

What Is Happy Tails?

Happy Tails Pet Therapy, Inc. is a non-profit, pet-facilitated therapy organization that was founded by Carla Courtney, D.V.M, an Atlanta-area veterinarian.



Happy Tails volunteers spread sunshine at Meadowbrook Manor, Lanier.

The organization's mission is to provide professional and experienced pet-facilitated activity to children's hospitals, nursing and

personal care homes, senior day centers, special learning centers, rehabilitation facilities, youth development centers and psychiatric hospitals.

Because animals are nonjudgmental, accepting and attentive, the service Happy Tails provides has been proven to be medically beneficial to those with physical or mental illnesses. In fact, studies have shown that the healing power of animals is directly related to higher survival rates for patients who come in contact with pets in an organized therapy program.

Membership In Happy Tails

Happy Tails has grown by leaps and bounds since its inception, with a current membership of more than 70 human volunteers and a larger menagerie of pet volunteers. Membership in Happy Tails is open to anyone with a dog, cat, rabbit or bird, providing that both the owner and animal meet established qualifications. While some facilities Happy Tails serves may limit pet visitors to certain sizes or breeds, the association itself allows any size or breed of dog or cat to join.

Prospective members must complete the application process, which involves submitting forms with background information and a written certification of the pet's good health from a veterinarian,



Residents at the Lorenzo Benn facility for youth enjoy a visit from their Happy Tails friends.

and attending the new volunteer orientation. Each dog must pass the "Canine Good Citizen Test," and all pets must pass a temperament test, administered by Happy Tails' training staff. These procedures ensure that Happy Tails volunteers and pets are properly trained for visiting facilities.



Happy Tails client Lekotek of Georgia is a special learning center.

How Happy Tails Works

Happy Tails works diligently to properly match humans and animals with a particular therapy situation. Therefore, a wide variety of facilities and schedules are available from which members can choose. The group is divided into teams of members and their pets that visit more than 20 facilities around the Atlanta area.

Before visiting a facility on a regular basis, the Marketing Coordinator completes a profile of the facility, and helps design a program that is applicable to that particular place. In addition, special training is provided to teams that will visit facilities that have special needs.

Human volunteers receive continuous education on a wide range of related topics, such as therapy applications and techniques, animal behavior and human illnesses. Most of this education is provided at Happy Tails regular meetings, which take place every other month.

Some of the therapy activities in which Happy Tails members (both human and animal) take part include: exercising and playing with the animals, petting and grooming, physical rehabilitation, relationship building, and bonding.

Who do I contact?

If you're interested in joining Happy Tails, wish to learn more about having a volunteer team visit your facility, or would like to pledge a tax-free donation, please call (404) 740-8211.



A resident of the Weinstein Center for Adult Day Services enjoys an outing with Happy Tails friends.

Mission statement

The mission of Happy Tails Pet Therapy, Inc. is to perform the most effective volunteer pet assisted activity/therapy services possible at care facilities in the Atlanta and surrounding areas. Our goal is to provide services that enhance the physical and psychological well-being of client patients and to provide improvement in communication and cooperation of the patients with the staff, family and fellow patients. More important, Happy Tails' therapy programs provide smiles to lonely or depressed patients. Therapy visits from Happy Tails' special pets ease the pain of patients who miss their home, their freedom, their family, or perhaps a personal pet they left behind.



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Special Pets For Special People