

Therapy Dogs Incorporated was founded in 1990 by Jack and Ann Butrick of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Since then we have grown into an organization of more than 15,000 handler/dog teams with members in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Territories. In 2015 Therapy Dogs Incorporated became Alliance of Therapy Dogs. It is a goal of Alliance of Therapy Dogs to provide registration, support and insurance for members who volunteer in pet therapy activities.



Pat Coglianese, President 2016
GSD Jessie and GR Tia

What is the definition of animal assisted activities?

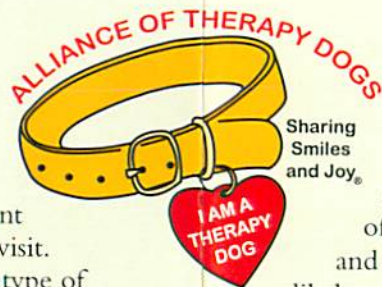
ATD volunteers take their dogs to visit schools, hospitals, nursing homes, libraries, airports and any facilities where interaction(s) with dogs would benefit people. During these visits, people are invited to pet and stroke the dog. Some might wish to brush the dog or just look at the dog. If the dog is small enough, with permission, people can hold them in their laps or the dog can be carefully placed on the bed. Some dogs will do simple tricks or obedience routines to entertain and to help people take their minds off their problems. These activities, including walking alongside the dog and owner and throwing toys for fetching games provide “therapeutic contact.”

How do I become involved?

To find out if you think you might enjoy participating in pet therapy, you are welcome to visit our website at www.therapydogs.com for more information, or you may contact a current member of ATD and follow along on a visit. You may decide that you won't like this type of volunteer work, as it can be emotionally difficult but rewarding at the same time. If you think you and your dog will enjoy it, discuss it with the member, check the website or call the corporate office to find a Tester/Observer (T/O) in your area to begin the testing process. The T/O will test your dog's basic good manners with strangers and with other dogs. This is done by gently handling your dog's body, especially the ears, face, feet and tail; walking on a loose leash with your dogs at your side; and walking near another dog. Once that test is completed, you will make a minimum of 3 visits to a facility with a Tester/Observer. There is no charge for any of the testing process as we are all volunteers, too. Finally, you send in your paperwork and fees to the ATD office. Upon review and acceptance of your application, you will be sent a red heart ID tag for your dog's collar and a membership card that will identify you as a registered member of Alliance of Therapy Dogs.

Why should I register my dog with Alliance of Therapy Dogs?

Registration proves to the administration of the facility that you and your dog have been tested and are covered by ATD's liability insurance. This insurance covers the people you visit in the event of injury or illness resulting from contact with your dog. The insurance does not cover you or your dog from injury or illness as a result of your participation in this program. Another benefit of this insurance policy is that coverage is primary and does not wait for response from another carrier, such as your homeowner's policy. Only registered ATD volunteers are covered by this policy. As a result, our insurance does not cover members who use their dogs in their workplace while being paid.



Which breed makes the best therapy dog?

There is no perfect breed or mix of breeds for pet therapy work. As long as the dog is at least one year of age, is healthy and well-mannered, and enjoys human contact, he or she will likely make a good therapy dog. Knowing tricks is not a requirement, but many members have taught their dogs special tricks such as “shake hands” or “wave” as a conversation starter and to make people smile. Obedience routines can serve the same purpose, while conformation dogs often excel at standing still for petting or brushing. Each dog/handler team is unique and offers wonderful opportunities for therapeutic contact. Only canines may be registered with our organization and no aggression towards other dogs or humans will be tolerated. Wolves and wolf hybrids, coyotes and coyote hybrids will not be considered for membership in Alliance of Therapy Dogs due to that fact we cannot verify their immunity against rabies.

What is a typical visit like?

In some facilities, the dogs and owners walk from room to room and spend a few minutes visiting with the resident. Other times the activities director will gather several residents in one area to pet the dog or dogs. Some handler/dog teams will perform a little show, involving tricks or skits or obedience routines. Occasionally, you will be rewarded for your commitment and dedication by positive reactions from residents who otherwise had been unresponsive to outside stimuli. Members have reported people waking from comas and speaking for the first time when they become aware of the dog. These instances are very rare and most volunteers are satisfied simply by knowing that people have briefly forgotten their problems while interacting with the dogs.

Sharing Smiles and Joy

Do the dogs ever wear costumes?

Wearing costumes, vests, or hats is not required, but if the dog is comfortable, it is perfectly acceptable to wear fancy outfits for special holidays or just for fun.

Do I need to commit a specific amount of time weekly or monthly?

Alliance of Therapy Dogs requires that you make at least 4 visits a year. Most visits last an hour or less, but how often you visit, or where you visit, is completely up to you. You may become involved with a group that goes to different places, or you may want to go on your own. You will need prior permission from facilities, usually going through activities directors or administrators, before entering any facility, especially hospitals where the criteria for visitation is very stringent. Many facilities even welcome drop-in visits, as long as mealtimes are avoided.

I still have questions about Alliance of Therapy Dogs. Who should I ask?

Please call the toll-free number at 1-877-843-7364 at our Cheyenne office or write to Alliance of Therapy Dogs at P.O. Box 20227, Cheyenne, WY 82003. You may also fax information or questions to 1-307-638-2079. Visit our web site at www.therapydogs.com or send emails to office@therapydogs.com.

*Thank you for inquiring about
ALLIANCE OF THERAPY DOGS!*

Proud Winner, Planet Dog Foundation,
Spring 2010 Grant Cycle

Alliance of Therapy Dogs

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