



Shelter Spotlight

By Kit Belcher, Executive Director

“Health Benefits Associated with Having a Pet”

Did you know that there are a number of health benefits associated with having a pet?

You could probably guess that by the smile that comes to your face when your cat jumps up on your lap and starts purring. You may find that you will automatically start petting your cat and that you feel good or feel better because your cat shows you that your touch is important to it -- and more is definitely better!

Or when your dog brings you a toy and wants play fetch, does it make you feel good? Without saying a word, your dog can make you feel like the most important person in the whole world.

Research by a number of organizations has proven that the pleasure and attention people get from their pets can be very beneficial in a number of ways.

An international non-profit group known as the Delta Society has done extensive study to understand how animals help people to improve their health. Specific research has uncovered some of the physical, emotional and mental health benefits of owning a pet. Here are some of the findings from research into the topic of pet ownership.

Some of the physical health benefits of owning a pet include the following:

- Pet owners have lower blood pressure.
- Pet owners have fewer minor health problems.
- Pet owners have better physical health due to exercise with their pets.
- Dogs are preventive and therapeutic measures against everyday stress.
- Seniors who own dogs go to the doctor less than those who do not.

Some of the emotional and mental health benefits of owning a pet include the following:

- Pet owners have better psychological well-being.
- Pets decrease feeling of loneliness and isolation.

- Pet owners feel less afraid of being a victim of crime when walking with a dog or sharing a residence with a dog.
- Contact with pets develops nurturing behavior in children who may grow to be more nurturing adults.
- Positive self-esteem of children is enhanced by owning a pet.
- Children owning pets are more involved in activities such as sports, hobbies, clubs or chores.

Obviously, owning a pet is not always sunshine and posies. Sometimes they misbehave or have to be cleaned up or cleaned up after at an inconvenient time. When you go on vacation, you have to find someone to look after your pet. Despite the downside, almost 70% of families surveyed reported an increase in family happiness and fun after a pet acquisition.

Another important finding has to do with kids who help out at humane societies like The Beltrami Humane Society: Children who are exposed to humane education programs display enhanced empathy for humans compared with children not exposed to such programs. This exposure could be through volunteer work at the shelter or animal visitation at school classrooms. When things go wrong or bad, kids seem to pull through a little better if there is a pet around. Another study found that companionship of pets (particularly dogs) helps children in families adjust better to the serious illness and death of a parent.

The “unconditional love” provided by a pet helps you to stay in good physical health, good emotional health and good mental health. You can read more about the research details at this website: www.deltasociety.org.

Featured Pets This Week: “Portia & Sugar”. These two cats are pretty and petite. “Portia” came to the shelter from our local impound. She had been a stray. She is very petite, has a sweet personality, is spayed and has had her basic kennel vaccinations. She loves watching the daily activities around her. “Sugar” is a medium to long hair, beautiful black and white “prissy” kitty. She is quiet, loves attention, and would like a special companion that can give her “princess” treatment. She is very loving, personable and would enjoy a peaceful setting where she can find a window seat, watch the birds and butterflies, and take in some rays while grooming herself. Is she just the one for you?

See our animals on our website photo gallery at www.beltramihumane.com, visit our shelter at 1612 Carr Lake Rd SE, Bemidji, MN. Hours are 12-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays thru Saturdays. Our phone number is (218) 751-7910.

Join us at our 2007 FURR BOWL this weekend, May 5th & 6th. Pick up your registration forms at the shelter, or come on down to the Bemidji Bowl. Lots of sessions to bowl! Fun, Food & Prizes. Everybody is Welcome! Help us “Strike Out Animal Homelessness!”

Shelter Wishes: \$\$ for Spays/Neuters, Medical Supplies, Puppy Chow, Kitten Chow, Cleaning Supplies, Volunteers for Grounds Clean Up