



You Have A Visitor: Observations on Pet Visitation and Therapy

Renee Lamm Esordi, Alan M. Beck

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Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) has become an accepted form of augmenting the healing processes that occur within the walls of healthcare facilities. The same joy and comfort animals provide at home can also benefit the eager patient or resident who awaits a visit from a volunteer and their pet.

Photographer Renee Lamm Esordi accompanied volunteers and their pets on visits to hospitals, nursing homes, a school for special needs children, a psychiatric program, and a youth camp for troubled teens. Candid interviews with health practitioners, staff, and volunteers describe the challenges and rewards of AAT in their own words. She witnessed and recorded the joyous responses of patients and residents who look forward to the companionship and conversation the visits provide. She also accompanied a volunteer on another type of visit: delivering pet food and supplies on behalf of an organization whose mission is to keep those living with HIV and AIDS from having to choose between taking care of themselves or taking care of their pet.

Her documentation of these interactions illustrate the pleasure people can derive from the simple presence of animals. These photographs tell a story not only of alternative methods of healing but also of compassion, unconditional love, and comfort that these visitors can bring.

CNN.com says Esordi "captured the beauty of this unique animal-human interaction", and *Animal Fair* magazine assures "one need only look at these snapshots to realize that a picture taken by Esordi is worth a thousand studies...her contribution to furthering public awareness is a valuable one."

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