



NATIPETS

SEPTEMBER 2024 | ISSUE 4

FREE

PET HIGHLIGHT
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NATIPETS

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PUBLISHER'S VIEW

Covid increased pet populations globally. What better way to spend the countless hours of being at home than with the companion of a new pet. Indeed, more than ever, our pets have become members of our families.

It is a mutually beneficial relationship we humans share with our dogs, cats, fish, birds, hamsters, rabbits, turtles, and even some insects. My daughter loves insects and has an aquarium of hissing cockroaches.

In 2017, it was estimated that there were approximately 90 million dog and 96 million cat owners in the United States. Three years later, the pandemic caused a surge in pet adoptions to the point where demand is outweighing supply. Indeed, the reciprocal benefits of pet ownership are wide and very long-standing. Early humans began relationships with canines when wolves scavenged food from them, resulting in the domestication of these animals for warmth, protection, hunting and gathering. Cats also became domesticated foraging for scraps – and

demonstrating their usefulness in controlling the pesky rodent population.

PET'S BOOST PHYSICAL HEALTH

We all know the delight of a wagging tail, a soft ear, a purring kitten. However, we may be less aware of how contact with domesticated animals can benefit physical health, including:

- Lowered cortisol, a stress hormone, and increased serotonin and dopamine, hormones associated with happiness and well-being

- Lowered blood pressure, heart rate and serum triglycerides

- Increased daily exercise in petting, lifting, grooming (and walking smaller dogs)

- Lowered risk of depression and stress-induced disease

PETS INVITE SOCIALIZATION

Aside from the loyal companionship dogs and even some cats provide, owning a pet invites social interactions with humans as well. (Just ask anyone walking around with an irresistible puppy!) People who might otherwise pass us by are likely to stop and comment or ask about our animal companions. Seniors and staff in care environments often come together in a shared focus on a resident's beloved pet or visiting therapy animal.

PETS COME TO THE EMOTIONAL RESCUE

Companionship. Seniors are particularly vulnerable to isolation and loneliness. A loyal, welcoming companion offering comfort, unconditional love, few or no demands, and constant presence is invaluable.

Security. Whether 100 or 10 pounds soaking wet, a barking dog can deter an intruder, creating a sense of protection and safety. Pets can also alert seniors to stimuli to which they may have decreased sensitivity, including people, sounds, odors, and even oncoming medical incidents in some cases.

Calm. Lowered stress hormones and increased "feel good" hormones create a sense of peace and relaxation in older adults burdened by worry and anxiety over health, future, finances and other concerns. Since animals can only "live in the moment," they keep their owners in a similar frame of mind.

Purpose. Meeting the needs of a living thing is not only reason to get up and get on with each day, it instills a sense of purpose, value and self-esteem. This is especially important for seniors with diminished responsibilities.

Until next time, Matt Tackett, Publisher

2 Sept. 2024



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LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

PET PARTNERS OF GREATER CINCINNATI SHARING THE LOVE OF THERAPY ANIMALS

By Sharon Boyles

When life becomes difficult, dreary, or mundane, it's good to have something that can change your perspective, lift your spirits, and remind you that you are loved. One beautiful way to do this is a visit with a therapy animal. Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati helps to share the love of therapy animals by sending teams of volunteers and their pets into the Cincinnati community to bring light, laughter, and joy to people in need and people who might not otherwise have much positive interaction with animals. Volunteers visit diverse locations such as hospitals, hospices, rehabilitation facilities, Ronald McDonald House, police and fire stations, local businesses, and local schools including universities, high schools, grades schools, and special needs programs for children and adults. A therapy animal can bring joy pretty much anywhere!

Paws-itive interactions with animals have been shown to have many benefits for human health on a physical level, but there are also some great mental, emotional, and spiritual health benefits, too. Trish Smith, who is a Pet Partners volunteer with her Yorkshire Terrier, Rosie, says that when she visits with people, they will sometimes get emotional or hold Rosie on their lap because they're missing their own pets. A Pet Partners visit helps to bring joy and a positive distraction from what a person or their family members may be going through. "Pet therapy reduces stress and creates a positive reaction in the body," Smith says. "Some people are afraid of dogs, but that's very rare. Usually, it's a very welcome thing to have a dog come in. The reactions are usually really positive."

Smith moved to Cincinnati in 2021, and when she retired from her position as a Director of Program Management with Liberty Mutual Insurance Co., she knew that she wanted to do volunteer work that would include Rosie. She did some exploration of local therapy-animal groups, and felt that Pet Partners had the most to offer, including good opportunities, good resources and training, a comprehensive screening of potential volunteers, and the most respected reputation in the community.

As Smith started doing more within the group, she became a board member, and from there moved into public relations and social media to help create exposure for Pet Partners.

Smith points out that there are important differences among a therapy animal, an Emotional Support Animal (ESA), and service dogs. The purpose of a therapy animal is simply to serve the community and make people happy. This is quite different from service dogs and ESAs, who provide complex support for just one person. There are some other important differences, as well. "Therapy dogs don't have the same privileges as service dogs in that they can't go anywhere, anytime," Smith points out. "They have to be invited in." All three types of support animals can wear a vest, and while it's okay to approach and pet a therapy dog in public, this is not the case for ESAs and service dogs. "People see a vest and assume it's a service dog, but there's a difference," Smith says.

A Pet Partners visit can be requested via their website. Smith says that when she and Rosie go visiting in a hospital or hospice, she typically gets a list of rooms with people who have requested visits. "But sometimes, I'll wander the halls, looking for someone who would like a visit from a dog," she says. "We'll visit with the staff and the nurses' station too. We look for people who look like they might need some company." Pet Partners limits visits to 2 hours a day because the animals are working and they want them to enjoy their work. Some of the environments that are visited can become sensory overload, resulting in some stress for the animals. Pet Partners always wants their pets to leave a visit happy and wanting to come back for another visit. All potential volunteers are screened and evaluated before they can become a registered Pet Partners therapy animal team. Dogs need to have basic obedience training, including leash training and basic commands. AKC and Good Citizen certifications are a good baseline. Therapy pets must be friendly with people, must enjoy being around people, and cannot be afraid or aggressive. Pet Partners also looks at how well the pet and their human function as a team, and at how well the human responds to their pet's actions and reactions. If you think you and your pet would be a good fit for this important work in our community, you can apply directly on the Pet Partners website. New teams are always welcome!

Pet Partners also carries liability insurance coverage for their teams, so you'll have peace of mind while you and your pet are making visits.

Therapy animal teams need to renew with Pet Partners every two years. There is coursework and an online test, plus a basic evaluation. Therapy animals are evaluated on how they react to certain situations and triggers to make sure they're still suitable for making community visits.

Therapy animals aren't limited to dogs and cats. They can also be miniature pigs, miniature horses, birds, alpacas, or llamas, depending on the needs of a facility. "If a facility requests it, the larger animals can be brought in to visit," Smith says. Any pet within the designated group of species registered by Pet Partners can join upon successful completion of their coursework and evaluation test. Handlers and their pets must also meet certain health and safety guidelines before they can be admitted to the program.

"It's a wonderful organization," says Smith. "It's a great group of people that really care about their pets and the people they visit. They're very passionate about what they do. I encourage anyone who is interested to visit the Pet Partners website."

If you'd like an in-person experience with Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati, they are having an information session at Good Samaritan Hospital on June 26 from 3:00-4:00pm and will also have a booth at Paws in the Park, a free, dog-friendly event on September 28, from 11 am-3 pm at Summit Park in Blue Ash. If you're more of an online kind of person, you can explore the national Pet Partners website at <https://www.petpartners.org> and the greater Cincinnati website at <https://www.tpgcpets.org/>.



5 Sept. 2024

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...YOUR DOG!

By: Sharon Boyles

It's not as weird as you might think. Birthday (or adoption day) parties for pets are more popular now than they were just a few years ago. According to Daily Express, 70% of pet owners are now celebrating a special day with their pet. Pets are loved and valued members of our families, so it's natural to want to honor them with a gift, a cake, a party...or all three!

Birthday parties for dogs are a lot of fun, but it's a little different than a birthday party for people. With a little planning and forethought, everyone will have a good time.

What to Wear: Party hats are by far the most popular option for party wear, but if your dog won't have it (or might eat it), try a cute bandana, a doggie sweater, or even a sparkly tulle tutu for smaller pets who won't get offended if you dress them up like a ballerina.

The Guest List: If your pup has friends in the neighborhood, send out an invite to their people. If other pets in your home are social, you'll want to include them, as well. Parties are an exciting and stimulating time, so be sure to keep an eye on the activities. Dogs are dogs, so take quick action to intervene in any pop-up disagreements so they don't get out of hand.

What's to Eat: Have plenty of snacks and water on hand for your guests and their people and for the star of the show. Be sure to check with owners about any allergies, intolerances, or dietary restrictions. Dog treats in moderation, sliced frozen bananas, baby carrots, and green beans are typically good choices for most dogs. Make some party treats for your human guests, such as chicken wings, chips and dip, or small bites.



Celebration cakes can easily be made at home if you're a baker or bought, if the ingredients are dog-friendly. Avoid cakes made specifically for humans and anything with chocolate in it. You can also make frozen pup cups pretty easily at home with frozen fruit or with bone broth poured into a popsicle maker. Avoid real ice cream, as this can sometimes cause gastrointestinal issues.

Gifts They'll Love: You know best what your dog loves, and a party is the perfect time to spoil them with a few well-chosen presents. Visit the toy aisle of your favorite pet store or if you're crafty, make a DIY toy or two. If your dog is territorial about toys, wait until the guests have gone home after the party to bring out the gifts, so there aren't any arguments over a toy.

Say Cheese: A photo booth is a fun way to create a nice memento of the special day. Have a backdrop and have a few props handy to create a fun picture. You might have to move fast because dogs may or may not tolerate props for more than a few seconds.

Play a Game: Have plenty of toys and treats on hand to encourage everyone to participate in games such as fetch, hide and seek, tug of war, and obey basic commands like sit, stay, and come.

The After Party: Let the fun carry on after the party is over by offering guests a doggie favor bag at the end of the party. You can include small toys, chew toys, a bandana, etc. It will be a lasting reminder of a fun time!



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DEATH WITH DIGNITY

By Sharon Boyles

Dying is not a medical event. It's a very personal and soulful experience, even for animals. As more and more people come to understand this, end-of-life care for pets is increasingly in demand. Vet clinics and pet parents are seeking ways to make their pet's journey across the Rainbow Bridge a sacred and beautiful experience for everyone involved. The services of a pet death doula is one way to bring a sense of peace, understanding, and compassion to a difficult, confusing, and painful situation.

A doula is a trained professional who provides emotional and spiritual support to someone who is transitioning to a new stage in their lives, such as giving birth or actively dying. Death doulas for people have been around for a while, but death doulas for pets are a relatively new concept that is rapidly gaining in popularity. Ute Luppertz, who is a pet death doula, as well as a holistic healing coach for animals, a senior pet specialist, and an animal communicator, says that people who are pet death doulas all have a different definition of what it is that they do. "Everyone has their own approach," she says. "Everyone is different, and every community is different. When you are talking to people about what you do, you describe it in a way that is authentic for you. The focus is on being self-aware and mindful. What is the energy you bring to the table? How honest can you be? What tasks do you want to do and what do you not want to do? What works for you, and what doesn't?"

Although every doula is different in their approach to this work, there are a few skills and abilities that are good to have for anyone thinking

about becoming a death doula. The ability to communicate with people from all walks of life and with people who are in emotional distress is crucial. It's important to be able to hold space for people and not overwhelm them with a lot of information, unless they specifically ask for it. It's important that both parties take ownership of the dialogue, and this is especially true when someone is in grief or depression. "You want to honor feelings," Luppertz says. "When we can really hold space for this experience and allow it to be really sacred and beautiful while we grieve, it can change everything."

Being able to really listen is another key skill. It's important to listen not just to a person's words but also to their emotions and body language to have a better understanding of what's really going on. Someone might be upset about their pet dying, and that is definitely valid, but their feelings might also be rooted in something older or deeper. It's important to look for that. Courage is necessary for this work, as well. "If you're afraid of death, it's not the right job for you," Luppertz comments. "It's not for the faint of heart, especially when there are messy family situations, such as when people aren't on the same page. You have to understand how to navigate situations without influencing."

What kinds of things can a pet death doula do for a pet and their family in their time of need? This is also dependent on the situation and on the individual doula. It also depends on whether the doula is working remotely or locally. Most doulas offer emotional and spiritual support, suggest resources for holistic healing, provide comfort and compassion, and hold sacred space for grief and the upheaval of loss. Some doulas are trained in Reiki, TTouch, Healing Touch, or other energy healing techniques and some have the gift of being able to communicate with animals. Any of this can be an enormous support to the pet and their family in their time of need. "To prepare gently,



deliberately and peacefully for the end of our pet's earthly journey, as gut-wrenching as it is at times, can be one of the greatest gifts," Luppertz says.

Pet death doulas aren't just for cats and dogs, although that is most often the case. Luppertz has worked mostly with cats and dogs, but she's also worked with horses, a parrot, a wildcat sanctuary in Oregon where there was an unfortunate incident, a rabbit, and a snake.

When her beloved dog, Shiva, passed away, Luppertz was inspired to expand her work with animals. "Shiva was the catalyst for me to start doing the spiritual work," she says. "When he died, it was a wake-up call for me to get started in this work. In my practice, I can journey with animals, do shamanic work, and walk them through the entire dying process when there is a scheduled euthanasia, so the animal knows what to expect." Luppertz will also describe the dying process to the family, if requested, because this eases tension and creates peace in the hearts and minds of those saying goodbye to their beloved pet. It gives a preview of what's going to happen on a soul level, instead of everyone just being thrust into the experience, and that is a comfort for many.

Luppertz recalls a favorite story from her work as a pet death doula. "Someone had an ancient Dachshund, who was 20 years old and a bag of bones with lots of health issues. The dog was not letting go. The owner had been telling her dog it was okay to let go, although it would break her heart. I tuned in with the dog and he didn't want to die because he didn't want to leave his owner behind with a broken heart." The owner was able to understand this and change the mixed messages she was sending. A week later, her dog died peacefully in his sleep. The dog was taking the owner's words literally and because of this, didn't want to die. This is but one example of how a pet death doula can make an enormous difference in the lives of pets and their people!

If you think you'd like to become a pet death doula, Luppertz offers online training. Classes are a safe space where people can learn, ask questions, discover resources, and get to know each other. Because of the unique nature of this work, each training class is designed to create community and help people make connections with each other. It's an opportunity to feel into what is realistic, and how that can be embodied. It's an opportunity for healing, because grief is a universal experience. Class curriculum includes topics such as understanding a new paradigm of the death and dying process, holding space for others, holistic end-of-life care, supporting pet guardians, self-care, and mindfulness.

Luppertz is grateful to be on her soul path, making a difference in the world, and helping the experience of death to be sacred and beautiful. "I know I was born to do this work," she says. "My connection with the animals is eternal. I know the soul is greater than the body. For me, the relationship with my pets does not end with the death of the physical body. This being said, I do not want to convince you to believe this. [This work] is not about avoiding grief, sorrow, or devastation. It's about creating a sacred space for the end of life."

If you're interested in pet death doula services for your beloved furry friend or in registering for an online training, contact Ute Luppertz through her website at <https://www.pets-point-of-view.com/>.

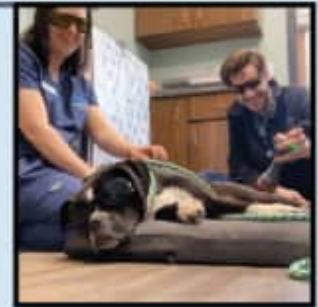


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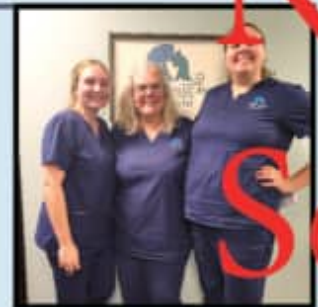
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COOL WAYS TO BEAT THE HEAT

By Sharon Boyles

It's the dog days of summer here in the Cincinnati area, and while there's not much you can do about the heat and humidity in the Queen City, there's a lot you can do to help keep your pet cool and safe during the summer months.

Create a Cool Zone: If you keep your AC at a higher temperature, or if you don't have AC, you can create a resting nook for your pet in the coolest and most shaded corner of your home. Use soft, lightweight bedding and place it under a table, in a corner, or in a secluded spot where your pet can, quite literally, chill out. Use a fan for better air circulation, but make sure the fan is in a safe place where it won't be tipped over or fall, and be sure to keep cords hidden or out of reach, so bored pets won't find entertainment in chewing wires.

Create a Dog-Friendly Water Park: Your backyard is the

perfect place for a pup water park. Set up a sprinkler and let your dog run around in the water or lie down under the sprinkles. You can also buy a kiddie pool for low cost and fill with cool (but not cold) water to let your dog jump in and splash around. For extra credit, toss in floating toys or treats for your dog to retrieve. **Soak It Up:** Soaking a bandana or small towel in cool water and wrapping it around your pet will help bring some relief. The water evaporates, creating a cooling effect. You can

also invest in a cooling mat that will lower your pet's body temperature. These mats are made with cooling materials to provide a nice surface for cooling off.

Summer Treats: Fill a Kong with some canned dog food or peanut butter and freeze it. This is both a cooling treat and a fun challenge for your pet. You can also make pup-sicles by blending pet-friendly fruits, such as watermelon, strawberries, and blueberries with water and pouring the blend into popsicle molds. Many Dairy Queens offer soft-serve pup cups, but you'll have to ask for one specifically, because it's a menu secret. Some dogs have digestive sensitivities, so check with your vet before offering a pup cup, and make it a once-in-a-

while treat.

If It's Too Hot for You... It goes without saying that if it's too hot for you, it's too hot for your pet! Don't leave pets outside for extended periods of time, especially in the hottest part of the day. If you have pets that live outdoors, make sure they have plenty of fresh, cool water, and that their habitat is in a shady area. **Signs of Overheating:** In dogs, this can include frantic panting, labored breathing, and extreme salivation. Dehydration may cause vomiting, diarrhea, and seizures. Brachycephalic dogs, such as pugs and bulldogs can be more sensitive to high heat and humidity. Signs of overheating in cats are similar to those found in dogs. Panting, drooling, vocalizing, rapid heartbeat, and lethargy are among the most common symptoms. Small animals, being more sensitive to

their environment, should be closely watched in hot weather. Overheated rabbits will have shallow breathing, a wet nose, hot ears, and lethargy. And believe it or not, fish can get overheated, too! Keep aquarium temperatures within normal parameters by floating a small bag of ice in the tank or by placing a clip-on fan to blow across the top of the tank. Turn off any lights. Check the tank frequently to make sure the temperature isn't dropping too rapidly. You can also invest in an aquarium chiller, which is a



special type of refrigerant cooler for aquariums. Your first response to any overheated pet is to get them quickly to a cool area. Dogs and cats can also be treated with a cool (not cold) water bath. If your cat is stressed by bath time, use a cloth dampened with water. You can quickly cool a bunny by dampening their ears with cool water. Always take an overheated pet to your vet or local emergency clinic as quickly as possible, because heatstroke may cause organ damage, which can lead to death. Taking good care of your pets during a Cincinnati summer will ensure that everyone has a safe and happy season!



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UNITED PET FUND RECEIVES GRANT FROM ELSA HEISEL SULE FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT AID FOR RURAL ANIMAL SHELTER DESERTS PROJECT

By Dr. Zeke Zekoff

United Pet Fund (UPF) is delighted to announce the continuation of its partnership with the Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation through the receipt of a generous grant. This grant, awarded as part of the **Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation Grant Program**, will support UPF's ongoing initiative, "Aid for Rural Animal Shelter Deserts," aimed at providing vital resources to underserved animal shelters and rescue organizations in rural areas.

The Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation, established in 2004 by Elsa Heisel Sule, a native of Northern Kentucky, is renowned for its commitment to philanthropy and its support of organizations with qualified charitable purposes. The foundation's continued generosity underscores its dedication to improving the welfare of animals in need.

In 2024, the Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation reaffirmed its support for UPF's Hartz Mt. / UPF Resource Train Program by awarding a substantial grant. This grant will enable UPF to transport tons of animal food and supply resources to Animal Shelter/Rescue Resource Deserts in the Tri-State area and much of the Midwest, addressing critical needs in communities where access to such resources is limited.



The Aid for Rural Animal Shelter Deserts project aims to alleviate the burden faced by animal shelters and rescue groups operating in remote and underserved areas. By delivering much-needed supplies and resources, UPF strives to ensure these organizations can continue their lifesaving work and provide quality care to animals in need.

"We are proud to support United Pet Fund's impactful initiatives through our grant program," said Ruth Kletter, Trustee and CEO at the Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation. "The Aid for Rural Animal Shelter Deserts project aligns with our foundation's mission to improve the welfare of animals and strengthen communities. We look forward to witnessing the positive impact of this collaboration."

The grant from the Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation will enable United Pet Fund to enhance its efforts in addressing the unique challenges faced by rural animal shelters and rescue organizations, ultimately improving the lives of animals, and fostering stronger, more resilient communities.

"We are immensely grateful to the Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation for their unwavering support of our mission," said Zeke Zekoff, DVM, President and Founder of United Pet Fund. "This grant will allow us to expand our reach and provide essential aid to rural animal shelters and rescue organizations facing significant challenges. Through collaborative efforts, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless animals and the communities they serve."

MEET ROSIE

NATIPETS PET OF THE MONTH

By Sharon Boyles

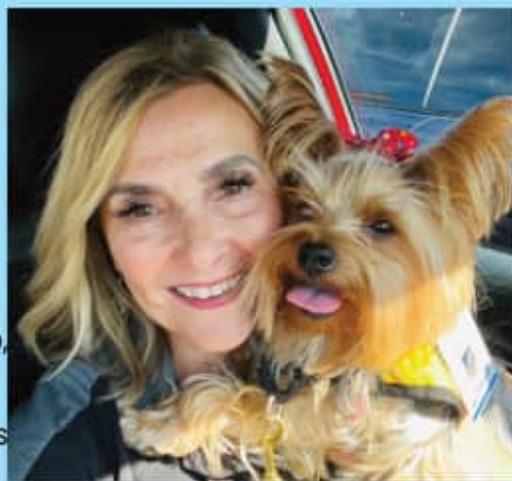
"She's a cutie, a diva, and a teenager," says Trish Smith, of her Yorkshire Terrier, Rosie.

Rosie is the Paris Hilton of the pup world. She has star quality, and she loves to be the center of attention! "If I pull my phone out, she'll pose for me," Trish says. "She loves to have her picture taken. She also loves all people, but she likes kids the best. She just melts when she's around kids. If we're at the hospital visiting, and she sees a kid, she'll just run toward them." This might be because Rosie has had fun adventures with Trish's nine grandchildren, including being dressed up, carried around like a sack of potatoes, taken for strolls in the baby buggy, and drafted as a member of the play kitchen team. She's had a lot of practice being with kids!

Rosie is five years old and was adopted by Trish at twelve weeks. Trish started training her right away, with an eye toward eventually becoming a part of Pet Partners of Greater Cincinnati. Pet Partners is an organization that aims to improve human health and well-being by sending teams of volunteers and their pets into the

community to visit with people who will benefit from a visit with a therapy animal. Teams are sent to hospitals, hospice, schools, businesses, and more.

Perfectly suited for her work as part of a Pet Partners team, Rosie is a typical Yorkie with a big heart and a big personality to match, which is important when you're meeting new people who need a big dose of love and cheer! At home, she's very food motivated and she loves to chase rabbits,



squirrels, and even deer, despite her petite size. Trish's other pup, Knute (named after famed Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne), is a poodle with a more timid approach to life, but Rosie is bold and fierce. The only rabbit she won't chase is George, a Pet Partners

therapy rabbit. That's because George is a Flemish Giant, and a lot harder to chase than the typical bunny!

"She's got a big personality," Trish says. "She's very smart, she's very stubborn. She's extremely cute, and she knows it. It's almost like she's saying, 'Look at me, I'm drop dead gorgeous! Aren't you glad you got to look at me today?'"

Rosie, we think you're a star!



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