The TWC K-9 Unit

The Unique Role of a TWC Therapy Dog.

Behavioral Health Assistance Dogs - With A Wellness “Buddy” – Life Gets better

TWC – Why Service Dogs

Trucker’s Wellness Centers (TWC) are committed to making the highest level of co-located, occupationally relevant integrated care immediately accessible to professional truck drivers. This demands knowledgeable and relationally skillful Healthcare Chaplains at each center. The TWC chaplaincy selection, training, and reporting processes insure professional and effective care while also providing the professional truck drivers a framework for engaging in and being part of a healthy support community.

Research shows that positive interactions with animals increase endorphins, oxytocin, prolactin and dopamine, the hormones associated with blood pressure regulation, pain relief, stress relief and joy. Visits from therapy animal teams can normalize stays away from home for extended periods of time, improve motivation to participate in treatment protocols and lessen worry, anxiety, unhappiness and pain.

Over 90% of service dog handlers say that their animals improve their quality of life by assisting with life stresses and increasing physical activity and community involvement. Each TWC service dog is matched to a chaplains unique needs after extensive training to perform specific tasks while maintaining a calm temperament.

TWC - Therapy Dogs/Facility Dogs

Therapy dogs are trained to provide affection and comfort to people who need emotional support or people in stressful situations.

“Buddy” – An Understanding Friend

These dogs are typically mature pets with calm temperaments, they enjoy being petted by lots of different people and are not easily frightened or excited. Many physicians agree that therapy dogs can decrease the levels of the stress hormone cortisol while increasing the hormones oxytocin and dopamine, which are associated with feelings of attachment and happiness.

Therapy animal teams provide Animal-Assisted Activities/Therapy

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA) are casual "meet and greet” activities that involve pets and their handlers visiting with people. The same activity can be repeated with many people. These visits result in people’s blood pressure lowering, patients commenting that they don’t feel as much pain, or can talk freely for the first time in months, and much more.
Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a goal-directed intervention directed and/or delivered by a health/human service professional with specialized expertise, and within the scope of practice of his/her profession. AAT is tailored to a particular person or medical condition to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning. The results of each AAT session is recorded in the patient’s record.

While therapy dogs work outside the home with groups of people, emotional support animals primarily provide comfort for one or two people.

TWC trains and qualifies Chaplains and their well-behaved dogs as therapy dog teams. These teams give unconditional love, boost self-esteem, and relieve loneliness and boredom. When they visit, the dogs seem to spark a reaction no one has ever seen before. The dogs and Chaplains provide a welcome change in routine and often form lasting friendships with the Professional Truck Driver. They bring back pleasant memories of family pets in days gone by. The person being visited may smile, cry, hug the dog, pet the dog, or laugh while the dog performs tricks.

Emotional Support Dogs provide therapeutic, physiological and psychological benefits to individuals with special stress induced emotional needs. Emotional Support Dogs can also benefit the Chaplain by providing affection, companionship, emotional comfort and support, to the Professional Truck Driver and encouraging physical activity. Emotional Support Dogs are custom selected and tailor trained to meet the unique lifestyle needs of each of the TWC Chaplains.

Emotional Support Dogs often provide the TWC Chaplain and Professional Truck Driver with:

- Relief from feelings of isolation
- An increased sense of well-being.
- Daily structure and healthy habits.
- An increased sense of security.
- An increased sense of self-efficacy.
- An increased sense of self-esteem.
- An increased sense of purpose.
- Mood improvement, and increased optimism.
- A secure and uncomplicated relationship.
- A dependable and predictable love.
- Affection and nonjudgmental companionship.
- Motivation to exercise.
- Encouragement for social interactions.
- Reduction in debilitating symptoms.
- Greater access to the world.
- Around-the-clock support emotional support.
PET Partners – A TWC Strategic Alliance

TWC is developing a partnership with Pet Partners to help TWC provide each qualified TWC Health Chaplain with a “Buddy”. Pet Partners is the national leader in demonstrating and promoting positive human-animal therapy, activities and education. Nearly forty years since the organization’s inception, the science that proves these benefits has become indisputable. Today, Pet Partners is the nation’s largest and most prestigious nonprofit registering handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams providing animal-assisted interactions.

Pet Partners, established in 1977 as Delta Society, is dedicated to improving human health through therapy, service and companion animals. Pet Partners mission is to increase awareness of the positive effects of animals, and expand the therapeutic and service role of animals in health, service and education. The organization was formed by members of both the human health and veterinary industries to focus on funding the first credible research on why animals are important to the general population and specifically how they affect health and wellbeing. In 1991, Pet Partners established the first standards-based therapy animal program, which has grown to include more than 11,000 therapy animal teams in all 50 states and 13 other countries. The impact of these interactions is felt one million times a year. Pet Partners’ curriculum and continuing education for licensed instructors, evaluators and handlers is the gold standard in the field. http://www.petpartners.org