

P.A.W.S.

Pets Are Working Saints

(Pet Facilitated Therapy)

A Ministry of Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church

Consider the P.A.W.S abilities

BACKGROUND: In the beginning, God created man with an innate stewardship responsibility for the animal. He preserves the animal in the flood. He used the animal in parables. In Proverbs, He even describes a righteous man having regard for the life of his beast. Animals have been partners in the hunt, guardians of the home, and companions in the night. It is only recently that the therapeutic value of animals has come to light as guide dogs for the blind, hearing aid dogs for the deaf, service dogs for those in wheelchairs, and even more recently as therapy dogs for all manners of human illness and conditions.

Unfortunately, pet facilitated therapy sometimes fall into one of two categories. One is the diversionary entertainment of enjoying the cute puppy or fuzzy kitten and the other is an opportunity to use the patients as a chance to train and socialize animals for the owner's personal needs.

The P.A.W.S. ministry sees the opportunity for pet facilitated therapy in a different light. Job 12:7-10 says "But now ask the beasts and let them teach you, And the birds of the air and let them tell you, Or speak to the earth and let it teach you, And let the fish of the sea recount to you, Which among these does not know what the hand of the Lord had done this, in whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all human beings."

HISTORY: Before the formation of the P.A.W.S. ministry in May 1989, a group of dedicated volunteers, led by Carol Taylor, participated for two years of regular therapy work at the Children's Center of Montgomery (a school for mentally and physically disabled children), Father Walter's Memorial Child Care Center (an institutional care facility for severely disabled children), and the Montgomery Rehabilitation Hospital (for patients recovering from strokes, heart attacks, head trauma, amputations, and other major surgical procedures). Regular visits filled a much felt void, and in the process, volunteers began to see miracles every time they went to "work".

EXPERIENCE:

- Some severely handicapped children have never had the opportunity for a hands on experience with a live animal and can learn kindness, gentleness and sometimes bravery.
- The severely handicapped are exposed to a variety textures, sounds and visual stimulation.
- Stroking a dog or cat can lower a person's blood pressure.
- Pets make it easier for strangers to talk.
- People often talk to animals and share feelings and memories.
- Visiting helps people feel less lonely and depressed.
- Animals offer a distraction from pain and infirmity.
- Nursing home patients who have become withdrawn are tempted to engage an animal.
- Speech therapists sometimes report patents talk more productively to animals than during formal rehabilitation.
- Petting an animal encourages use of both hands, arms, stretching and turning.

- Animals pay no attention to age or disability, but accepts people as they are.
- Visits offer memories of the experience and something to share with others.
- There are many similar statistics that show pet owners are more healthy and happy than the general public.

Former Senior Minister, Dr. John Ed Mathison, often reminded the congregation that “it is not about me”. P.A.W.S. takes that another step. Neither is it about the animals. It is about the ministry. The animal is a tool to be used by God’s servant, the volunteer.

ENTHUSIASM: As the program developed, and the regularity of visits became predictable, the staff gained confidence on the innate gentleness of the animals and the handler’s ability to work with different disabilities. The volunteers learned to see beyond the disability and discover the “child of God” inside. In Mathew 25:40, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” It is not “by chance” that we leave a facility touched by a particular individual or situation. As Christians, this gives us the unique opportunity to realize that we are our brother’s keeper.

SITUATION: The goal of Frazer’s membership is to Win, Disciple and Serve. P.A.W.S. volunteers accepted the challenge. Their animals have been a wonderful tool to acknowledge the fruits of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control – that can be with all of us. Volunteers proved a wholesome and safe environment for adults and children of all ages to come in contact with a Christian environment.

It is said that love is an action word. It is not enough to simply love animals and the people who love animals. A program is only as strong as its foundation. The future strength is the commitment of the new people who join the program. Their commitment is based upon their perception of attitudes, efforts and commitment of the people currently involved in the program. It is important to pray, plan, train, share responsibilities, and uplift each other. As Philippians 1:6 says, “He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it in you.” 2 Timothy 3:17 promises that you are “adequate, complete and equipped for every good work.”

VOLUNTEERS: One does not have to be a member of Frazer UMC to volunteer for the P.A.W.S. ministry. However, it is made clear to all volunteers that this is a Christian ministry founded and supported by Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church.

Each year, the Church asks each person to volunteer for service in some capacity. This “Every Member Commitment” effort usually identifies people who want to serve in several areas. This list produces the names to contact for the following year. Each month, the Church e-mails a reminder or mails a post card to each volunteer with information for that month’s visit. There is then a defined list and P.A.W.S volunteers are easily contacted. However, it is more difficult to keep in touch with non-members who wish to begin or continue serving. Non-members are asked to notify the Church each year if they want to be continued as part of the ministry. That is also an opportunity to update contact information. Contact prior to mid December will help insure notification of the January orientation.

- Each volunteer is expected to observe at least one therapy session before becoming an active participant. See Observation below.
- Do not hand over responsibility for your animal to a non-P.A.W.S. person.
- Provide annual verification of rabies vaccination or other health record as necessary.

- Do not take photographs without obtaining permission from both the institution and the person involved. The HIPAA law places high value on confidentiality and other activities related to the health care profession.
- Volunteers must leash dogs and harness cats. Maximum effort must be made for restraint of any other species of animal.
- Volunteers may make as many visits as they want to. However, each person should place emphasis on making at least one visit per month.
- Volunteers should wear soft soled shoes since some facility floors are not carpeted.
- Delicate or dangling jewelry should be avoided.
- Strong perfume or aftershave should be avoided
- Be properly dressed to stoop and bend.
- In some cases, long hair should be pulled back for safety and convenience.
- Wear your P.A.W.S. name tag on each visit.
- Do not inquire about the detailed specifics of an illness or injury but it is ok to engage the patient in conversation concerning general progress, how they are feeling and wish them well in their progress.
- Exhibit evidence of Christ's love.

ORIENTATION: Each year the Church conducts an orientation class for each of the ministries. This give volunteers the latest program information and is considered part of the training for those new to the program. The orientation class for P.A.W.S. is usually at the Church, on a Sunday afternoon in January, and lasts for one hour. New volunteers need to attend this training. Those with experience are asked to attend in order to obtain the latest information and meet and mentor the new members. Please do not bring your animal.

OBSERVATION: The program is designed for each new volunteer to make at least one visit to a facility and observe. This gives the volunteer first hand observation on what to expect and how to interact. There is a form to complete that helps guide the focus of the volunteer. There is no correct answer and no one at the site needs to review the response. The volunteer sends the form to the coordinator and is then ready for a "real" visit. Observation forms are available during orientation, from the coordinator, and on the Frazer / P.A.W.S. web site.

ANIMALS: Dogs, collared and leashed – Cats harnessed and leashed

- Do not use a leash that can be extended in length
- Tags (Rabies, ID)
- Dogs clean and no fleas (bathe no more than 24 hrs prior to visit) Other animals clean
- Provide a towel or small blanket to use with lap animals.
- Provide animal treats and water as necessary.
- Do not let your animal relieve itself outside the door of a facility.
- “Potty break” animals prior to a visit. Have clean-up supplies just in case.
- Animal free of parasites and not treated with any chemical just prior to visitation.
- Provide written documentation of rabies vaccination or other health records as necessary.
- Never let your dog precede you through a door. You don't know who or what is on the other side until you get there.
- See Temperament Testing below

TEMPERAMENT TESTING: All animals must pass the P.A.W.S. Temperament Test before they may be used as a therapy animal. A health certificate is required at the time of testing.

This is mainly for rabies vaccination requirement. The Temperament Testing Application may be completed in advance by downloading it from the website or may be completed from a copy that will be available at the testing site. Testing includes a screening by a veterinarian and a basic screening by volunteers to determine that the animal is under the control of the handler, gentle, friendly around other animals, and generally adaptable around people and confined spaces. Testing is normally scheduled for February or March of each year. Volunteers wanting to add untested animals may have to wait until the next annual testing since it is difficult to provide the logistics for periodic sessions. The only authorized testing is the one conducted by Frazer/P.A.W.S.. Animals with alternative certification or previous, pet therapy experience must be retested through P.A.W.S..

SITE CAPTAINS: The volunteer coordinator will attempt to secure a person who will accept responsibility for monitoring and coordinating the program at “their” site and helping other volunteers who visit there. When available, the names of captains will be published.

SHARING: If you have information you would like to share with other volunteers, provide it to the coordinator. It is easy to forward the information to those who have e-mail. Information may include, but is not limited to, the death or illness of an animal, photographs, acquiring a new pet, an interesting situation or information, a change in the status of your residence or health or just sharing your thoughts.

LIABILITY: Frazer UMC provides liability insurance for activities sanctioned by P.A.W.S.. Visits at unscheduled times or at unscheduled facilities are the responsibility of the pet owner. Please make every effort to comply with all rules, regulations and directions of the Church and those who administer the program.

The information in this document was combined from previously developed documents and contains minor modifications promoted by the current volunteer coordinator.

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Direct access to P.A.W.S. is www.frazerumc.org/P.A.W.S. You will then be able to select the Visitation Schedule, Temperament Testing Application, Observation Form, this document and the direct contact information for the current volunteer coordinator