

**LIFE / PETS / DOGS**

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## What Makes a Great Facility Partner

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The [Love Dog Adventures](#) animal therapy team is a small program, thus choosing our partner facilities is critical to the success of our volunteers and our host facility. We get far more requests than we can accommodate and we always want to serve our partners as they deserve.

When we began volunteering at a new long-term residential care center, we knew right away it would be a productive partnership. The first people we met, who invited us in for a site visit, understood perfectly what we do and how we value working with great facilities. I brought my tiny Petey for this first visit and he was a hit. But at only four pounds, I soon realized he would be too fragile to continue visiting here. So we decided it would be Benny's place. I always go several times with my own [dogs](#) before reaching out to other Love Dog teams so we fully understand the population, their needs, perhaps their limitations and challenges.



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The first time I brought Benny here, I knew it was the right choice. We sat in the lobby waiting for our facility contact, and several people were immediately drawn to this little guy. Benny is fourteen pounds of pure love, but sturdy, and much better suited for this group of clients.

When our contact came out to greet us, a big smile crossed her face. We already had established a fan club and people wanted to know where we would be meeting and how often. She was so pleased with the reception to the dog. We now begin every visit in the

lobby and people start gathering. This gives us the opportunity to tell them where we will be and Benny gets to stretch and show off some tricks.

The facility posts our visits on their activity board and this also helps prepare people for his visit. What makes this such a great partner for us is that every single person affiliated with the residence welcomes us warmly, even if they are not sure why a dog is there! They loving seeing the dog, they understand that we are there to augment their activities and therapies, not be in the way. We are the only team visiting at this point but look forward to several other teams joining this facility.

They also appreciate that our volunteers at the other end of the leash are so well prepared to meet with their residents. Several Love Dog volunteers have shadowed with me without their dogs to assess if this would be a good place for them and the response has been very favorable. The facility permits this as they understand this is the perfect way to introduce a new place to people, without their dogs.

They understand that the currency for volunteers is respect, appreciation and communication.

I was told in the beginning that several residents rarely leave their rooms, but we see them coming out to meet Benny. Those that love him the most are not possessive, but rather make the rounds to tell their neighbors that he is there and they should give him a chance!

Sometimes we have a room filled with people. Sometimes just one or two. This last visit was especially rewarding as we may have only had two people with us, but they had the very best time with Benny.

So while our facility partners thank *us* for visiting, this week I want to thank all of our tremendous partners for being such an important part of the Love Dogs success.



**Sue Grundfest**

Las Vegas Therapy Dogs Examiner