

Grace Andersen

Pet Visitation Program

of the Baptist Medical Center Auxiliary

Jacksonville, Florida

At Baptist Medical Center, we see the Pet Visitation Program as a part of the hospital's overall clinical approach to the treatment of patients. The positive impact of interacting with an animal, like a dog, raises the emotional level of the patient and that enhances their physical recovery.



Our P.A.W.S. teams bring joy, comfort and healing to Baptist Medical Center patients, family members and staff.

At Baptist Medical Center, patients are offered a special kind of treatment that doesn't involve needles or medicine. It's the healing power of animal-assisted interactions, more commonly known as pet therapy. Our P.A.W.S. (Patient and Wellness Services) teams are composed of trained volunteers and their dogs who share their unconditional love, providing a therapeutic value beyond what our hospital team can. And the dogs' presence is a welcome respite not only to the patients and their families but to the hospital staff as well.

The program was named for Grace Andersen, a dog lover, in gratitude for her generous donation to the hospital's foundation to start a pet visitation program.

P.A.W.S. Dog Requirements

To be considered for the program, the dog must:

- Be a minimum of one year of age.
- Be spayed or neutered.
- Have passed the AKC Canine Good Citizen exam

- Maintain current registration with either the Alliance of Therapy Dogs or Pet Partners.
- Pass the P.A.W.S. veterinarian health and temperament/behavior screening (no charge to owner).
- Have a negative fecal test performed by Baptist Hospital's lab (no charge to owner).
- Successfully complete the initial training visits.

Note: Unfortunately, dogs that are fed a "raw protein" diet are ineligible to participate in the P.A.W.S. program. Raw food diets present an increased risk of pathologic bacterial and protozoal shedding and infection that can compromise the health of our patients.

If the dog is approved to become part of the P.A.W.S. program, the owner must provide documentation of the dog's annual physical examination by a licensed veterinarian and is required to have current vaccinations and rabies boosters. Annually, a fecal sample must be tested by Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville's laboratory, at no cost to the owner.



P.A.W.S. Owner Requirements

To be considered for the P.A.W.S. program, the dog's owner must:

- Be an employee of Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville or join the Baptist Medical Center Auxiliary and abide by the policies, requirements and guidelines, including attending the new volunteer orientation, wearing the approved Auxiliary uniform and ID badge and attending the annual Auxiliary training.
- Commit to two pet visits each month for a maximum of two hours each. Weekday visits only are permitted until the team has made a minimum of 25 visits or unless approved by the P.A.W.S. Chairperson and Director of Volunteer Services. After 25 visits or if approval is granted, the team may make evening and/or weekend visits.
- Assume a designated administrative duty to support the P.A.W.S. program.



- For admission into the Auxiliary, human volunteers must have a background check and prove their immunity to mumps, measles, rubella and chickenpox. Volunteers must receive an annual tuberculosis (TB) skin test and seasonal flu vaccination, both provided at no cost to volunteers.

Potential new members of P.A.W.S. will receive training in hospital protocols from an experienced team to ensure they are properly prepared to assume their new responsibilities.



Benefits of being an active member of the Baptist Auxiliary:

- Free meal on service work day (\$7.50 maximum).
- National Volunteer Week recognition.
- Free annual TB skin test (MANDATORY).
- Free annual flu vaccination (MANDATORY).
- Spring and fall volunteer luncheons.
- Annual holiday brunch.

Additional benefits may become available based on service day/service hour levels, including discount tickets to Florida attractions, hospital blood bank membership, a discount on inpatient/outpatient hospital services after insurance payments, and more!

For more information or to apply to become part of this rewarding volunteer service, contact the Auxiliary office at 904.202.8008.

