

**VA****U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

# **News Release**

Office of Public Affairs  
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Nov. 7, 2019

## **VA and Pet Partners combine efforts to bring therapy animal services to more Veterans**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) partnered with non-profit organization [Pet Partners](#) in October to help improve quality of life, social engagement and health of Veterans, by increasing access to animal-assisted activities (AAA) and animal-assisted therapy (AAT) services throughout the VA health care system.

Pet Partners and VA will train therapy animal teams, encourage VA medical facilities to establish and expand trained therapy animal visitation, and provide AAA and AAT programs to give patients connection, comfort and joy that comes from spending time with animals.

“Emerging research recognizes the positive effects interactions with animals can have on patients,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA’s work with Pet Partners provides unique resources to our Veterans, through animal-assisted activities and therapy.”

The partnership also provides Veteran communities with volunteer opportunities and helps integrate Veterans and their families into Pet Partners’ activities and events.

A wide range of [research](#) and [studies](#) suggest the human-animal bond can lead to lower blood pressure, reduced risk for cardiovascular disease, lessened anxiety, pain and loneliness. Time with therapy animals not only promotes physical and mental health but also supports wellness across variables such as social interaction, rate of recovery and personal motivation.

For more information, visit [health partnerships](#).

###