

Print this article**Pets as Therapy visits On the Corner Daycare**

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On Thursday 23 January 2014, Pets as Therapy (PAT) dogs Lily and Kirby visited the On the Corner Day Care Centre in Parow North. The two lively dogs were met by 41 small children ranging from one- to five-years-old, neatly sitting in two rows of chairs.

PAT pets are thoroughly assessed for suitability before they are allowed to go on visits and once the greetings were over, Marike Kotzé from PAT told the children all about these special dogs who go to visit children and the elderly in hospitals, old age homes or homes for physically and mentally disabled children and adults.

The short talk was continually interrupted by small children wanting to share stories of their own dogs. This is exactly the response that PAT volunteers expect and is one of the main reasons they put in a lot of time to visit those who are not fortunate enough to have pets of their own.

More and more research is coming to the fore, showing the positive impact that both companion and visiting animals have on residents in various types of facilities including homes for the retired and both mentally or physically challenged. Visits from animals provide a change from normal routine and residents become more responsive during as well as after a visit. There are also physiological benefits; a person's blood pressure drops when stroking an animal and petting encourages a person to use hands and arms.

The children were allowed to greet the dogs, stroke them and brush them. This was accompanied by continual chatter and lots of excitement. The dogs loved all the attention too!

This centre is run by husband and wife team Bianca and Jacques Geustyn. This visit was arranged as one of the events they arrange once a month at their centre to do a small talk or demo for the children including the Fire department, the Police Department and so forth.

PAT is a registered charity, and all members are volunteers who use their own animals to visit selected facilities. To find out more, please visit their website: www.pat.org.za.

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