

# Unconditional Love from a Four-Legged Friend

## Pet Therapy



Madden with his furry friend Homie

## GET THE FACTS!

**Pet Therapy provides an opportunity for children to:**

- Feel, touch, pet and cuddle with their four-legged friends.
- Receive unconditional love.
- Practice an activity or participate in a program in the presence of a furry friend.

**Interacting with a therapy animal can:**

- Improve self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Promote relaxation and calmness through the release of beta-endorphins.
- Decrease blood-pressure and cortisol levels.
- Increase oxytocin in our bodies, which decreases the sense of isolation and loneliness while increasing the sense of connectedness.
- Reduce pain as a result of endorphins; our bodies' chemical that suppresses pain.

*Canadian Service Dog Foundation*

*"At The Darling Home for Kids, Piper participates in animal therapy where she giggles at all of the sloppy wet kisses."*

- Erin Gibson, Piper's Mom

## MADDEN'S STORY

*Madden started going to The Darling Home for Kids in the summer of 2014 and will often stay for the weekend while his mother works, or gets a break and some much needed down time.*

*A very social guy, Madden enjoys being around people at The Darling Home for Kids and interacting with animals in the Pet Therapy program. Although he can't see clearly and doesn't use his arms or hands, his furry friends in the program are brought over to him. He beams when the dogs lick his face, and with hand-over-hand support, he is able to pet them. It's a great sensory experience for him. Madden has a huge emotional reaction to animals' snuggles and kisses, and from the smile on his face, he is telling everyone how much he LOVES it!*

*For Madden and his family, The Darling Home for Kids is an incredible place, and the Pet Therapy program provides a furry friend that brings him pure joy!*

In the field of holistic healing, **Pet Therapy** utilizes the inherent human-animal bond for its incredible healing powers. Through their innocence, sincerity, unconditional love and exuberance for life, animals have an increasing presence in therapeutic care for children with complex disabilities.

At **The Darling Home for Kids**, our children are offered the gift of friendship like no other through their companionship and interaction with specially trained service animals. The ability to interact with an animal, be it a dog or another furry friend, can have a very positive

impact on a child's quality of life, self-esteem and emotional outlook.

Whether children are curled up with an animal for a snuggle on the couch, walking the dog through the halls of the Home, or receiving affectionate kisses, there is incredible joy experienced by our children when they engage in this therapy, and children always look forward to the next visit from their four-legged friends.

The Pet Therapy program at The Darling Home for Kids is made possible by our partnership with St. John Ambulance's Therapy Dog Program, which uses volunteers and certified therapy dogs.

*"My name is Homie. I am 11 years old and a retired racing Greyhound; I am one of the most calming gentle dogs you will ever meet. Within seconds of meeting someone new I like to come over and lean up ever so lightly to make sure that I am within petting reach. I know when to offer kisses, when to simply lay down next to a child, and when my unconditional love is needed most. The occasional tug of my ear or tail does not bother me, as I am trained to be a friend no matter what. My favourite part of being a therapy dog is to spread a sense of calmness, especially for the amazing children at The Darling Home for Kids."*

- Homie, Therapy Dog

To learn more please visit us at  
[www.darlinghomeforkids.ca](http://www.darlinghomeforkids.ca)



Piper participating in pet therapy



Homie an 11 year old retired racing Greyhound