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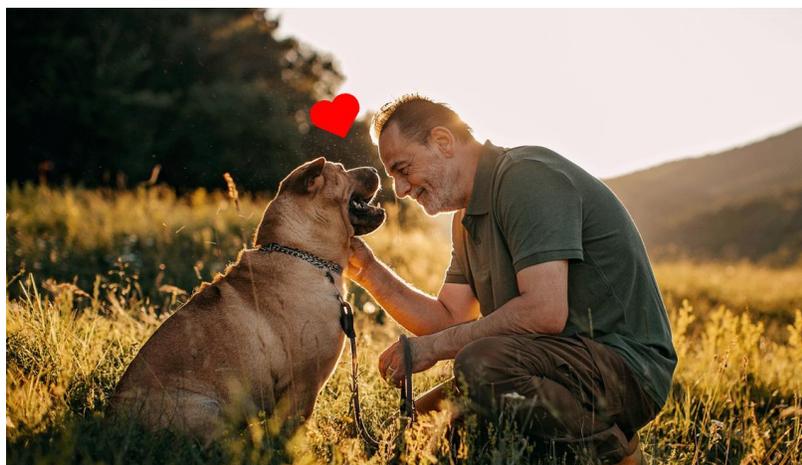
# The Healing Power of Pets: Humane Society Joins Forces with Hospital 'Humane'

Saving the lives of animals while also treating people

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By

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A humane society and hospital in Adrian, Michigan, have forged a remarkable partnership based on a shared belief in the healing power of [pets](#). The seeds of the joint venture were sown in 2017 when Marcie Cornell, CEO of [Lenawee Humane Society](#) (LHS), met with Dr. Julie Yaroch, president of [ProMedica Charles and Virginia Hickman Hospital](#) to discuss the hospital sponsoring the society's ball.

There was no money available for the sponsorship, but that conversation led to a far-reaching partnership.

ProMedica often boards pets at LHS while their owners receive care. LHS brings pets to the hospital campus to help staff decompress.

“There are many mental, emotional and physical benefits to owning a pet” Yaroch told AARP Experience Counts. “Research has shown that pets help people lower blood pressure, fight depression and combat social isolation.”

Cornell offered some real-life examples of these miracle workers on four legs. Leo, a mixed-breed support dog, helped a young man called Clay. [Leo was trained as](#) a diabetic-alert dog and for nine years he would rescue Clay by alerting him to his low blood sugar levels and preventing him from falling.

Bear was a five-year-old German shepherd/husky mix rescued from a hoarding home who helped a Navy veteran named McKenzie, who suffered from nightmares following a tour as SWAT team member in the South Pacific.

When they first met, Bear laid his head on McKenzie’s grandmother’s shoulder, silently convincing her to give him a chance. Bear’s residency was settled, and he and McKenzie began to heal one another.

McKenzie helped Bear overcome his fear of people. In return, whenever McKenzie’s nightmares wrested her from sleep, Bear was there to pull her out of her scary dreams. He would snuggle up close to McKenzie, and in those moments between dusk and dawn, they assured each other in silence: “I’ve got you, and you’ve got me.”

In 2003, Brian was recently divorced and severely depressed. Despite inpatient and outpatient mental health care, his depression remained. At LHS, he met a black and tan Rottweiler/Springer mix whom he named Frau.

Through Frau's daily presence and the compassionate gaze of her big brown eyes, Brian's depression finally lifted, and they remained best friends for 15 years until Frau's death.

The future is ripe with possibility. ProMedica has donated 10 acres of its campus for the humane society to begin building a new shelter, which will extend a collaboration that has already brought immense benefits to people suffering mental health challenges.

ProMedica is also exploring the possibility of a therapy dog coming to campus to help ER patients presenting with mental health concerns. An on-site doggy daycare is in LHS's Phase II plan for the shelter. "This land donation will hopefully help others to think outside of the box," Yaroch said.

Lenawee Humane Society's new mission statement is: "Saving the lives of animals while enriching the lives of humans."

***Share your experience: Has an animal helped you in a medical situation?***

*Keith Cornfield is a contributing writer based in Lenawee County, Michigan. He spent 40 combined years in the mental health and ministry fields, and wrote regularly for Lectionary Homiletics preaching journal.*