

Eleanor Slater Hospital Pet Therapy Program

As all dog owners know, pets can put a smile on your face with their unconditional love and excitement. That is part of the reason that the Pet Therapy Program at Eleanor Slater Hospital (ESH) is working so well, and has been for many years. The program started at Zambarano, and was so successful that it was established at ESH in Cranston as well.

Liam, a four-year old yellow English Labrador Retriever, visits the Regan, Adolph Meyer and Pinel buildings twice a month on Saturdays from September to June. Zambarano patients see Guinevere, a six-year old Springer Spaniel, on Fridays, twice a month.

Both dogs have had a beneficial impact on the patients. In addition to looking forward to the visits, many have had their own dogs in the past and the program brings back happy memories.

In addition to brightening the patients' days, the dogs have been incorporated into some patients' physical therapy programs. In some cases, patients have improved their motor skills and hand-eye coordination. A deaf, blind, and wheelchair-bound patient worked one-on-one with Guinevere for two years. His extreme sensitivity to touch significantly decreased and he learned how to play fetch with the dog. The visits have made a few medical patients eager to get up and dressed.

The list of success stories and benefits from the pet therapy program is long and will continue to grow as the program remains in place.

