

# POTENTIAL THERAPY DOG CANDIDATES

**Remember, this is a team effort-you need to enjoy this as much as your dog**

Things to Ask Yourself:

- Do I enjoy visiting health care facilities, schools and/or retirement homes?
- Do I enjoy meeting strangers and can I be truly interested in making conversation with them?
- Am I comfortable interacting with people who may be confused, physically or mentally challenged, and/or terminally ill?

Temperament Suitability:

- Does my dog enjoy meeting new people?
- Is my dog able to tolerate rough handling from strangers calmly, without growling or snapping?
- Is my dog friendly with other dogs?
- Would my dog rather be with me than with other dogs?
- Is my dog well socialized with people of all ages and races, from young children to the very elderly?
- Will my dog calmly accept strangers touching him anywhere on his body?
- Is my dog able to remain calm when loud noises or angry yelling / shouting / screaming occur nearby?
- Your dog should:
  - Sit politely when a friendly stranger shakes your hand
  - Sit politely for petting by a friendly stranger
  - Walk politely on a loose leash—stop when you stop—turn promptly when you turn
  - Heel at your side with attention on you despite distractions going by such as people in wheelchairs, walkers, people jogging by, and loud noises nearby
  - Sit on Command
  - Down on Command

- Stay in place with you at least 10 feet away
  - Come promptly when called
  - Sit politely at your side when a friendly stranger with a dog comes up to shake your hand
- Your dog MUST have impeccable manners. He cannot jump up on people or pull while on leash. He must be able to remain calm when new people approach. He cannot be aggressive with other dogs.

#### Health Suitability:

- Your dog must be current on all core vaccinations. If you are vaccinating on a less frequent basis, you must have an authorization statement from your veterinarian.
- Your dog must have fecal tests done yearly to check for parasites
- Your dog must be tested for heartworm yearly, and must be on a heartworm preventative
- Your dog must be comfortable with regular bathing / grooming, nail clipping / filing and teeth brushing

#### Other Helpful Behaviors that Therapy Dogs should Know:

- Both verbal and hand signals for sit / down / stand / stay / come
- Sit-stay
- Stand-stay
- Down-Stay
- Remaining calm for whole-body hugs
- Greeting behaviors for meeting new people
- Up to chair on cue for visiting with clients in beds / wheelchairs
- "Gentle" cue for taking treats
- "Settle" in down-stay on mat or rug
- Sit-stay or stand-stay for crowded petting by many people at once
- Walking next to a patient using a wheelchair or walker