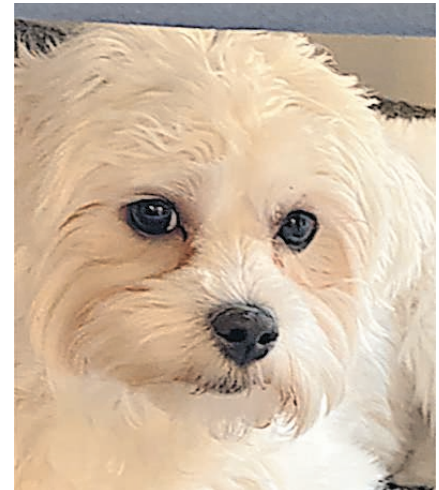


ALBAN MANOR NURSING HOME



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BSc MSc Managing Director



I felt inspired to write this article as at Alban Manor Nursing Home we are very lucky that we have Roxy, a beautiful Maltese terrier that lives with us. She celebrated her first birthday with a big party last month having joined us at the tender age of eight weeks old. There was lots of singing and cake although I am sure she didn't know what all the fuss was about! Roxy has a gentle nature and is certainly an expert at demonstrating and inspiring love from everyone she meets. Many of our residents have had a pet of some kind before, so understandably they are very fond of Roxy. Before the arrival of coronavirus she was used to being loved by all the visitors too. Luckily she does not seem to have noticed the change that the pandemic has brought about in our lives and carries on regardless, in her happy care free ways. However with the lockdown it has become even more apparent to us that we are lucky indeed to have Roxy, who provides us daily with endless entertainment and joy.

It is well known that the UK is a nation of animal lovers, with approximately 51 million pets

across homes in the UK. These include dogs, cats, fish, turtles, hamsters, guinea pigs, birds, rabbits and horses as well as some other exotic animals. And many pet owners tend to have more than one type of pet or indeed several of the same type. Worldwide, dogs are the number one choice of pet and cats come in at number two.

Dogs are the most popular pet in almost every region in the UK too, except for London, where cats outnumber dogs. This may be because cats require less space and are more independent which may make them better suited to an urban lifestyle. With dogs and cats occupying number one and two positions, the third slot is taken up by fish in the popularity stakes.

In this article I wish to look at the benefits of having a dog. A dog is considered a man's best friend for good reasons. A dog can bring love and companionship into a home. Dogs are intelligent animals and useful in many areas in community settings such as guide dogs, guard dogs, prisons, police work and rescue missions, as well as at airports to detect illegal

trafficking of goods etc. They are also used in schools, as well as in healthcare settings to help individuals with learning disabilities, hearing, seizures, eyesight, diabetes to mention a few. Dogs are also being used at airports to help nervous flyers to calm down and relax before a flight.

The benefits of pet therapy for residents in care homes have been widely reported and documented.

Any pet can be a great friend and a valuable companion. Research shows that living with pets can offer health benefits too such as lower blood pressure. In one study having a dog in the home lowered the blood pressure more than taking a blood pressure medication. However it is advised to take the findings with caution as the studies need to be much larger and over a longer period of time to draw any real conclusions that can be incorporated into our health guidelines. Studies have also shown pets can help to lower anxiety levels, cholesterol levels, as well to boost immunity. A pet can provide social support to the owner helping them to feel more relaxed and less stressed. Pets especially dogs provide increased opportunities for social interaction with others and thus helping to reduce

feelings of loneliness.

Whilst pets can bring many benefits they can be quite a commitment too. It is costly to feed and groom them. Then there is also the issue of veterinary bills for medical care. Dogs need walking, and some of the big breeds might need long walks twice a day, which can be time consuming. So before getting any pet it is essential to really think through how it will impact your home and lifestyle. However pet owners would say resoundingly that it is worth all the time, effort and money for the happiness that a pet brings.

Pet owners certainly know the benefits of having a pet in their lives. However more research is needed to look at ways to explore how increased exposure to pets could be beneficial for everyone's well being, and included accordingly in health guidelines. I know everyone at Alban Manor would agree that Roxy is the cutest little puppy on the planet and brings great joy wherever she goes.

And until the next time, I will leave you with this quote by Agnes Sligh Turnbull "Whoever said you can't buy Happiness, forgot little puppies"

My best wishes

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