

PET CORNER



Seniors and Pets

By Rick Chaboudy and Annette Dettloff



"I couldn't stand not having a pet greet me at the door," expressed Cathy Monti, 77 of Palm Harbor, Florida.

"Suddenly our home seemed so lonely."

Cathy and Bob Monti are about to celebrate their 49th wedding anniversary. Besides their devotion to one another, the other constant in their life has always been their love for animals. "We have had pets for 48 of our 49 married years" said Bob, 82.

But having pets has not been easy. Cathy and Bob have been professional entertainers all their adult lives, and have appeared with the likes of Bob Hope, Liberace, and Bill Cosby, to name a few. During their days on the road, they kept their pets close by. "They traveled with us wherever we went," said Bob.

Through the years, the couple's love for animals has never waned. In fact, it was never more evident than after the recent loss of their 15-year-old Yorkie-Poo, "Lyric" last April. "We not only felt sorry for ourselves but also for our 5-year-old kitty, "Melody." She seemed to miss Lyric almost as much as we did," said Cathy.

Soon after Lyric's departure, the Monti's began their search for a new pet. Months later, and after many frustrated trips to local animal shelters, the Monti's met "Sparky" at Suncoast Animal League. After spending time with Sparky, a 1½-year-old male Chihuahua, they decided the search was over, they had found their new family member.

Their arrival at home was just as successful as Sparky and Melody had an immediate bond and are now buddies. "They are a constant source of entertainment for us," mused Cathy. Their home is lively and active again.

Yes, Sparky was the "spark" that was missing in the Monti household, and his presence has helped create a whole new energy to their household. "We exercise much more now that we have Sparky," commented Bob. "We walk him four to six times a day." This is a fact that did not go unnoticed by a recent Purina PetLover survey which stated: "45% of those sur-

veyed spend more time doing physical activities like walking and 26% of the women said they lost weight."

Other survey findings were:

66% say their pets keep their mind active and their memory sharp

84% say owning a pet makes them feel happier.

88% say that owning a pet gives them a more positive outlook on life.

71% of the women said their pet keeps them energized.

"Research showing the physical benefits of pet ownership for seniors, which includes lower systolic blood pressure and cholesterol levels (American Journal of Cardiology, 1995), has been well documented over the years. However, seniors also benefit emotionally from pet ownership, which might not be as easily seen on the outside, but can greatly impact their quality of life and enable them to feel their best," says Steve Cohn, DVM, a Purina Pets for Seniors veterinarian.

The research is there, but the Monti's already know the value for seniors having pets. They are reminded of it each night when Sparky and Melody climb into bed to snuggle under the covers on one of those "chilly Florida nights."



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JoEllyn Ruscigno

Sales and Marketing Director

1755 East Lake Rd. www.theallegro.com
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688 Phone **(727) 943-8878**
jruscigno@theallegro.com Facsimile **(727) 938-4758**

Assisted Living Facility #10331

Linda R. Chamberlain, P.A.
Board Certified Elder Law Attorney

901 Chestnut Street, Suite B
Clearwater, FL 33756
Telephone: 727.443.7898
Fax: 727.631.0970

E-mail: Linda@FloridaElderLawyer.com

