Studies show that positive interactions with a friendly companion animal can help improve your health in a wide variety of ways, including:

- lowered blood pressure
- decreased anxiety and depression
- lowered risk of heart disease
- prevention of allergies in children
- reduced stress levels
- strengthened immune systems
- increased social interaction
- improved cardiovascular health
- diminished overall physical pain

Benefits of Therapy Pet Visits

Who Can Benefit

A variety of individuals and groups can benefit from pet therapy visits, including:

- people receiving cancer treatments
- people in nursing homes
- veterans with post traumatic stress disorder
- universities and community programs to help people deal with stress and anxiety
- children having medical or dental procedures
- stroke victims and people undergoing physical therapy to regain motor skills
- people with mental health disorders
- in courtrooms, to lower the stress and anxiety of children or adults who are testifying

What to Expect From Our Visits

Would you like to invite us to spend time with you? Below you’ll find some basic information on our visits.

- Therapy team visits will be scheduled upon request, based on therapy pet team availability.
- On average, therapy pet visits last one hour.
- Please let us know the type of population we will be visiting, such as children, elderly, special needs, etc., and if we need to make any specific accommodations.

For more information, please email Lisa Smith at pettherapy@andersonanimalshelter.org.
Anderson Animal Shelter's Healing Paws program is a volunteer-based therapy pet group offering animal-assisted therapeutic support to individuals and organizations in our community. We are looking for friendly, sociable therapy pet teams willing to represent Anderson in the community and bring the unique benefits of the human-animal bond into the lives of people that need it most.

**What do we look for in a Healing Paws therapy pet?**
- Therapy pets must be at least one year old and do not need to have been adopted from Anderson.
- Part of the evaluation test will assess your pet's temperament. Will they accept a friendly stranger? Will they tolerate gentle tugging on their ears and tail? How will they react to a restraining hug or clumsy petting? Will they submit to an overall exam, including checking teeth, ears and touching the feet?
- Dogs entering the program must have basic obedience training — either in a formal class or on your own.
- Dogs will also be tested for their reactions to a stranger walking by, loud voices, crowded petting and will be required to walk through a crowd while remaining calm. They will need to demonstrate their ability to walk on a loose lead, sit on command, come when called and be able to encounter a neutral dog without barking, lunging, or showing aggression.

**What do we look for in a Healing Paws therapy pet handler?**
- Handlers must be at least 18 years of age.
- Handlers must be outgoing and comfortable interacting with a wide variety of individuals.
- All handlers must be able to maintain control of their pet at all times. Adverse training methods using force, fear, or intimidation is strictly prohibited, as is the use of choke, prong, pinch and shock collars. Harnesses, martingale collars and Gentle Leaders are acceptable.

**How do I get started?**
1. Schedule your pet’s evaluation by emailing our Healing Paws program coordinator, Lisa Smith. Upon passing the evaluation, you and your pet will be certified and insured through Anderson Animal Shelter.
2. Next you will need to fill out an Anderson Animal Shelter volunteer application and attend a volunteer orientation.
3. Provide proof of rabies (for dogs and cats), as well a yearly wellness exam and fecal test.
4. You and your pet are now ready to start healing our community! Anderson will provide you with places to go.

For more information or to schedule an evaluation, email Lisa Smith at pettherapy@andersonanimalshelter.org.