

## Wyckoff

# Pet therapy program produces positive results

Pet therapy is a unique type of therapy offered to residents and patients throughout Christian Health Care Center. Staff and outside visitors bring their pets to CHCC daily, bringing joy to patients and residents.

The results are extremely positive. Pet therapy has been proven to have many health benefits, including lowering health care costs, providing emotional stability in times of stress, decreasing blood pressure and cholesterol, helping individuals with heart disease, and fighting depression. Suzanne Gramuglia, Activities Director for Heritage Manor Nursing Home/Southgate, explained that pet therapy brings a smile to faces, lightens moods, and helps patients to positively reminisce about past experiences. In



Above: Lexi dressed up for Hawaiian Week at Christian Health Care Center. Right: Muffin the bunny with owner Nancy Laracy and CHCC resident Douglas Bolflour.



the behavior-management units, pet therapy calms agitated patients. Overall, pet therapy has a very positive outcome among the patients, residents, and staff at CHCC.

The most common animals that visit patients are dogs. Lexi is a Schnoodle (a cross between a Schnauzer and a poodle) that has been visiting The Longview Assisted Living Residence weekly for four years. She is owned by CHCC employee Denise Kish. Lexi been known to dress up for events such as wearing a lei for Hawaiian Week or a Santa hat at Christmas. The residents enjoy Lexi's visits and always look forward to her weekly trips to Longview. Another dog that is used for pet therapy is employee Karen Hockstein's Yorkshire Terrier Kipsy, who has been visiting Hillcrest Residence for nine years. The residents enjoy watching Kipsy do tricks, petting her, and feeding her little treats.

A bunny named Muffin, along with her owner, Franklin Lakes resident Nancy Laracy, visits Heritage Manor and

the Dementia Special Care Unit every other week. Muffin has received great reviews when she visits. Since the bunny is smaller than most of the dogs that come to visit, residents are able to pet and hold her in their arms. Muffin is not only popular with the patients; the staff constantly stops Laracy and Muffin as they enter and exit CHCC to get a little lift to their day as well. Muffin and Laracy are also visitors to The Valley Hospital's Butterflies Program and Camp Dream Street (which houses inner-city children diagnosed with cancer), and more recently they visited Sandy Hook victims in Newtown, Connecticut. Muffin and Laracy bring joy to many different people they touch through the pet-therapy program. Overall, pet therapy has extremely positive results throughout CHCC and continues to be a strong asset to the activities provided at CHCC.

For more information about pet therapy opportunities at CHCC, call Suzanne Gramuglia, Heritage Manor Nursing Home/Southgate Activities Director, at (201) 848-4249.