

United Way of the Piedmont: Focusing on Community Impact

United Way of the Piedmont's "**Connecting Seniors**" Community Impact Area focuses resources to ensure that senior citizens in our community have access to support systems to maximize independence. Focus areas include: Senior Wellness, Access to Transportation, Support to Caregivers and Socialization.

Every month, Spartanburg Humane Society's Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) team of volunteers and their registered therapy animals visit residents of long-term care facilities in our community. AAT teams provide one-on-one visits to residents who enjoy animal companionship. Many residents do not receive regular visits from family and friends, often bringing on feelings of isolation and loneliness. When a therapy pet and volunteer visits with these residents, they are often met with excitement and happiness.

AAT team members often report highlights from their visits with residents to the Spartanburg Humane Society. Below are highlights that convey the power and meaning of their visits.

. . . Ms. M helped Ms. S, who suffers from dementia and is often distant, to pet Rowdy, a Basset Hound mix, for the first time. Everyone in the room smiled at Ms. S's enjoyment and laughed at Rowdy's grin of contentment.

. . . Samantha, a Pomeranian, "danced" along with delighted residents in the recreation room.

. . . Muggles, a King Charles spaniel, came to the assistance of nurses who were unable to help Miss M raise her head up from her tray. She lifted her head to smile at her canine friend.

. . . Mrs. S was so happy that Mackenzie was visiting that she left her room to track him down and play with her buddy.

Through the AAT program, special teams made up of a beloved pet and a proud guardian manage to overcome silence, create smiles from frowns, and encourage idle hands to reach out to pat a head or shake a paw. They inspire moments that together make a significant difference in the lives of Spartanburg County seniors.

Your support of United Way's Community Impact Fund ensures investment in the Animal Assisted Therapy program and other programs that are making a positive impact on our community.