** decline and actively transition **toward death**. Having animal-assisted therapy can enhance and develop conversations that may otherwise seem trivial or unapproachable. Mars was able to provide a sense of calm, emotional healing and closure as Mary's ability to participate with the family conversation dwindled. When our visit came to an end, each person in the room said good-bye to Mars and thanked us for our visit. These moments cement and drive my passion for **Animal-Assisted Therapy** and the impact it has with our hospice patients. It is my desire to share these experiences with our healthcare partners to continue to grow facility dog programs among our hospice organizations and the facilities we **serve**.

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