



There's No Place Like Home for Seniors' "Best Friends" Thanks to Sunnyside Community Services and Amie's Place Foundation.

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The social and emotional benefits of owning a pet are well documented. Pets provide social support, especially to elderly owners, and their company lowers seniors' risk of depression that can stem from social isolation. Studies have shown that regular positive interactions with an animal can lead to a significant decrease in agitated behavior among individuals suffering from dementia.

However, family caregivers can sometimes find themselves overwhelmed with the responsibilities of caring for a family pet in addition to their loved one with dementia or other illness. Homebound seniors may have mobility issues that prevent them from properly caring for their pet. Despite the love, emotional bonds, companionship and many therapeutic benefits that pets provide, there may be no other option for some seniors than to give up their beloved companion.

Homebound seniors and caregivers facing such difficult and heartbreaking decisions are getting a reprieve, thanks to a grant from Amie's Place Foundation and Sunnyside Community Services (SCS). SCS is introducing "Pet Pals" a new program for homebound seniors and family caregivers that will match them with volunteers who will provide assistance with pet care. A Pet Pals volunteer might walk the dog, for example, or purchase pet food, empty a litter box, or take the pet to a vet appointment." Volunteers also provide companionship to the senior. In addition, in

the event that a client enters the hospital for a short-term stay, SCS will provide volunteers to foster the pet.

Pet and people-loving volunteers for this new project are being sought. “Volunteers will receive supportive training and should be able to commit to a regular schedule,” said Judy Zangwill, Executive Director of Sunnyside Community Services. “Just a little time and kindness can improve the quality of life for homebound seniors and family caregivers, and keep people and their animal companions together where they belong.”

To volunteer or for more information on the Sunnyside Community Services Pet Pals program, call (718) 784-6173, ext. 479.

About Sunnyside Community Services

Sunnyside Community Services offers a range of life-enhancing programs that include pre-kindergarten and after-school programs for children; college prep and career programs for teens and young adults; a lively center for active older adults that offers hot meals and a variety of education and fitness options; caring and dedicated home care services; respite and resources for family caregivers; a social adult day program for people with memory loss and other cognitive disorders, and more. Sunnyside Community Services is located at 43-31 39th Street. For more information call (718) 784-6173 or visit www.scsny.org.

About Amie’s Place Foundation

It all began in 1982 in Long Beach, Long Island, with the exceptional work of Lewis Gelfand, DVM who provides pet care treatment and assistance for people too ill to care for their pets. Based on Dr. Gelfand’s work, Amie’s Place Foundation was established in New York City to fund organizations providing programs for people who need assistance caring for their pets, risk losing them during times of crisis, or face barriers limiting access to their pets when they most need each other. In light of the profound healing effect that pets have on individuals who are encountering a difficult, sometimes life-changing event, the Foundation works to provide

necessary pet-care assistance and to promote public awareness of the unique relationship a beloved pet and its human companion share. Grants have funded the first Senior Center and hospital-based programs at The Caring Community/1998 and St. Vincent's Hospital/2003 in Greenwich Village, New York City. Amie's Place Foundation has funded programs that include Beth Israel Hospital, FACES (Finding a Cure for Epilepsy and Seizures) at NYU Langone Medical Center, JASA, Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, MedicAlert Foundation International, PAWS NY, Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine, Schervier Nursing Care Center, Search and Care, and Sunnyside Community Services. The Foundation encourages national replication of programs that help prevent the unnecessary forced separation of people from their pets simply because no one is there to help them. www.amiesplacefoundation.org.