

# The Power of a Pup

Furry, four-legged friends visit kids and the elderly, and the results are pretty special



K-9 volunteer Snowball is ready to help.

Dog lovers know that their pets offer companionship, stress relief and plenty of smiles. Those who have a therapy dog share those benefits and much more with people in the community. The Good Dog Foundation and its human and canine volunteers are helping patients to heal at Greenwich Hospital and Nathaniel Witherell, and also giving kids a leg up on reading at local elementary schools. “Dogs give unconditional love and support. They are so attuned to us,” says Rachel McPherson, executive director and founder of the Good Dog Foundation based in New York. Rachel was previously a documentary filmmaker and started the foundation seventeen years ago when

she discovered that it was illegal for dogs to enter major hospitals. She lobbied to get the law changed, and today her group’s expertly trained dogs are making a difference in the lives of everyone from cancer patients to autistic children to trauma survivors at 350 facilities in Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts.

The Good Dog dogs were recently part of a clinical study at Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital, which followed patients

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—SANDRA LYNNE HILL, VOLUNTEER

undergoing chemotherapy for head and neck cancers; when paired with a dog, the patients were more likely to complete the intense, difficult treatment and their emotional well-being increased.

The dogs also help to ease anxiety in children who are learning. “When dogs work with kids, the kids’ reading levels improve,” says Rachel. Volunteers have witnessed the progress firsthand. Twice a month Sandra Lynne Hill brings her border collie, Angus, to Riverside School so that children can read to him. “The most rewarding thing about working with the children is seeing their progress,” Sandra says. “Initially, some of the kids are a little hesitant to touch or sit close to Angus. Within a couple of weeks, they are petting him and he’s putting his head on their lap. They are so comfortable reading with us.”

Think your pet has what it takes to help? Visit [thegooddogfoundation.com](http://thegooddogfoundation.com) for screening and training information.

—Mary Kate Hogan



An attentive dog audience helps build confidence in kids.