

-- AKC Introduces New Therapy Dog Title -

New York, NY - I am pleased to announce an exciting new title open to all AKC dogs. The AKC Therapy Dog title, or "THD," will launch June 27th as an official AKC suffix title and will reward dogs and their owners that have provided ongoing community service to help improve the well being of others.

Currently, it is estimated there are 50,000 certified and active therapy dogs in the United States. Volunteerism has exploded over the past decade, especially those with dog and owner teams working in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and at natural disasters.

As you know, the AKC annually recognizes an outstanding Therapy Dog as part of the annual AKC Humane Fund Awards for Canine Excellence (ACE). We receive so many great nominations that we know there are many more dogs out there that deserve recognition. We have also received many requests from the fancy to award titles to therapy dogs as a way to recognize the "great work their dogs do." Additionally, earning a THD title builds on the skills taught in the AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy and Canine Good Citizen programs, which create a sound and friendly temperament needed by a successful therapy dog.

The AKC will not certify therapy dogs. Instead, we're working with therapy dog certification organizations to recognize the work done by therapy teams. The certification organizations are the experts in this area and their efforts should be acknowledged and appreciated.

The title will be open to all AKC dogs that have completed a series of criteria. To qualify, dogs must be certified by a participating therapy dog certification organization and have performed a minimum of 50 community service visits.

To obtain a title an owner must complete an application along with evidence of documented visits. Application forms are available on the website at www.akc.org/akctherapydog. The program will accept documentation going back to January 1, 2000.

If your dog qualifies we encourage you to apply for the title. For more information visit www.akc.org/akctherapydog or email akctherapydog@akc.org.

Ron Menaker
Chairman