



JNH

Jaquith Nursing Home

HAPPENINGS

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JAQUITH RESIDENTS MAKING A NEW FRIEND THROUGH PET THERAPY

Jaquith Nursing Home residents have been getting to know a new friend who's been spreading a lot of joy over the past several months.

Hershey, a two-year-old chocolate lab, has been visiting the nursing home as a therapy dog thanks to her owner, Mississippi State Hospital employee Melita Breeden. Hershey has been visiting JNH residents since she became certified through Therapy Dogs International earlier this year, letting them pet her, play with her, and sharing her unconditional affection with everyone she meets.

"It really brightens their day," Breeden said about bringing Hershey out for visits. "And it brightens your day too, because you see them enjoying it, and you know the dog is enjoying it too. It brings out a lot of reminiscing, and people remember really good times they spent with the pets they've had in their life."

In fact, pet therapy can do a lot more than just remind people of the animals they've loved over the years; it has been proven to combat loneliness, reduce anxiety, lower blood pressure, and give people something to look forward to.

Not only has Breeden seen those things happen with hers and Hershey's visits, but they're part of the reason she decided to get Hershey certified in the first place. She had seen other pet therapy dogs visit patients at Mississippi State Hospital and noticed the remarkable change it could bring about.

"You could just see those individuals who were withdrawn, and then when it was time for pet therapy, it's all big smiles and eyes wide open," she said. "Seeing it firsthand made me start thinking about it a little bit more."

It's safe to say that Melita is a dog person. Hershey was part of a litter of 11 puppies, and Melita and her husband decided to keep seven of them. Hershey happened to be one of the two chocolate labs in the litter. Melita had said she always wanted to have a female chocolate lab to train as a pet therapy dog, so she finally had a chance.

Hershey, for her part, seems to have the perfect demeanor for it. Laid back, friendly, and happy, she makes it easy for anyone to approach her.

First though, she had to get certified. With her natural disposition, it didn't turn out to be too difficult for Hershey. She passed the American Kennel Club Good Citizen Test, a pre-requisite for Therapy Dog International, and then basic obedience courses were no problem for her.

It's almost surprising, actually, since labs are sometimes known as be-



ing hyper dogs. Hershey, though, has always stayed calm, no matter what the situation.

"Even when we first get started with visits, and people are all around her and excited to see her, she's still as calm as can be," Melita said.

On one recent visit, Melita and Hershey went to visit an old friend, Dora Sudbeck, a resident on Madison Inn. After greeting Dora, Hershey was happy to just lay down on the floor right at Dora's feet.

"I just love Melita to bring her out here and let me play with her some. She has a lot of fans out here," Dora said.

She's one of the residents who does a lot of reminiscing when Hershey visits. Another dog person, she used to have a lab that was part of her family for 19 years. She noted that Hershey is a particularly well-behaved lab, who always minds and is more than pleased to just let people rub on her and pet her.

"I think all the other ladies down here really love her too. When Melita is out on the porch and has her out there, they always come to see you, don't they darling?" she said, showing Hershey some love and petted her head.

She also said she's read about how pet therapy can lower blood pressure and have other benefits.

Melita said Ms. Sudbeck isn't the only resident who has been happy to see Hershey. Residents and staff alike couldn't help but come over and spend a few minutes petting her as they walked down the sidewalk on

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one recent visit. Pet therapy, it turns out, doesn't just benefit patients and residents, but employees can enjoy the benefits when they see the changes in others around them.

Residents often ask when Melita will be bringing Hershey back out, usually asking for her by name, but there is one resident who refers to her as "my baby." Unfortunately, Hershey's visits have to be done on a strictly volunteer basis, which means she only gets to come out when Melita has a day off on a weekend or other holiday.

Still, Melita brings her to visit about once a month, and she's hoping to come out more frequently and have it become a more regular part of her schedule.

There are plenty of people who would probably appreciate it.

"I do miss it," Dora Sudbeck said. "I really am appreciative of Melita bringing Hershey up here. I'd really love to have another one. I'd love to have my room full of them."

For information about volunteering at Mississippi State Hospital and Jaquith Nursing Home, please call 601-351-8018. For more information about Therapy Dog International, please visit www.tdi-dog.org or email tdi@gti.net.



THE REAL REASON FOR THE HOLIDAY BLUES

Many people have come to expect to feel a little less energetic, to want to sleep a little more, and to get a little down during the fall and winter seasons. The holiday blues, many people call this time, or maybe a winter depression.

Regardless of what it's commonly known by, this phenomenon has a very real cause and a very real name – Seasonal Affective Disorder. It can cause usually non-depressed individuals to experience depression symptoms and can cause mental health issues already present to become exacerbated.

"People complain about the symptoms, but they may not know the name for it and the biology of what's happening," said Dr. John Askew, Director of Psychological Services at Jaquith Nursing Home.

"It's related to the change in light levels, and the shortening of days as the seasons progress. Humanity has experienced this forever. It's a fairly old subject. It's an area of interest on the border between psychology and biology."

What happens, in a nutshell, is this: When the sun sets and light fades, the body releases the hormone melatonin, signaling that it's time to sleep. Less sunlight during the shorter winter days means melatonin is released earlier than many people are used to.

While the body may be signaling that it's ready to sleep, many people are still engrossed in their evening activities and putting off sleep. Their actual sleep cycle doesn't mesh with what the body is saying it needs, and it ends up causing the symptoms so many people recognize during the holiday season.

"What it will do is it may have some effect on their mood, and you'll find things like increased appetite," Askew said. "Everybody complains about gaining weight during the holidays, but it's not just the big holiday meals. If Christmas were at a different time of year, we'd still be packing on weight during winter."

It ends up affecting an estimated 6.1 percent of the U.S. population, while a full 14.3 percent experience a milder form known as Subsyndromal Seasonal Affective Disorder. Besides the effects on a person's mood, symptoms may include having trouble waking up, oversleeping, trouble concentrating, and a lack of energy.

"More exposure to natural sunlight helps, and so do more outdoor activities," Askew said.

That may be good for weekends, but for many who work during the week, the trouble is that they don't have a chance to do those things while the sun is still out. But it turns out there are ways that can help get around that time constraint and alleviate some of those SAD symptoms.

Light therapy using fluorescent lights that put out a brightness level of 10,000 lux and produce full-spectrum light can imitate the sun's rays and essentially trick the body into thinking the sun is out.

"It's not tanning you or anything like that, but you're exposing the photoreceptors in the eye to the particular brightness level and, very importantly, the color of light that matches natural sunlight," Askew said.

Someone could go as far as buying a light box specifically made for light therapy, or just go to Home Depot and buy the bulbs that will fit into their regular lamps and light fixtures. For the elderly, this can not only combat SAD, but have the added effect of improving visual perception that may have fallen over time.

Others may feel the symptoms more if they watch a lot of late night television or use their computers at night, both activities that have the person staring at a bright light. That fights off the

production of melatonin and can cause even more trouble falling asleep.

“The main thing to get across is that this is deeply-rooted in our biological make up. It affects everyone, even if it doesn’t have any negative effects,” Askew said.

“The symptoms will fade as the seasons change. A lot of people get really joyous in the switch back to daylight saving time.”

ANNUAL PUMPKIN CONTEST GETS JAQUITH RESIDENTS IN THE HALLOWEEN SPIRIT



Jaquith Nursing Home residents showed their Halloween spirit once again this year with the pumpkin decorating contest that has become a highlight of the fall season here.

Residents on all five inns that make up the nursing home showed their creativity on Wednesday, Oct. 27 by decorating not just their pumpkins, but having a whole theme they and JNH staff set up to impress the judges in one of four categories – most creative, most resident involvement, best presentation and best overall.

“I’m always impressed with the amount of involvement the residents put into these contests,” JNH Director Marc Lewis said. “Every year, residents put forth a great effort for what may seem like such a small thing to many of us. They clearly enjoy it, and we’re glad to see so many people enjoying themselves.”

Jaquith Inn won the award for most creative after judges found a table full of jack o’lanterns involved in a poker game. Jefferson Inn, Building 29, had the most resident involvement, with their pumpkin serving as the cowardly lion in the building’s “Wizard of Oz” theme. Building 33, also Jefferson Inn, received the best presentation award for their brightly-colored ladybug pumpkin. Finally, Adams Inn won the best overall award for the festive party they threw.

While not everyone was able to win an award, the judges were impressed by all of the work the residents put in on each and every building. Residents on Building 28 used their pumpkin to set up a scarecrow outside the door – but their scarecrow looked more like a hippie adorned with peace symbols and spiders. Building 34 skipped Halloween entirely and went straight to Thanksgiving, making a turkey out of their pumpkin. Somehow, Building 34’s pumpkin ended up looking like Donald Trump and sitting next to a pile of Monopoly cash. Building 41’s pumpkin wore a sombrero and sported a western theme.

Some of the residents went the spooky route. Building 48 had a pumpkin that ended up looking like someone who’d been squashed by a giant rock, with the pumpkin head on one side and some stuffed jeans poking out of the other. Building 78 decorated theirs into a giant black bat, complete with wings and fangs.

The pumpkins for this year’s event were donated by the North Delta Produce Growers Association, who reached out to Mississippi State Hospital and Jaquith Nursing Home through its work with Alcorn State University.

“Any time we can, we try to stay involved in the community,” said Charles Houston, president of the organization. “That’s where we want our business to be – grow local, and allow citizens to buy local. We do want to run a successful business, but we want to be good friends to the community, too.”

The association uses any excess crops from the fields to donate to churches and other non-profit organizations who could use the food. This is the second year in a row they have donated to Jaquith Nursing Home. While residents didn’t them for pumpkin pies or any other cooking, the pumpkin carving contest has been an annual tradition that brings a lot of joy to the residents, who often surprise with their creativity and designs.

Elizabeth Myles, marketing specialist for Alcorn’s Mississippi Small Farm Development Center, said partnering with local organizations was good for everyone involved.

“I know all the residents enjoyed it last year, and it looked like so much fun,” Myles said. “It’s great to be involved and have

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partnerships like this.”

Lewis said that while it is a lot of fun, it means more than that to many of the Jaquith residents.

“It’s fun for us, but it is things like this that help our residents feel more at home,” Lewis said.



SEPTEMBER FAMILY COUNCIL FOCUSES ON SHATTER THE SILENCE AND SILVER ALERT

Thirty nine friends and family members of Jaquith Nursing Home residents attended the September Family Council meeting to visit their loved ones and members of JNH administration, as well as hear about some new initiatives within the Department of Mental Health.

Before hearing from the main speaker, Social Work Supervisor Rena Rideout informed attendees about the latest activities that have taken place on and off the Mississippi State Hospital campus. From July through September, Jaquith residents had fun with events like the annual Independence Day celebration, concerts, cookouts, and the Serendipity art show. They were also getting ready for events like the Mississippi State Fair and the hospital’s Fall Festival.

Kathy Van Cleave, Director of the Division of Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementia, also spoke about two new undertakings DMH, the Shatter the Silence elderly suicide prevention campaign and the Silver Alert System now being used to notify the public when a loved one who is believed to have dementia or other cognitive impairments is missing.

She said that while many people only associate suicide with younger people, individuals 65 and older have the highest rate of suicide, and it often goes hand in hand with Alzheimer’s Disease or dementia. Many caregivers can also experience stress or depression, even after placing their loved ones in a care facility.

“We have the opportunity now to raise awareness and bring those conversations to the forefront,” she said. “We can recognize that it’s ok to admit you have a problem, no matter where you call in

the age spectrum. Seeking help is not just for those in the 18-24 age group.”

She encouraged caregivers who may be experiencing stress or other problems to talk to someone, whether it’s a friend, pastor, or professional. She also shared many warning signs of suicide, such as increased prescription use, a sudden rush to complete a will, or a drastic change in eating or sleeping habits.

In addition, Van Cleave introduced the Silver Alert System, which is designed to spread the news when an elderly person who may have cognitive impairments has been reported missing.

“This is a collaborative effort between several agencies who will all worked together to draft legislation and enact the Silver Alert. Just like with Amber Alerts for children, there’s a whole network of media outlets that work together,” she said.

There are preventative measures caregivers can take, like making sure their loved one gets exercise to reduce anxiety and restlessness, and reassuring them if they feel lost or disoriented. It is important not to leave a person with dementia unsupervised in new surroundings, she said.

If the worst case scenario does happen, the Silver Alert System will prove to be a valuable tool.

“This gives us access to that media network and the inter-agency network that crosses jurisdiction between counties and municipalities, so that if a vulnerable adult is reported missing, we can all work together to find them,” Van Cleave said.