



ARF's Pet Hug Pack (Therapy Animal Team)

As of October 2007, ARF's Therapy Animal Team, the Pet Hug Pack, is made up of 66 people, 65 dogs, 4 cats and 1 guinea pig. The Pack supports community outreach events, onsite programs and makes over 40 visits each month to therapeutic and/or educational facilities.

Onsite (at ARF) programs include:

- Programs for Kids:
 - Birthday Parties at ARF
 - Camp ARF
- Programs for Schools and Groups
 - Learning Center Tours
 - Classroom/Assembly Presentations
 - Added Touch Program (adult field trips to ARF)
- Programs for Pre-Teens and Teens
 - ARF All Stars
 - Volunteer Training Classes at ARF

Offsite programs include:

- Visiting Animal Program (VAP)
- Library programs (children's story times)
- Teaching Loving Care (TLC)

The cornerstone program for the Pet Hug Pack is:

Visiting Animals Program (VAP) – started Summer 2002
***An Animal-Assisted Activity Program of visits to Contra Costa County
 Social Service, Medical and/or Educational facilities***

Medical studies have found that interaction with companion animals lowers blood pressure, reduces anxiety and otherwise improves one's physical and mental health. In addition, research has demonstrated that many people who are emotionally "closed down" or unresponsive will often open up in remarkable ways when they are petting a cat or dog.

Number Facility partners by Type as of October 2007

Acute Care Hospitals	4
Veteran's Rehabilitation Center	1
Long-term Skilled Nursing Care	13
Behavioral Health – Inpatient	1
Assisted Living	10
Senior Residence	2
Special Education Schools	3
Adult Day Care	2
Special Needs After School Program	1

In addition, a small group of Pack members are also Pet Pal volunteers for Hospice of the East Bay.



Feedback:

by Carol Goldman, Director of Programs, **Reutlinger Community for Jewish Living, Danville**

ARF provides a wonderful interactive program for our seniors. We especially appreciate the enthusiastic four footed friends that visit during the cold winter months. Many of our seniors do not leave the facility that often. It is always refreshing to be happily greeted by our canine companions. The consistency is fantastic and many friendships have developed with the handlers and our residents as well as their pets. We consider ARF to be an integral part of our wellness program and value the professional training given to each handler and their pet. I have heard on several occasions a resident ask if they could pet sit some time. Come to think of it they may not be a bad idea! We look forward to continuing this wonderful relationship for years to come.

Program Goals:

Support our community's therapeutic facility clients/residents by accepting their invitations to visit them with pets that are qualified for the experience. Effective visits will:

- Promote the health benefits of companion animal interaction to our target customers
- Provide a positive experience for the customer
- Promote the benefits of humane and loving companion guardianship and training which supports ARF's humane education and animal rescue strategies
- Promote strong and effective relationships between ARF (represented by each Pet Hug Pack team) and partner facilities

Target facilities:

- Adult Day Care, Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing, Acute/Extended Care/Rehabilitation, Special Education facilities, Special Needs centers in Contra Costa County.

Visit format:

- Introduction of participating staff and volunteers (people and pets) and a summary of ARF (its mission and programs) on each visit as appropriate (new attendees or facility).
- 30-60 minutes (with any one group of residents/patients) of casual animal interaction with attendees, encouraging animal petting, pet story telling, etc. Visits may take place in Activity Rooms and/or be room-to-room visits with individual patients (skilled nursing facilities) as directed or approved by facility staff.

Team Visit frequency/facility:

- Monthly – more frequent if TA Team is available and can reach mutually agreeable schedule with facility Activity Director/Administrator (ARF's team currently makes 30 visits/month)

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