

Living Healthier  
**together**  
Anne Arundel Medical Center

(<http://living.aahs.org/>)

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## THERAPY DOGS BRING SMILES AND COMFORT TO PATIENTS AND FAMILIES



**D**ogs really are man's best friend. That's why you shouldn't be surprised if you see some walking the halls of our hospital and visiting patients in their rooms. At AAMC, we harness the healing power of pets with more than 25 volunteer pet therapy teams. Each team is

made up of a volunteer from the community who owns a pre-trained and certified dog.

Therapy dogs can help put people at ease both emotionally(<http://www.aahs.org/living/?p=54691>) and physically. Their visits often create a happier, calmer atmosphere not only for patients, but for family and friends as well.

Katherine Tighe and her dog, Suzie, along with fellow volunteer George Benoit and his dog, Kallie, have provided pet therapy at AAMC since 2015. They make frequent stops to the emergency room, as well as the pediatric, cancer(<http://www.aahs.org/living/?p=39121>), joint replacement(<http://www.aahs.org/living/?p=37151>) and elderly care units.

“My dad was in and out of hospitals and rehab centers for years before he died,” says Katherine, an animal-assisted therapist and social worker. “He was growing more and more depressed and unhappy.”

Then she remembers one day she came to visit him in the rehab facility, and something was different. “There was this black lab there who had stolen my father’s slipper. He was going up and down the halls trying to get back his slipper,” she says. “My dad enjoyed it so much, and it made me happy to see him have a spark again.”

Adds George, “One time we walked up to a woman who was waiting for a loved one in surgery.” She started petting Kallie and immediately began crying. “Somehow the dogs give people an emotional release.”

“We’ll go in a room where a child is afraid and screaming in pain, and he will see the dog and calm down immediately,” Katherine says. “The whole demeanor changes, and it’s beautiful.”

Dogs must go through basic obedience training and pass a canine good citizen test. The team receives an extra level of training that focuses on managing difficult situations and evaluating the dog’s temperament. We partner with five organizations to certify pet therapy teams: Caring Canines, Pets on Wheels, PAWS-AAC, Fidos for Freedom and Pet Therapy International.

**+** For information about our pet therapy team, or to learn how your dog can become certified to visit patients, call 443-481-5056.

