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**ST. ANDREW'S SENIOR SOLUTIONS GOES THE EXTRA MILE TO
HELP SENIORS KEEP THEIR PETS**

Recognizing the positive health benefits of pet ownership for seniors, organization is offering pet care assistance services

ST. LOUIS, MO., July 26, 2010 . . . Thanks to their pets, countless older adults are living longer, healthier and happier lives. And as health research continues to point to the positive health effects of pet ownership on the senior population, St. Andrew's Senior Solutions is helping to ensure that seniors get to continue enjoying the companionship of their four-legged friends by providing pet care assistance as part of its comprehensive list of services.

"In recent years, there has been much discussion regarding the positive effects of pet ownership on physical and mental health, especially when it comes to the older adult population," explained Ann Bannes, vice president of St. Andrew's Senior Solutions. "This fact has been demonstrated time and time again among the many seniors' lives we touch. We have numerous seniors who need our services for their 'special' friend – their pets that mean the world to them, but due to health concerns, these seniors have found themselves unable to care for their pets the way they once did. That is when we realized that we could step in to help, in order to ensure that our clients weren't forced to give up their beloved four-legged friends."

Currently, St. Andrew's is caring for a cat named Taffy and three dogs, Twiggy, MacDonald and Snoopy. Services being offered include daily walks, help with feedings and even medication provision for health issues. These services are proving to be invaluable for home-bound clients and those in assisted living facilities whose health prohibits them from walking their dogs, making regular trips to the vet or keeping up with other routine pet care activities. As a result of the help they are receiving, these seniors are continuing to enjoy the love and comfort provided by their animal companions, and are also benefitting from the overall enhanced quality of life that pet ownership can offer.

Eighty-eight-year-old Barbara Grabe is among the clients currently availing of the pet care services provided by St. Andrew's. Barbara is the owner of a miniature schnauzer named Snoopy. Having been a beloved member of Barbara's family for nearly a decade, Snoopy played an important role in helping Barbara grieve the loss of her husband who passed away three years ago. After recently suffering a heart attack, Barbara became unable to continue taking Snoopy on his twice-daily walks. Knowing what an important companion Snoopy was for Barbara, her family sought out help from St. Andrew's. A care provider from St. Andrew's now takes Snoopy on his daily walks, allowing Barbara to keep her beloved dog.

"St. Andrew's is providing a wonderful service which is making it possible for Snoopy to stay with me," said Barbara. "I really think every senior should consider having a pet because of the companionship they provide. When I get home, Snoopy is always waiting, and I can't imagine life without him."

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St. Andrew's offering pet care services to clients

First and final add

In terms of overall health, studies have shown that pet owners have lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels than those without pets, which results in a reduced risk of heart disease and fewer visits to the doctor. Other research has also indicated that pet owners have a better chance for long-term survival after surviving a coronary event. Since animals need attention, pets can also help seniors lead more energetic lives with increased opportunities for exercise, outdoor activities and socialization. Individuals with pets also have less anxiety because the mere presence of animals can greatly reduce stress.

From a mental health perspective, seniors benefit greatly from the unconditional love and affection pets can provide. Studies have shown that the companionship of an animal can protect seniors from the isolation and loneliness that is often associated with growing older. By providing a sense of camaraderie to seniors, pets help them realize they aren't alone, thus helping to fight off the depression that can result from the loss of a loved one, the inability to leave home or the reduction in social interactions that aging can bring.

St. Andrew's pet assistance services are available for a nominal fee, which is based on the level of care that is needed. After evaluating the specific client's needs and those of his or her pet, the organization will create a care plan designed to meet those needs.

"Our focus has always been on caring for families, and since animal companions are such an integral part of the family structure, it only makes sense for us to extend our services to pets," noted Bannes. "Any pet owner would feel lost if they had to give up their four-legged friends, and our efforts are designed to make sure none of our seniors have to part with these cherished members of their own families."

To learn more about the pet assistance services available through St. Andrew's, or for more information on the benefits of pet ownership for seniors, contact St. Andrew's Senior Solutions at (314) 726-5766.

St. Andrew's Senior Solutions is a private, non-profit organization that is an affiliate of the St. Andrew's Resources for Seniors System. Founded in 1961, the St. Andrew's Resources for Seniors System is not-for-profit and provides housing, health, in-home care and supportive services, as well as services and assistance to the family caregivers of seniors. To learn more about St. Andrew's Senior Solutions, call (314) 726-5766 or visit www.standrewsseniorsolutions.com.

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