



## **Sunnyside Community Services Partnership With Amie's Place Foundation Helps Keep Homebound Seniors and their Animal Companions Together For A Second Year**

February 2015, Sunnyside, New York

Sunnyside Community Services (SCS) is thrilled to announce that it has been awarded a Renewal Grant in the amount of \$17,500 for a total of \$35,000 since 2014 from Amie's Place Foundation, who funds organizations dedicated to keeping families and pets together.

Thanks to Amie's Place Foundation, Sunnyside Community Services introduced Pet Pals, an innovative program to benefit homebound seniors and family caregivers by matching them with volunteers to help care for their animal companions. Since 2014, SCS' dedicated Pet Pal volunteers provided almost 500 hours of pet-care assistance visits to homebound seniors, making it possible for them to fully enjoy their pets and the company of their new friends. With this second grant, Sunnyside Community Services can expand the Pet Pals Program to meet the growing need and continue providing comprehensive, quality-of-life services for seniors and their pets.

The social and therapeutic benefits animal companions provide are undeniable. For seniors, especially those with limited mobility, a pet's companionship lowers risk of depression and isolation, and it can lead to a significant decrease in agitated behavior among individuals with dementia. But homebound seniors and family caregivers often find themselves overwhelmed and unable to provide necessary care for an animal companion, forcing them to give up their pet. With Amie's Place Foundation support, Pet Pals provide essential services to homebound seniors, such as walk the dog, purchase pet food, empty a litter box, or take their pet to and from a veterinarian appointment, to help ensure that seniors and their animal companions can safely stay together for as long as possible. Pet Pals also provide companionship, and in the event that the senior enters the hospital for a short-term stay, provide peace of mind by fostering their pet.

In addition to the immediate assistance and emotional benefit that people and their pets enjoy when engaged with Pet Pals, there are richer rewards as well. "Thanks to the Amie's Place Foundation, we are pleased to offer Pet Pals as a natural extension of Sunnyside Community Service's holistic approach that promotes healthy aging as part of its continuum of care," said Judy Zangwill, executive director at Sunnyside Community Services, a multi-service, non-profit organization that provides services for more than 14,000 individuals of all ages each year. "Our Pet Pals program offers more than companionship and convenience – it is a lifeline of hope to individuals whose lives it touches by providing a critical conduit to reach isolated members of the community and introduce them to programs and essential services that they may need to continue living independently, such as Meals on Wheels, benefit enrollment, case management, or home care assistance."

For more information on the Pet Pals program at Sunnyside Community Services, call 718 784-6173 ext. 479, or email [info@scsny.org](mailto:info@scsny.org).

#### About Sunnyside Community Services

Sunnyside Community Services (SCS) is a multi-service, non-profit organization that provides services for more than 14,000 individuals of all ages each year. SCS' programs for active older adults includes the SCS Center for Active Older Adults, mental health counseling, a social adult day program for seniors with cognitive impairment, family caregiver support, benefits counseling, and case management. SCS' compassionate home care services enable seniors to remain living independently in their homes for as long as possible, and Friendly Visiting and Pet Pals services break the barriers of social isolation among the homebound by providing companionship to people and their pets. SCS range of services for youth and families include pre-kindergarten and after-school programs, a Beacon Community Center, SONYC programs for middle-school students, college prep and career readiness programs, and more. Sunnyside Community Services is located at 43-31 39th Street, in Sunnyside, New York, 11104. Tel: 718 784-6173 | For more information, please visit [www.scsny.org](http://www.scsny.org) or [www.facebook.com/SunnysideCommunityServices](https://www.facebook.com/SunnysideCommunityServices).

#### 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 Medical Center, FACES (Finding a Cure for Epilepsy and Seizures) at NYU Langone Medical Center, Hospice Savannah, JASA, Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, MedicAlert Foundation International, PAWS NY, Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine--Center of the Human-Animal Bond, RedRover Domestic Violence Safe Housing Program, 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](http://www.amiesplacefoundation.org).