**PERSUASIVE SPEECH**

**FOR**

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**“As Good as it “PETS”**

“Petting, scratching, and cuddling a dog could be as soothing to the mind and heart as deep meditation and almost as good for the soul as prayer.” Dean Koontz said that, and trust me, I believe it!! I have seen the bond between man and dog grow into love and companionship, and I have seen the difference having a companion dog makes in the lives of the elderly. I can cite many sources... articles, statistics, and quotes from famous people, but I know what a difference this kind of companion makes to a person.... you see, I adopted a companion pet for my Godfather, and he has not been the same since... in a very, VERY good way.

In an article posted online from U.S. News and World Report, titled, “Ten Reasons Older People Need Pets, we learn the following:

* “Older people with pets exhibit less anxiety than their pet-less counterparts. Maybe it’s those regular walks ..... Or maybe it’s that tail wagging every day when you wake up.”
* “There are lots of shared activities for pet owners...” If the person you know that might want a companion pet is able to get along and walk on his or her own, a companion pet gives its human a cause and a reason to take a walk with that four legged best friend. Companion pets don’t only provide love and company.... they also give you a great reason to get out and MOVE!!
* “Having a pet can expose you to a lot of new interests.”
* Companion pets give senior citizens a mission and a purpose. While the people in a senior’s life may be busy with activities and projects of their own, YOU are the pet’s “project.” That animal lives to please you and be right by your side.
* Having a pet gives life purpose... for both the pet and the person. Accepting a pet means that the senior is willing to commit to being involved in another life.
* “Loneliness can become an unwelcome companion as we get older and can lead to depression as well as physical problems.” It’s been demonstrated that having a pet brings optimism to life. The senior can also can reap the benefits of such a productive and loving family. Having a pet to love and care for has been shown to reduce stress levels in ALL people.

According to information found on the ASPCA website, “Approximately 6.5 million companion animals enter shelters in the United States each year.” We also learn that each year, “approximately 1.5 million shelter animals are euthanized... put to sleep... because they are either unwanted or there was no room for them to stay in the shelter. The National Park Service offers a presentation titled, “The Health Benefits of Companion Animals.” From that we learn that numerous scientific studies have been conducted for the past twenty five years. By having companion animals, the following health benefits have been confirmed, and they are, improved cardio vascular health, reduced stress, a decrease in loneliness and depression, establishment and advancement of human relationships, especially with other people that also have companion pets. The National Park Service presentation also states, “Health professionals can contribute to the welfare of their patients by encouraging them to ,

maintain bonds with their pets.”

According to the United States Census Bureau, 13.3 percent of the population in the United States in 2013 were senior citizens. That percentage is forecasted to grow to at least 20 percent by the year 2060. I think it is safe to assume that the companion animal population will grow as well. All this means is that more animals will need homes and there will be more seniors that can benefit from having companions. The animals will get and give love while the human partners will receive that love, reduce their stress levels, have an opportunity to move about and at least walk, and be there to provide much needed companionship. All in all, I believe it is clear that senior citizens and companion animals are a match made in heaven!

Charles Schulz, the cartoonist who created “Peanuts” is famous for saying, “Happiness is a Warm Puppy.” Now we know that is true!!! I encourage all of you to speak to those you know and love, and if there is a senior citizen in your life, like I am blessed with my godfather, please do whatever you can to find a companion animal for them.... they will thank you... to be sure !!

Thank you