Paws for Wellness promotes positive human-animal interactions to enhance healing and quality of life. Paws for Wellness upholds the safety, confidentiality, and integrity of the patient experience at all levels of healthcare. The same applies when engaging with the greater community. Paws for Wellness furthers public understanding of the healing benefits found in the human-animal connection and advocates for and practices the ethical treatment of animals in their role as therapeutic assistants.
About Us
Reading Hospital has been using certified therapy animals to enhance patients’ physical and emotional well-being since the 1990s. Located in the Department of Psychiatry, Paws for Wellness established itself as a formal program in 2001.

The program’s devoted therapy cat and 18 certified therapy dogs promote hope and healing while helping to alleviate physical pain and emotional stress often associated with illness and hospitalization. These trained therapists support behavioral health, medical, surgical, and physical medicine units within Reading Hospital. They support patients’ families and staff as well.

Since its inception, Paws for Wellness — a volunteer-supported program — has logged more than 10,000 hours in support of patient health needs and local community events.

Current Services Include:
Animal Assisted Therapy utilizes certified therapy animals within the context of patient treatment and care. Session outcomes such as decreased pain, increased orientation to reality, improved mood, motivation, and concentration are documented in a patient’s medical chart, just like any other clinical intervention.

Meet and Greet visits offer patients social and interactive breaks with a certified therapy dog.

Mascot Program, a staff-specific initiative, relieves the high stress inherent in the clinical healthcare setting.

Patients who do not benefit from this therapy include those who:
- Are in contact or in environmental isolation
- Have phobias or allergies to animals

Patients who do benefit from this therapy include those who:
- Need distraction from pain or problems associated with complicated hospital stays
- Require motivational enhancement to participate in physical or occupational therapy
- Demonstrate confusion or other cognitive impairment
- Experience anxiety or depression
- Need a comforting presence
- Lack family or other social support

To request services or for more information about Paws for Wellness, contact Maryjo Brown, MA, LPC, at 484-628-5137 or Maryjo.Brown@towerhealth.org.