



“Why join Intermountain Therapy Animals?”

Intermountain Therapy Animals (ITA) is one of the largest and most successful local organizations in the United States providing animal-assisted interactions. We have more than a quarter-century of experience, and we enjoy an excellent reputation in the communities where we and our affiliates serve.

We are committed to the very highest standards in our field of endeavor and to thoughtful professionalism in our delivery of services. And to always learning more about our chosen field.

Why Is ITA an Excellent Choice for You and Your Animal?

Becoming part of ITA is NOT a quick, simple, relatively inexpensive and painless way to be “qualified” to be a visiting animal team. But for those who want to be serious and professional, who are open to learning and eager to take their interactions to the highest level, ITA can be a meaningful path of deep and rewarding experiences.

- Our training and testing protocols for therapy animal teams (our screening is not just a “dog test”) are second to none, and testing recurs every two years to assure that an animal is still capable and enthusiastic about the therapy job, and a handler is maintaining appropriate skills and relationship with the partner animal.
- We offer extensive training for the human end of the leash in health, safety, and dealing effectively and appropriately with various patient populations; and then mentoring until a team gains experience and confidence.
- We place strong emphasis on the temperament and relationship of the team, to honor our animals as partners and to respect their needs and preferences.
- We never “throw you into the deep end;” rather, we and our affiliates offer mentoring and support whenever needed, and forever.
- We believe in a win-win-win model, encouraging teams to visit at those sites where both the handler and dog love being with that particular clientele, because that’s where you and your animal partner will do your best work and find your volunteer time most rewarding.
- We/your affiliate leaders do the groundwork for volunteers, setting up programs and providing entre for your teams. Further, we liaise between teams and facility personnel to troubleshoot any challenges and work toward continuous improvement in our services.

- We encourage and provide continuing education for our teams. Our arena of choice is fairly young, as such things are measured, and we are constantly learning new methods and techniques and benefiting from new research, all of which helps you as a volunteer to do an ever better job.

Currently, there are 21 colleague groups in 14 states whose members have chosen ITA as their “mother ship” for training and testing protocols. We take our work very seriously.

We do not compete with any other major or minor therapy animal registry, nor do we aspire to be the biggest, or to claim superiority. There is plenty of need out there for all of us, and we focus only on our own teams and organizations.

We are committed to keeping our organization and staff personal and present. We encourage constant back-and-forth communication between facilities and teams, and between ourselves and the organizations who affiliate with us. We don’t feel that our chosen pursuit—animal-assisted interactions of all kinds—can be learned alone, or online, or practiced without frequent discussion and consideration. Every team, every client, and thus every interaction, will be unique, and questions are always arising on how best to handle one situation or another.

All our trainings must be done in person and all our teams must belong to a local support group. We never register independent teams or independent instructors or team evaluators because we want everyone to feel invested in the quality of their colleagues and the reputation of their organization, and to share ideas and learn from one another.

The most common positive compliment we get from our members far and wide is that *we are responsive*. We still

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answer the phone and we provide support in any way that is needed. We don't always have all the answers, but we enjoy troubleshooting with our members at all levels to come up with workable solutions and wonderful new insights.

We believe wholeheartedly in seeking to constantly refine and improve our services, in being open to learning more, and in collaborating positively with the facilities and staff with whom we work. We do all this in the pursuit of our mission ("enhancing quality of life through the human-animal bond"), of course, and to discover ever new ways that humans and animals can benefit one another with an underlying basis of respect, kindness and compassion.

Everything we do as an organization is to facilitate that mission. We never claim "solo genius," but rather collective genius, a space in which everyone can feel

seen and heard. We know that great, breakthrough ideas and practices come from all areas, from individuals at all levels, which is another reason we vow to stay open, to listen to one another, and to seek those new ideas anywhere they shine through.

In practical terms, we have never yet had to file a claim on our liability insurance, which points to the validity, safety and effectiveness of our training and testing procedures. We have never had a facility dismiss ITA or complain about incompetence.

If you decide to pursue the possibility of becoming a visiting team and participating in animal-assisted interactions with an ITA-affiliated group, we guarantee that it will be a life-changing journey for you and your partner, more rewarding than you can yet imagine.



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INTERMOUNTAIN THERAPY ANIMALS ~ www.therapyanimals.org

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