



Unique Benefits of Animal-Assisted Therapy for Individuals in Long-Term Care

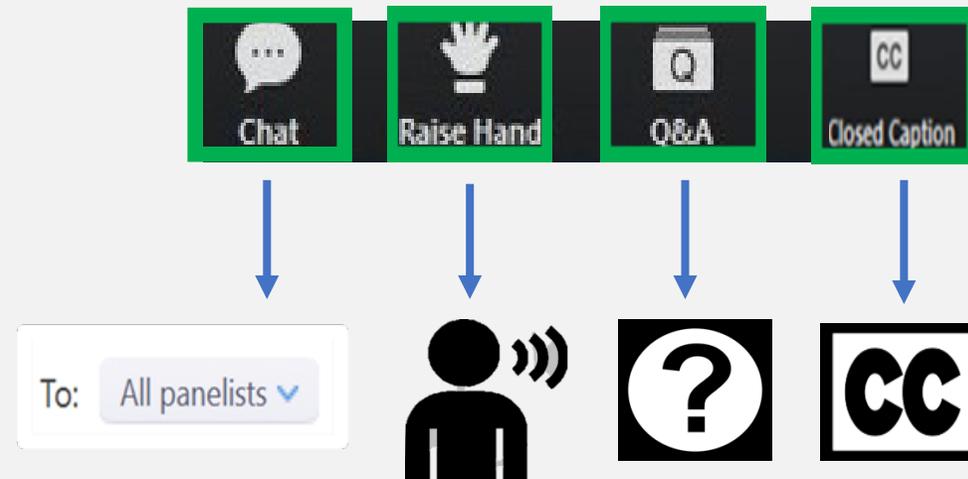
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Webinar Objectives

- Discuss the skill, temperament, and training requirements for therapy dogs
- Discuss additional ways to incorporate dogs such as facility dogs and service dogs
- Describe the process for matching handler/dog teams with populations in different care settings
- Explain how care settings can begin offering animal-assisted therapy
- Discuss how to find a reputable therapy dog organization

Today's Presenters



Pam Budke
Executive Director
CHAMP Assistance Dogs



Martha Pollard, MSN, RN
Therapy Dog Program Director
CHAMP Assistance Dogs



Janie von Wolfseck, PhD
Therapy Dog Handler
CHAMP Assistance Dogs

CHAMP Assistance Dogs

- CHAMP (Canine Helpers Allow More Possibilities) is a 501(c)(3) organization based in St. Louis, Missouri
- Active since 1998, CHAMP has trained and placed highly skilled service dogs with individuals in need, free of charge
- We offer therapy dog visits to bring joy and health to the community, free of charge





Mission Statement

It is the mission of CHAMP Assistance Dogs to improve and enhance life skills and promote companionship through the placement of specially selected service dogs with qualified individuals, and further, to always celebrate the mystery and joy inherent in the canine/human bond.



Vision of CHAMP Assistance Dogs

*Both partners,
dog and human,
have a better life
because of the other.*

CHAMP Service Dog Program

- Puppies in the CHAMP Service Dog Program begin their journey on Day One!
- Pups are observed, handled, and cared for by volunteer “whelper helpers” 24 hours a day until the age of 8 weeks.
- Their journey from tiny pups weighing a few ounces to active 9-pounders is a joy to experience!



About CHAMP Service Dogs

- The cost to raise and train a highly skilled service dog is \$35,000, and dogs are placed with people in need, free of charge
- Our puppies are never housed in kennels; they live in the homes of volunteer puppy raisers who are committed to help train and enrich their lives for up to 2 years
- CHAMP partners with a prison where inmates assist in training the dogs, which provides a sense of purpose and offers job opportunities
- Some service dogs are placed as facility dogs, home service dogs, and home companion dogs



Assistance Dogs

Assistance dogs are trained to assist individuals with a variety of cognitive, emotional, and physical disabilities.

Services that the dogs may provide for people include assisting with activities of daily living (e.g., opening/closing doors, retrieving dropped or needed items, removing shoes and clothing, assisting with balance).

Toward the end of their training, a dog is matched with their likely partner and trained specifically for that person's needs.

CHAMP maintains a relationship with dogs and the people they assist through regular visits and additional training as people's needs change.



Facility Dogs

Facility dogs live with an employee of a facility and go to work on a regular basis.

They provide the benefits of animal-assisted therapy for many people and offer consistency. They are often used to improve the mental health of the population they serve.

Facility dogs are assistance dogs that function more as therapy dogs; they do not perform specific tasks for individuals, but rather provide emotional support, comfort, and acceptance to everyone they encounter.



Home Service Dogs

Home service dogs often possess the same skills as public access dogs, but they perform their skills at home.

Olive picks up things for Fran and is taught to alert Fran's husband if Fran falls or needs his assistance.



*Olive is a Rescue
From Helping Strays
of Monroe County, IL*

Fran & Olive
CHAMP Home Service Dog
5-31-22

CHAMP Home Companion Dogs

Home companion dogs provide emotional support.

They also help provide a sense of purpose as the recipients of the dogs learn to address the dogs' needs (e.g., feeding, providing water, and grooming).



Assistance Dogs International Accreditation

Assistance Dogs International defines three types of assistance dogs: guide dogs who assist people with visual impairments, hearing dogs who assist people with hearing impairments, and service dogs who assist people with disabilities other than blindness or deafness.

CHAMP Assistance Dogs is a fully accredited assistance dog organization.

When considering a service dog organization to partner with, be sure they are accredited, as that ensures the organization meets strict care, health, and training standards.



Therapy Dogs

- CHAMP therapy dogs visit people in adult and pediatric hospitals, nursing homes, adult and child daycare centers, rehabilitation centers, schools/colleges, long-term care facilities, and more
- Therapy dog visits have been shown to increase engagement, improve mood, and lower blood pressure and heart rate
- It's truly amazing and very moving to see how people light up upon seeing a dog. Sometimes people express deep emotions during therapy dog visits, and reminisce about pets of their own



Prerequisites for Becoming a Therapy Dog

- Therapy dogs must be close to 2 years of age to enter the training program, and they must have lived with their owner/handler for at least 6 months.
- Therapy dogs are people's pets and are not owned by CHAMP.
- Dogs must pass a skill and temperament evaluation prior to admission, demonstrating knowledge of basic commands, such as sit, stay, sit for 1 minute, down, and down for 3 minutes. They must walk nicely on leash and come when called.
- Temperament testing is also done; we want the dogs to be comfortable around strangers and enjoy people!
- We do not have breed restrictions; dogs are evaluated on their individual skills and temperament.



Therapy Dog Training

- The CHAMP therapy dog training program consists of 12 weeks of classes.
- Dogs are taught how to maneuver in small spaces, how to approach people, make eye contact, and more.
- Their humans learn how to interact in a safe manner, continually assess their dogs for signs of stress, and communicate with people who have disabilities.
- Guest speakers are invited to attend classes to address volunteering, communicating respectfully with different populations. Speakers include therapy dog handlers, people with various types of disabilities, social workers, and other professionals with relevant experience.



Training at Goldfarb

- We try to provide our students with as many experiences as possible.
- During the course of their training, students observe current therapy dog teams on visits.
- Therapy dog classes are taught by expert trainers who also work with our assistance dog program.
- CHAMP is proud to be able to partner with the Goldfarb School of Nursing at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. They allow us to practice in their state-of-the-art simulation lab so students and dogs can experience an actual hospital setting and how to navigate visits in complex environments.





Therapy Dog Visits for Elder Care

A variety of communities—including Elder Care Alliance communities—offer pet therapy as part of their health and wellness programs. In addition to helping people with physical, mental, or emotional illnesses, pet therapy can provide fun and entertainment for seniors. Also, many people appreciate that pets are not judgmental and are capable of immense love and affection.

Benefits of therapy dogs for visits with elders:

- Provide mental stimulation
- Decrease anxiety
- Help people with dementia recall memories
- Reduce loneliness
- Trigger the release of endorphins and boost mood
- Reduce overall physical pain
- Can help improve motor skills; walking a dog involves using larger muscles in the torso, arms, and legs, and can improve coordination



Rehabilitation Center Visits

- Dogs may assist with physical and occupational therapy by giving clients (as directed by therapists) the opportunity to pet/brush them or toss a ball.
- We often hear stories of patients cooperating with care or making great progress during visits because their focus is on the dog and not on their discomfort, loneliness, pain, or frustration:
- “When we made our TRISL visit, not only did Gracie get to do double leash walking with a client at the rehab center, but the physical therapist asked if Gracie could walk backwards. And of course, she did. We walked about 15 steps backwards with the client and the client’s walker, then we did a complete U-turn. Was very cool!”



Introducing Janie von Wolfseck, PhD

Janie has years of experience as a CHAMP therapy dog handler, visiting a wide variety of types of facilities

Pictured at right is Janie's current therapy dog, Zoe, who has a wardrobe that would make anyone envious!

As our smallest therapy dog, Zoe wears a CHAMP bandana instead of a cape when she visits her friends!



Therapy Dog and Visit Considerations for Facilities and Organizations

- Facility staff planning for visits is important to assure maximum benefit for those visited by therapy dogs
- A guide from the facility who is familiar to clients will allow clients to feel safe with the therapy dog handler, and will cue the handler regarding the best way to interact with a particular client for their safety and comfort
- All dogs in any facility should be on lead at all times while not crated or confined in an office or closed area
- Personal dogs visiting clients is a wonderful way to improve engagement and health, but often personal dogs are not trained or screened to interact well with other dogs. Be aware of this if personal dogs visit in a facility that may have an on-site dog or therapy dogs
- The benefit to handlers of being on a therapy dog team is immense!

Arranging Therapy Dog Visits for a Facility

Search for reputable therapy dog organizations

- Therapy dog organizations recognized by the American Kennel Club:
www.akc.org/sports/title-recognition-program/therapy-dog-program/therapy-dog-organizations/
- To confirm that a not-for-profit organization practices good stewardship of donations and finances, visit websites that evaluate criteria, such as Charity Navigator:
www.charitynavigator.org/
- For information about therapy dog organizations, visit the Therapy Dogs International website:
www.tdi-dog.org/About.aspx

Questions to Ask Therapy Dog Organizations

- What are the skill/temperament requirements for your therapy dogs?
- How long has your organization been in business?
- How long is your training program?
- Do dogs qualify for your program remotely, or are they evaluated in person?
- What qualifications do your program instructors have?
- What types of facilities do you visit?
- Is there a charge for therapy dog visits?
- Do you currently have teams available to volunteer at our facility?
- Is your program insured?

Thank You!

Please feel free to reach out to
CHAMP in the future if you have
any questions about therapy
dogs or assistance dogs:

www.champdogs.org

(314) 485-1264





Questions?

