

Pet Therapy at Bethany Village Benefits Residents, Staff

Friday, June 1, 2012 by Allyson Crawford



A lot of us have pets, no matter our age. For many, choosing a retirement community that allows pets is a no-brainer. Pets are an extension of family, and for most, leaving them behind when making a big move is not an option.

Bethany Village allows residents to bring pets to campus. It's not uncommon to see residents walk their dogs around Reflection Lake. Cats are popular and so are birds and fish. While Bethany is still in the minority of communities that allow residents to bring pets to the community, a recent news report suggests that tide is turning.

For many, pets provide a special bond of companionship, comfort and stress reduction. That's the theory behind the robust pet therapy program at Bethany Village.

Several volunteers participate in the pet therapy program at Bethany. Highly trained pets - and their owners! - visit Bethany a few times each week to brighten the spirits of Bethany's Linden House residents. The volunteers come from the Miami Valley Pet Therapy Association (mvPTa).

"We had one resident in Memory Support who stood with her arms crossed... she didn't want anything to do with the dogs," says volunteer Margaret Wittmer. "The resident kept inching closer and she ended up petting the dog!"

"The pets do a lot," volunteer Carol Farrell explains of the therapy dogs. "They put lots of smiles on faces. Some of the residents just can't wait for the dogs to come back!"

"When the residents are laughing and smiling, good hormones are released" adds volunteer Iris Carter.

The positive implications of therapy dogs doesn't end with residents. The animals help staff well-being as well.

"We don't get in and out of Bethany without employees stopping and visiting with the dogs!" laughs Carter.

The amount of training owners and dogs go through to become certified is rigorous. Certification classes are 10 weeks long. Dogs must show they can settle and be quiet and behave around other animals. The dogs must also already know basic obedience skills before entering a training program. Each dog is tested to gain acceptance into the training program.

For more information about Bethany Village's pet policy, please contact the marketing department at 937-436-6850.

Photo credit, left to right:
Iris Carter with Annie
Carol Farrell with Aspen
Margaret Wittmer with Hayley