

Media Release

5 February 2018

The Pet Factor – Making Friends Through Dog Walking

Elizabeth knew she needed help looking after her dogs when she started getting pain in her knees. However, she never realised the LinkPETS program could provide more than dog walking. It's also provided friendship and social support through the wonderful volunteers she has met.

Elizabeth has always been a dog lover and for many years, would also care for other people's dogs within her own community. Not long after moving into a retirement village, Elizabeth started to have trouble with her knees which prevented her from walking her dogs, Moppet a poodle-cross and April a cavalier-cross dog. Being a responsible pet owner, Elizabeth knew how important regular exercise was for Moppet and April's ongoing health.

It was around this time when Elizabeth contacted the LinkPETS program for help. Run by Link Health and Community, the program provided Elizabeth with volunteers to care for Moppet and April through regular dog walks and helping to tidy up after them.

But Elizabeth didn't realise the program would provide more than dog walking support. It's given her friendship and social support both practically and emotionally, and she has now become friends with her volunteers.

"One evening I was waiting for someone to arrive and they were running late. It was raining heavily, but the volunteer held the umbrella and stayed with me until they arrived. I was very grateful to her - she's such a sweet girl." Says Elizabeth.

There are many pet-loving volunteers, who come from a range of backgrounds. Elizabeth's had international students from Hong Kong, who've said how Moppet and April reminded them of their own dogs back home.

"When the volunteers saw April and Moppet, they rushed up and cuddled them. When they went home for Christmas they wrapped their arms around them and started to cry, as they were going to miss them."

The LinkPETS program currently needs more owners who are aged over 65 and need help caring for their pet. The program is more than pet care. It also provides social support and friendship to the owner and helps them stay connected to their community. If you or someone you know needs extra help caring for their pet, please contact Sarah Burton, Volunteer Support Officer on 8822 8309 or visit www.linkhc.org.au

See images below



Above: Elizabeth giving April a cuddle



Above from left: Moppet and April, Elizabeth's two dogs enjoy their regular walks by the LinkPETS volunteers.

About Link Health and Community

Link Health and Community is a not-for-profit organisation that provides medical, health, and support services to improve the health and wellbeing of all residents living in the east and south east of Melbourne. www.linkhc.org.au

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