

Hospice Training Touches on Healing Effects of Pet Therapy

By Christopher Davis | Posted on 06/26/2008



Volunteers and their pets learn how to help patients benefit from animal companionship.



Volunteers who attended Hospice of Santa Barbara's pet therapy orientation were, from left, Jill Kitnick with Primo, Joy Janssen with Meggie, Jennifer Allen with Hannah, Jessica Jones with Roscoe, Christine Brown with Willy, Efafe McFarland with Spirit, Madonna May with Georgio, Mary Wagner with Sophie, Stan Hatch with Button, Karen McDonald with Gracie and Barbara Mizes with Scruffy. (Hospice of Santa Barbara photo)

[Hospice of Santa Barbara](#) held a pet therapy orientation on Tuesday for volunteers who are interested in providing the joy of animal companionship and healing for Hospice of Santa Barbara patients.

Dogs, cats, bunnies and other animals, along with their owners, were involved in this special training on Hospice of Santa Barbara's front lawn.

Therapy animals are trained to allow unfamiliar people to pet them and provide people with a sense of healing and nurture through physical contact. Pets that serve Hospice of Santa Barbara patients and clients attended the orientation.

Studies have shown that a 12-minute visit with these pets improves heart and lung functioning by lowering pressures, diminishing release of harmful hormones and decreasing anxiety among hospitalized heart failure patients — having an overall positive effect on health.

Hospice of Santa Barbara's Patient Care Volunteer Training Program is now including Pet-Assisted Therapy to further provide affection and comfort to patients in their homes or residing in facilities.

To become certified, the volunteer and the pet must go through a certification process through Therapy Dogs (dogs only) or Love on a Leash. The cost for registration is \$20 per year for one pet and \$10 for each additional pet. The therapy animal also must pass an evaluation, which can be administered by a certified professional dog trainer.

Christopher Davis of SurfMedia Communications represents [Hospice of Santa Barbara](#).

