

Memorial Hermann
Katy's Newest
Volunteer Charms
Patients with Tricks,
Licks and a Wag of
Her Tail



Amazing Gracie

Recently, the patients and staff at Memorial Hermann Katy were delighted to welcome the hospital's newest volunteer – an 18-month-old Australian Shepard named “Gracie.” Gracie and her owner Sharon Evans, a retired homicide detective with the Houston Police Department, are the first certified therapy dog team to join the hospital's newly established pet visitation program.

“We anticipate that our patients and staff will experience tremendous benefits as a result of this program,” said Scott Barbe, Memorial Hermann chief executive officer. “In fact, research indicates that interaction with an animal can lower a patient's blood pressure, reduce stress, increase optimism, improve morale, and speed the healing process.”

Memorial Hermann Katy credits Evans in part for the creation of the program. After learning of Evans personal experience with dog therapy and her desire to make a difference in the lives of others through her canine companion, the idea was unleashed and the program began to take shape.

Dogs like Gracie must be evaluated by a veterinarian to make sure they are healthy, up-to-date on vaccinations and well tempered before they can participate in Memorial Hermann Katy's

“Patients in hospitals and nursing homes who have regular visits from pets - whether their own or those brought in from various agencies - are more receptive to medical treatment and nourishment.”

- ACCORDING TO PAWPRINTS AND PURRS,
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION



pet visitation program. Additionally, canine participants must be certified by a pet therapy certification organization.

Gracie is certified by Therapy Dogs, Inc., a non-profit, all volunteer network of caring individuals who share their special

dogs in order to bring happiness and cheer to those in need. Gracie and Evans earned the certification upon completion of 16 months of extensive training with pet therapy dog tester Shannon Smith of Rover Oaks Pet Resort – Katy.

According to Smith, in order for Gracie to become a certified therapy dog, she not only had to master basic commands like “sit,” “stay,” and “heel,” but she also had to learn how to comfortably and confidently maneuver around standard hospital equipment such as wheelchairs and walkers.

Gracie’s new assignment is to learn crowd-pleasing tricks like how to bow and limp on command.

Gracie and Evans will make weekly rounds at Memorial Hermann Katy each Thursday at 2 p.m. For more information on Memorial Hermann Katy’s pet visitation program and how to become involved, contact Brenda Kepner, manager of volunteers and community service, at 281-644-7582 or Brenda.Kepner@memorialhermann.org.



Studies show children and adults with pets to love heal faster than those without pets

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