

BEYOND THE VEST

SGT. ANGIE HAMILTON, ASHLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT, DARE / SRO

PRINCESS, ACSO'S K-9 THERAPY DOG / 2025 CARING THERAPY CANINE THERAPY DOG OF THE YEAR

DEANNA SKELTON, PRESIDENT CARING THERAPY CANINES / ALLIANCE OF THERAPY DOGS T.O.



KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Ashland County Sheriff's Department K-9 Therapy Dog program
 - Community & School Support
 - Critical Incidence Response
- The Three Pillars of Support
- Therapeutic Mechanisms
- Client Outcomes
- Caring Therapy Canines / Alliance of Therapy Dogs



ASHLAND COMMUNITY THERAPY DOG OUTREACH

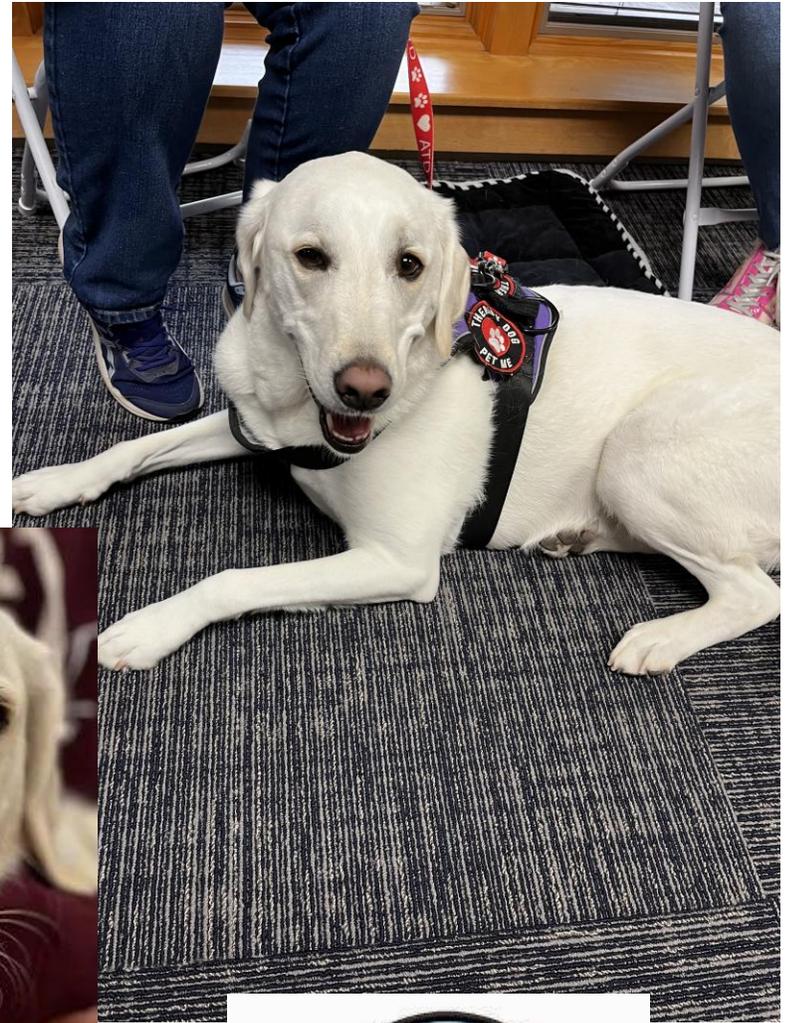
**SGT. ANGIE HAMILTON, DARE & SRO
PRINCESS, ACSO K-9 THERAPY DOG**





PRINCESS

AT WORK & VOLUNTEERING



INTEGRATING ANIMAL SUPPORT WITH MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICE

**DEANNA SKELTON, PRESIDENT – CARING THERAPY CANINES
ALLIANCE OF THERAPY DOGS, TESTER / OBSERVER
LIFELONG DOG LOVER & MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPION**



THE THREE PILLARS OF SUPPORT



SERVICE DOGS



EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL
ESA



THERAPY DOGS

SERVICE DOGS – TASK BASED

- Individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities
 - Most service dogs ease challenges associated with their owner's physical, psychological, sensory, and/or developmental disability
- ADA protected
 - Service animals **MUST** be allowed to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the facility where the public is allowed to go
- Full public access
- Work with one handler
- Highly trained

SERVICE DOG TASKS

- GUIDE – SIGHT ASSISTANCE
- HEARING
- MEDICAL ALERT
- MOBILITY
- AUTISM SERVICE
- PSYCHIATRIC SERVICE DOGS (COMMONLY INCLUDE VETERANS WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS)



“Service dogs may not have wings, but they give us the freedom to soar”
– FT Cares foundation

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS – PRESENCE BASED

- Companion Animals
- Provide comfort through presence, not tasks
- Not expected to perform specific tasks related to owner's condition,
- No specialized training
- Housing protections only through Fair Housing Act
- Species vary

ESA CLINICAL RELEVANCE

- Help owners cope with challenges associated with emotional and mental health conditions (such as depression & anxiety)
- Emotional Regulation – relieve loneliness & offer grounding
- Interruption of Patterns – For OCD, can help interrupt obsessive thought patterns through routine & disruption
- Symptom Alleviation – Help manage and reduce symptoms of PTSD and other conditions

“You know, a dog can snap you out of any kind of bad mood that you’re in faster than you can think of” – Jill Abramson, PlayBarkRun

THErapy DOGS – COMMUNITY BASED

- Trained for structured interactions
- Serve people other than their owners (also known as handlers)
- Role is to complement traditional modes of treatment or therapy through comforting, supportive, calming and engaging interactions
- No public access granted outside of scheduled visits or by invite
- Typically, all volunteer work

THERAPY DOGS – INTERACTIONS

- Law enforcement  Court systems 
- Schools  Reading Programs  Dog Bite Preventions
- Hospitals  Clinics  Hospice  Nursing Homes
- Colleges & Universities  Exam Week De-stress
- Libraries  Special Events  Reading Programs
- Community Events

“Petting, scratching, and cuddling a dog could be as soothing to the mind and heart as deep meditation and almost as good for the soul as prayer” – Daily Paws

THERAPEUTIC MECHANISMS

WHY ANIMAL INTERACTION HELPS



WHY ANIMAL INTERACTION MATTERS

PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFITS

- **Reduced Cortisol**
 - Lowers stress hormone levels
 - Supports emotional regulation
 - Improves cognitive clarity
- **Increased Oxytocin**
 - Reduces fear response
 - Supports connections
- **Parasympathetic Activation**
 - Promotes calm
 - Supports connection

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

- **Attachment**
 - Non-judgmental presence
 - Predictable interactions
- **Behavior Activation**
 - Encourages movement
 - Supports motivation
- **Social Facilitation**
 - Reduces isolation
 - Eases social anxiety
 - Encourages participation



CLIENT OUTCOMES



CLIENT OUTCOMES

MATCHING SUPPORT TO CLIENTS NEEDS

Which support is best?

- **PTSD & Trauma**
 - Service dogs: help veteran's cope and function; Provide independence
 - Therapy dogs; help provide grounding and emotional regulation
- **Anxiety & Depression**
 - ESA: Companionship
 - Therapy dogs: Reduce anxiety; provide calm environment
- **Autism Spectrum**
 - Service dogs: sensory regulation; Alerts to parents
 - ESA: Comfort
 - Therapy dogs: Social skills support



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the client's primary goal?
2. Task-based or presence-based support?
3. Can the client care for an animal?
4. Housing or financials constraints?
5. Family dynamics?

THERAPY DOGS



“THE BEST THERAPIST HAS FUR AND FOUR LEGS”

Therapy dogs offer silent, devoted companionship, serving as emotional anchors that heal through unconditional love and presence. As the saying goes, “The best therapist has fur and four legs.”, acting as a bridge to comfort , reducing anxiety, and reminding us that we are never truly alone in our struggles.

-Warrior Canine Connection

ALLIANCE OF THERAPY DOGS

- Registry of certified therapy dog teams
- Provides testing, certification, registration, support and insurance for members who volunteer with their dogs in animal-assisted activities
- Powered by volunteers – Tester/Observers, Board Members, and teams all donate their time

ATD IMPACT

- 311,890 LOGGED VISITS
- 19,451 MEMBERS
- 18,437 REGISTERED HANDLERS
- 171 JUNIOR HANDLERS
- 711 TESTER/OBSERVERS
- 3.7 MILLION INTERACTIONS WITH COMMUNITIES IN 2024

WWW.THERAPYDOGS.COM



TESTING PROCESS

- The hands-on testing process focuses on your bond with your dog and ensures they have the right temperament for therapy work. After the Handling Assessment, a Tester/Observer will do 3-4 supervised Observations – including 2 to medical facilities – offering guidance and support before recommending a team for certification,
- Must complete a background check
- All dogs must have a health verification form completed by their vet showing current rabies vaccination, a clear fecal test and certifying the dog is in good health.
- Testing includes: walking on leash, neutral dog interaction, contact with individuals in walkers, wheelchairs, unsteady gait, rushing by, waiting patiently at the handler side, touching of the dog's paws, tail, and ears, general temperament review, and are they having fun?
- Once a team has received certification, they are covered by insurance with ATD in case anything should occur on a visit.

LET'S PARTNER TOGETHER

Caring Therapy Canines

- www.caringtherapycanines.com
- Email: info@caringtherapycanines.COM



THANK YOU

