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*Lou Ann Weber
Director
Inpatient Rehabilitation*



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A DOG-GONE SUCCESS pet therapy

When Wayne Biderman lived on a farm in rural Mount Vernon he enjoyed the companionship of his trusty sidekick, Tony, a beagle-basset hound mix who would accompany him to the barn every day.

Biderman also enjoyed having the strength and physical stamina that it took to do the labor-intensive work a farm required.

Now, the 67-year-old retiree has difficulty climbing a few stairs, even walking down the hallway. Biderman is a three-time cancer survivor who suffers from heart disease and diabetes. While hospitalized in late 2007, his goal was to regain the strength he needed to go back home and live self-sufficiently. Occupational and physical therapy were part of Wayne's recovery plan.

A 4-year-old chocolate lab named Tucker also was a part of that plan. Tucker is a trained and certified pet therapy dog who has gone through extensive training at Kirkwood Community College with his handler-owner, Mike Dooley. The two now make regular visits to Mercy Medical Center to work with not only Wayne, but a wide variety of patients as part of the hospital's new inpatient rehabilitation pet therapy program.

"Tucker loves the interaction with patients," says Dooley. "He loves people. When I say we're going to 'work,' his tail starts wagging and he's ready to go. He knows he's going to the hospital."

Traditional pet therapy programs have been offered to area patients for years and are shown to be effective in brightening the spirits of patients in both rehabilitation programs and skilled nursing facilities. But Tucker's visits go beyond providing an emotional boost. Tucker helps patients achieve functional goals, such as exercising an arm, regaining balance or walking on uneven ground.

"Tucker has been a wonderful addition to our program," says Lou Ann Weber, Inpatient Rehabilitation Director. "The patients' eyes just light up when they see him and he provides an extra incentive as they work on what can sometimes be the monotonous tasks of therapy."

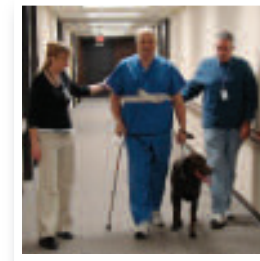
Pet therapy dogs help motivate simple physical activities for mobility of an arm, for instance, by allowing the patient to groom the

animal or throw a tennis ball instead of doing more traditional exercises to achieve the same goal of increasing range of motion or strength. Instead of doing exercises to increase finger or grip strength, patients can practice putting on and taking off the pet's collar. To improve balance and gait, patients can take the dog for a walk down the hospital hallways or outside on uneven surfaces and over curbs.

Wayne Biderman loved his first encounter with Tucker.

"It's a wonderful experience and something I'd like to do more often," says Biderman. "I'd like the chance to get friendlier with the dog and be more familiar with him on a regular basis."

Biderman might just get that chance on his road to recovery. Tucker will be part of Mercy's rehabilitation program for as long as he is able.



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Three-time cancer survivor*

