

A Calming Presence

Therapy cats help war veterans cope.

By Brad Kollus

Science has demonstrated the healing power of our feline companions: They are good for our physical and emotional health, they comfort us and give us a sense of well-being, and they can assist in therapy for those in need. Cats now are taking on a new role: helping our veterans heal from their emotional war wounds.

“An assistance animal is an animal that a person owns and that helps the person with a specific task,” says Larry Norvell, president and CEO of Delta Society, an organization that helps individuals acquire assistance animals. “There are animals that act as seeing eye dogs. If a person is hearing impaired, the animal can alert the person to the doorbell. If somebody uses a wheelchair and drops something, their assistance dog can pick up the item. An emotional assistance animal can provide security to a person with a psychological illness. Our country is going to see a significant increase in the need for service animals, primarily due to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.”

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