

Powers: Recognizing the amazing things therapy animals do every day

All About Pets



The Pet Partner teams are greeted by excited children and others as they wait to enter the Prescott Valley City Council Meeting to receive their proclamation. (Courtesy)



By Christy Powers, All About Pets Columnist

Originally Published: April 29, 2019 6:01 p.m.



A group from Pet Partners of Prescott will be walking around the courthouse plaza with their partners beginning at 1 p.m. today. You just might have time to stop by and observe - and certainly they would be most willing to visit and answer any questions you might have about what they and their special pups do.

National Therapy Animal Day was created by Pet Partners to recognize all the amazing things that therapy animals do every day; helping people of all ages in a great number of settings including hospitals, schools, assisted living facilities, pediatric care units, libraries and more.

The goal of National Therapy Animal Day is to recognize and honor these therapy animals and educate the public about the role that they play in enhancing the health and well-being of people of all ages. It has been proven that therapy animals can lower blood pressure, improve mood, help struggling readers and much more.

It is also important to recognize the dedication of the handlers of these therapy animals. Hours are spent in the training and then in arranging and participating in these visits.

Incidentally, it is not just dogs that do therapy work. As you may have seen on the news, there is a therapy miniature horse who appeared on an airplane. But also birds, cats, rodents - any number of creatures can be therapy animals. Miniature horses are great because they have a long life span and the strength to help with mobility. Certainly not recommended for your neighbor's household, however.

Dogs are the primary therapy animals and they love the work. Dogs are very adept at realizing who needs a lift. You can appreciate that with your own dog.

If you are having a bad day or are in pain, he can be very supportive. There have been stories of dogs who spent days next to the bed of a dying or seriously ill

person. Certainly former president Bush had a devoted partner who stayed with him to the end and beyond. And now that dog is helping veterans.

There is a strict difference between a Therapy dog and a service dog. Service dogs meet the various needs of one particular person. Therapy dogs work with a wide variety of people.

However, there are also the fakes. Some people are so dishonest as to illegally pass their pet off as a therapy animal so they can bring them on airplanes and into stores. This is creating a real problem both for merchants and the airline industry. These fake therapy animals are not trained to the standards of real therapy animals and can cause serious and very disturbing problems.

I recently received an email, found it in my junk file, (where it certainly belongs,) from an organization urging me to fill out their form and they will have a doctor sign a letter authorizing my dog's legitimacy as a therapy or service animal, and provide the almost real appearing vest for my dog. Such a disgrace. So harmful for the legitimate therapy animals.

Legitimate therapy dogs have gone through extensive training and testing to prove that they are suitable for this kind of work. Besides the extensive training, the highest health standards must be met. Pet Partner's teams visit seriously ill people of all ages in hospitals, so the health of the dog is very important.

You might be interested in finding out how to get your dog registered as a therapy dog. The benefits are endless for you, your dog and naturally, the people whose lives you are enhancing. Helpful information is available at ppofprescott@gmail.com.

Pet Partners of Prescott has received proclamations from the towns of Prescott, Prescott Valley and Chino Valley, recognizing the value of their amazing work. Join them later today at the courthouse plaza.

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