

Visitors bring peace
Riverside Terrace resident Jo
Preston visits to love Chester
a little better during his visit
to the residents. His owner
Tammy Lorch, at back,
brings the Great Pyrenees
with each Tuesday morning
to visit.

Healing With HUGS

Pets Lend a Helping Paw

Pets can be great playmates and lots of fun, but now more than ever, they are truly a beloved member of the family, bringing joy and unconditional companionship to our lives. And just as moms and dads provide the love, support and endless hugs we need to get through any situation, so can our pets. Surprised? Well don't be. Our furry friends may possess the power to help heal with pet hugs.

Across the country, thousands of special therapy pets bring smiles each and everyday to those in need by simply offering them a pet hug. Research shows that human interaction with pets can provide life-enhancing physical and emotional benefits. In fact, bringing pets into a nursing home or hospital can help boost people's moods, enhance social interaction and help lower blood pressure.

In an effort to promote the important role pets play in people's lives, the Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) recently established the Pet Hug Fund, which provides support to animal therapy teams nationwide.

Locally, Tammy Lorch visits Riverside Terrace each Tuesday morning with her Great Pyrenees pet, Chester.

"Our residents love him," said activity director Linda Newman-Lewis. "They look forward to his visit each week."

Lorch is an animal lover herself, and realizes the benefit to the residents. They also pet weekly visits to a center in Smithville.

Powerful Pet Tails

Many of the ARF Pet Hug Fund therapy pets expressed their own fair share of hardships before being the opportunity to teach thousands of lives with pet hugs. Several were rescued from shelters, and due to their experience, they now give back to others in need through the simple gesture of a warm embrace.

For example, Ducati is a gentle and curious cat who visits children and seniors among his biggest fans. He was surrendered to the county shelter without his mother when he was only two weeks old and at the time, the local rescue group did not have space to care for him. Luckily, an ARF employee visited the shelter one day and knew she had to adopt the tiny kitten, so she could give him the love and care he desperately needed. Now Ducati is an official member of the ARF therapy team and positively impacts hundreds of children at the numerous schools he visits each year.

Another real-life rescue pet, Beemer, was a surrendered Schuamur mix adopted from a public shelter with one bone left to live. After receiving some TLC and proper training, Beemer started doing therapy work and for more than eight years now, he has provided tons of thousands of pet hugs to sick kids and isolated living residents.

To learn more about pet therapy or to find out how you can help further the mission of spreading pet hugs around the country, visit pethuglover.com.

How You Can Help Spread Pet Hugs

In three years, ARF Therapy Animal teams have made 1,000 visits and touched the lives of 100,000 people in need. Through the establishment of the ARF Pet Hug Fund, additional therapy teams will receive resources they need to help reach out to thousands of others across the country.

In order to support the ARF Pet Hug Fund and its numerous pet therapy teams nationwide, pet lovers are encouraged to visit www.pethuglover.com to download a mail-in certificate for a Pet Hug Store Limited edition "Build-A-Dog Workshop" mini-therapy dog or cat. For every exclusive 4-1/2-inch mini-pet ordered through June 30, 2007, Petrus will donate \$1 to the ARF Pet Hug Fund to support its mission of providing pet hugs to people across the country. Petrus will donate a minimum of

\$75,000 to the ARF Pet Hug Fund as part of this and a related promotion. "The ARF Pet Hug Fund's partnership with Petrus and Build-A-Dog Workshop is a fun way to honor the exceptional therapy pets, while educating people about the importance of pet hugs," says La Truitt.



Shirley is modeled after the real-life rescue cat Ducati, who has helped thousands of children with the ARF therapy team.

Beemer is modeled after the real-life Schuamur mix providing pet hugs to those in need.



Nearly three-year-old Ota Howard has always enjoyed dogs, and is especially happy to see Chester when he visits Riverside Terrace.

