



For Immediate Release
February 25, 2008

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Hendricks Regional Health Establishes Pet Therapy Program

Danville – For years research has shown that pet ownership provides certain health benefits. Pets help lower blood pressure and lessen anxiety, boost immunity and help socialize people who tend to be more withdrawn. Pets provide an unconditional love that can turn a bad day into something positive.

A group of staff at Hendricks Regional Health worked for several months to develop and implement a new pet therapy program at the hospital called Paws to Pet. The idea for the program originally came from a nurse at the hospital, Cindy Breiva, who is currently licensed as an Evaluator for Therapy Dog International, Inc. (TDI) as well as for AKC's "Canine Good Citizen" program.

Extensive research went into the establishment of Paws to Pet and many evidence-based practices supported the initiative. The pet program is intended to meet patient needs and desires in any inpatient or outpatient unit at HRH and the goals of the program are:

- To create a more enjoyable hospital experience while at the same time improving the physiological and psychological well-being of the patient.
- To soften the impact of being a patient in a medical environment by providing the patient with an opportunity to give and receive warmth and unconditional love from an animal.
- To reduce patient feelings of isolation, and promote giving and receiving support.
- To decrease blood pressure and to allow a release of strain and tension that can take the edge off of loneliness and depression.

At present there are five canines serving as therapy dogs at Hendricks Regional Health: Lilly, Tucker, Ellie Mae, Elye and Kiska. All of the dogs are TDI certified and spent weeks being acclimated to the hospital before participating in their first patient interaction. Each dog, sporting its own hospital identification badge, visits once per week with its owner/handler who volunteers their time to meet with hospital patients and visitors.

Danville resident and owner of Kiska, Lynn Villers, says she has noticed the pet therapy

program being beneficial not only to patients but to visitors and staff as well. “Visitors in waiting areas, particularly those waiting in the intensive care unit or emergency department, are sometimes under a considerable amount of stress and you can see the tension lifted from them when the dog walks in to pay them a visit. It just brightens their day.”

The Paws to Pet program is administered by the Guest and Volunteer Services department at Hendricks Regional Health. For more information about the program call (317) 745-3556.

Since 1962, Hendricks Regional Health has served as the area's leading healthcare provider by delivering innovative care with a personal touch. Licensed by the Indiana State Department of Health and accredited by the Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program, Hendricks Regional Health staffs a full complement of physicians in 56 specialties at locations in Danville, Avon, Plainfield, Brownsburg and Lizton. To learn more call (317) 745-3353 or visit www.hendricksregional.org.

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