



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025



PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY:  
**CENTER FOR HUMAN-ANIMAL  
INTERACTION**

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**VCU**  
School of Medicine

# About CHAI

The Center for Human-Animal Interaction (CHAI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization stewarded through the Medical College of Virginia Foundation, which holds a 99/100 (4-star) rating from Charity Navigator.

CHAI is generously housed within West Hospital by the Department of Psychiatry in the Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Medicine.

Many of CHAI's staff and executive committee members are VCU and VCU Health professors, physicians, and professionals passionate about animals and the benefits of human-animal interaction.

In addition, CHAI relies on a large network of dedicated volunteers, most of whom help deliver our Dogs on Call program.



# Vision & Mission



## MISSION

*Improving health  
and well-being  
through human-  
animal interaction.*

## TO ACHIEVE THIS MISSION

**Our research goal** is to increase knowledge of the benefits of the human-animal interaction through interdisciplinary research.

**Our clinical goal** is to enhance health and well-being for patients and other members of our community through animal-assisted interventions.

**Our educational goal** is to improve understanding of the benefits of the human-animal interaction.

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# From the Director's Desk

**Nancy Gee, Ph.D., C-AIIS**

Professor of Psychiatry, VCU School of Medicine  
Bill Balaban Chair in Human-Animal Interaction  
Fellow and Former President, International Society for Anthrozoology  
Director, Center for Human-Animal Interaction



The Center for Human-Animal Interaction (CHAI) continues to advance its mission of improving health and well-being through the human-animal bond. In 2025, our Dogs on Call program delivered over 83,000 meaningful interactions, completed 1,341 visit requests, and attended 56 community events—bringing comfort and joy to patients, families, and staff across VCU Health and beyond.

Our volunteers contributed an impressive 1,854 hours of service, and many went above and beyond by assisting with randomized controlled trials to deepen understanding of animal-assisted interventions. This commitment to research and education resulted in nine journal publications, three book chapters, and numerous conference presentations and keynote addresses. CHAI faculty conducted research projects with six medical students, four PhD students (two from Europe) and mentored four faculty members.

In addition to all of this, CHAI staff worked to successfully accomplish many different fundraising activities at VCU and VCU Health in 2025 in support of our mission.

We are grateful for the generosity of our supporters and the dedication of our volunteers, faculty, and staff. Together, we are not only providing care but also shaping the future of human-animal interaction through science, education, and compassion.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Your support ensures that every visit, every study, and every interaction makes a lasting impact.

**Charlotte**



**Allie**





# 2025 Executive Committee



**Nancy Gee,  
PhD, C-AIIS**

CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE CHAIR  
  
Professor of Psychiatry,  
VCU School of Medicine  
Bill Balaban Chair in  
Human-Animal Interaction  
Fellow and Former President,  
International Society for  
Anthrozoology  
Director, Center for Human  
Animal Interaction



**Jean Bailey, PhD**  
CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Associate Dean of  
Faculty Affairs,  
VCU School of Medicine



**Nathan  
Cunningham, MPH**

CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Associate Vice President of  
Patient Experience,  
VCU Health



**Marjolein de Wit,  
MD, MS**

CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Professor of Internal Medicine,  
VCU School of Medicine



**Carissa D. Etters, BS**

CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Associate Vice President,  
VCU Health Enterprise  
Communications



**Susan Kornstein, MD**

CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Professor of Psychiatry and  
Obstetrics & Gynecology,  
VCU School of Medicine  
Executive Director,  
VCU Institute for  
Women's Health



**Ralph Rios, FACHE**

CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Vice President of  
Support Services,  
VCU Health



**Gary Southard, Jr.,  
MBA**

CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Senior Administrator,  
VCU Health



**Suzanne Weaver,  
MS**

CHAI EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Director of Operations  
and Wellness,  
VCU & VCU Health



# 2025 Affiliates & Council

## Research Affiliates

**Randolph T. Barker, PhD**  
Professor Emeritus of Business,  
VCU

**Sandra B. Barker, PhD, NCC, LPC**  
Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry,  
Center Founding Director and  
Senior Advisor,  
VCU

**Gonzalo M.L. Bearman, MD, MPH**  
Professor & Chair, Internal Medicine and  
Infectious Diseases,  
VCU

**James Bjork, PhD**  
Professor, Institute for Drug and Alcohol  
Studies,  
VCU

**Pamela Dillon, PharmD**  
Associate Professor and Research Liaison,  
Wright Center for Clinical and  
Translational Research,  
VCU

**Jeffrey D. Green, PhD**  
Professor of Psychology,  
VCU

**Lance J. Hampton, MD**  
Associate Professor & Chair,  
Urology, VCU

**Susan Kornstein, PhD**  
Professor, Psychiatry and  
Obstetrics & Gynecology,  
VCU

**Ashlee R. Loughan, PhD**  
Assistant Professor, Neurology  
VCU

**Gretchen N. McCandless-Neigh, PhD**  
Professor, Anatomy and Neurobiology,  
VCU

**Shleby E. McDonald, PhD**  
Associate Professor of Social Work,  
Sarama Bliss Endowed Chair in  
Human-Animal Interaction,  
Colorado State University

**Lisa Townsend, LCSW, PhD**  
Associate Professor of  
Pediatrics and Psychiatry,  
VCU

## Advisory Council

**Randolph T. Barker, PhD**  
Professor Emeritus of Business,  
VCU

**Sandra B. Barker, PhD, NCC, LPC**  
Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry,  
Center Founding Director and  
Senior Advisor,  
VCU

**Gonzalo Bearman, MD, MPH, FACP, FSHEA**  
Chair of the Division of Infectious Diseases,  
Professor of Internal Medicine,  
Hospital Epidemiologist,  
VCU Health

**Kelly Gottschalk, DVM**  
Retired Veterinarian,  
Wellesley Animal Hospital,  
Richmond, VA

**Mark Gottschalk, DVM**  
Retired Veterinarian,  
Wellesley Animal Hospital,  
Richmond, VA

**Dick Robertson, DHL**  
Senior Advisor,  
Warner Brothers Television Group,  
Malibu, VA

**Cynthia Robson**  
Catering Director,  
VCU Health (Honorary Member)

**Dominic Sica, MD**  
Professor and Eminent Scholar of Internal  
Medicine,  
VCU

**R. Macon Sizemore, MHA, PT,**  
Rehabilitation Services Director (Retired),  
VCU Health

# Who's ON THE TEAM



**Nancy Gee**  
PhD, C-AIIS

Professor of Psychiatry, VCU School of Medicine  
Bill Balaban Chair in Human-Animal Interaction  
Fellow and Former President, International  
Society for Anthrozoology  
Director, Center for Human Animal Interaction



**Karl Dorn**  
MEd

Program Coordinator



**Lisa Townsend**  
LCSW, PhD

Associate Professor of  
Pediatrics and Psychiatry,  
VCU School of Medicine  
Clinical and Research  
Associate



**J.T. Hosack**  
MA

Volunteer Coordinator,  
Senior

# Our Volunteers



**CHAI's 72 volunteers contributed 1,854 hours of service in 2025!**

## 2025 Administrative Volunteers

Kathy Albers  
Dr. Randolph T. Barker  
Dr. Sandra B. Barker  
Denice Ekey  
Greg Felton  
Rebecca Felton  
Morgan Gossman  
Madhu Kandipan  
Barbara Klucik  
Margaret Popik  
Ivy Worsham

## 2025 Dogs on Call Volunteers

Beth & George with **Maggie & Baylee**  
Kathy with **Hairy Harry**  
Amy with **Chip**  
Marcie with **Harry**  
Sean with **Gracie O'Malley**  
Jessica with **Nova**  
Benjamin with **Sadie**  
Lauren with **Darcy**  
Gary with **DeDe & Trixie Belle**  
Shandra with **Ezra**

Ann with **Booker**  
Denice with **Darcy**  
Tracy with **Picca**  
Linda with **Jag**  
Dr. Gee with **Allie**  
Jennifer with **Snickers**  
Tracy with **Missy**  
Susie & Mike with **Kimchi**  
Susie with **Homer**  
Harrison with **Scout**  
Pat with **Gus**

# Our Volunteers



Thank you for all you do!

## 2025 Dogs on Call Volunteers (cont'd)

Michael with  
**Keegan & Cadhla**

Becky with **Ivy**

Danessa with **Dolly Parton**

Kristen with **Poppy**

Simone with **Captain Jack**

Marcia with **Phoebe**

Crystal with **Deezel**

Eliza with **Luna**

Dr. Levy with **Charlie**

Kim with  
**Clifford, Rudee, & Odee**

Jeanne with **Zeke**

Joan with **Gabbi & Truvy**

Dr. Oertel with **Dewey**

Pam with **Beckett & Pippin**

Brenda with **Leroy**

Bruce & Ann with  
**Scout & Pippa**

Terri with **Kirby**

Margaret with **Elsa**

Donna with **Cassie & River**

Ashley with **Charlie**

Denise with **Wiley**

Wayne with **Maxwell**

Daphne & Dr. Schmidt  
with **Shiner**

Susan with **Roe**

Katia with  
**Shiller, Kepler, & Tobias**

Mary Lu with **Healey**

Carol with **Dunkin**

Bob with **Remy & Louie**

Brinkley with **Tilly**

Jules with **Junia**

Brad with **Teddy**

Carmen with  
**Weird Alf Yank-A-Leash**

Karen with **Harbor**

Brian with **Cam**

Kim with **Kingston**

Cheryl with **Blue**

Sandy with **Dexter**

Amanda with **Belle**

Robin with  
**Yogi, Wrigley, & Bear**

Kim with **Callie & Chef**

## 2025 Research Teams

A number of our Dogs on Call teams go above and beyond by helping CHAI conduct randomized clinical trials in the hospital to examine experimentally the impact of therapy dog visitation in a hospital setting. We are grateful for their commitment to the additional training and time commitments this work requires.



George & Beth Adams with **Maggie & Baylee**  
 Kathy Albers with **Hairy Harry**  
 Marcie Apelt with **Harry**  
 Linda Flamm with **Jag**  
 Dr. Nancy Gee with **Allie**

Tracy Hartman with **Missy**  
 Susie Higbie with **Homer**  
 Simone Kschuk with **Captain Jack**  
 Marcia LaMaskin with **Phoebe**  
 Jeanne McNeill with **Zeke**  
 Margaret Popik with **Elsa**

Denise Russell with **Wiley**  
 Wayne Sarkees with **Maxwell**  
 Susan Sexton with **Roe**  
 Carmen Vasquez with **Weird Alf Yank-A-Leash**  
 Eliza with **Luna**

**To Learn More About Joining  
Dogs on Call, Scan Here**

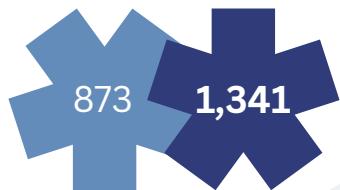


# Dogs on Call By The Numbers



Dogs on Call delivers complimentary/no-cost therapy dog visits to patients, their families, and staff at VCU Health. Visits can be requested by calling (804) 827-PAWS, by emailing [chai@vcuhealth.org](mailto:chai@vcuhealth.org), or by paging #6134 using a VCU Health pager.

Total Visit Requests Completed



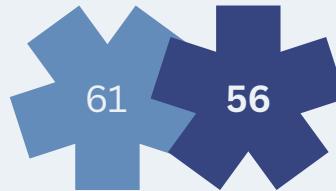
Percent of Requested Visits Met/Attempted



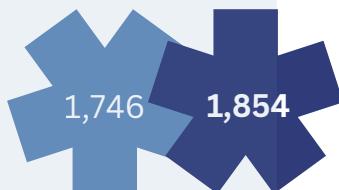
Total Visits Completed (Requests/Visits During Rounds)



Events Attended by Dogs on Call



Hours Volunteered



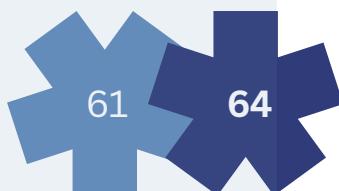
CHoR Visits



Meaningful Interactions



Peak Number of Dogs on Call Handlers



# DOGS ON CALL Activities & Events

While Dogs on Call continues to focus on serving VCU Health patients, families, and staff, our teams also love supporting the broader VCU community. **Dogs on Call teams made appearances at 56 events in 2025!**

Here are just a few of the highlights:

- 1/30** Austin Germani Memorial Fund's "Strike Out Stress" Bowling Tournament
- 3/23** Children's Hospital Foundation's Champions Day
- 4/11** Let Life Sing Carnival in celebration of Blue & Green Day
- 4/18** VCU Take Back the Night
- 4/30** Palliative Care Memorial Service
- 5/13** Polaroids with Pups
- 5/21** National Trauma Survivors Day
- 5/29** VCU Block Party
- 6/23** VTCC Mental Health Award Ceremony
- 7/21** School of Medicine New Student Orientation
- 7/26** Hounds for the Homesick
- 9/3** Well-Being Visit at the VCU Police Department
- 9/18** Pups on the Plaza
- 10/8** Paws for Serenity - VCU Honors College
- 11/13** World Diabetes Day
- 12/4** Lunchtime Lecture with the VCU School of Medicine's Blue Ridge Mountain Society

# CHAI Annual Fundraisers



The Center for Human-Animal Interaction is sustained in no small part by the generosity of the VCU Health community. We are grateful that so many friends and allies showed their support at our fundraiser events.

**The Austin Germani Memorial Fund's "Strike Out Stress" Fundraiser (January 30, 2025).** Dogs were a profound source of solace for Austin, and one of his passions was making therapy dogs accessible to individuals living with depression and anxiety. Austin's vision strongly aligns with CHAI's mission in research, education, and service, and the Austin Germani Memorial Fund has selected CHAI to be one of its beneficiaries. Dogs on Call maintains a strong presence supporting psychiatry patients at VCU Medical Center and at the Virginia Treatment Center for Children. Dogs on Call therapy dog teams and CHAI staff were honored to attend Austin's fundraiser, and we are delighted to partner with the AGMF going forward as a way of supporting mental health for all children.

**Pups on the Plaza (September 18, 2025).** This Block Party-like fundraiser occurred on 12<sup>th</sup> street and the plaza just outside the McGlothlin Medical Education Center. With the street closed by VCU Police, the event became a full-on block party. McGruff the Crime Dog made an appearance, DJ Woof played music, and people danced throughout the afternoon. Holiday Barn graciously covered the cost of the first 200 meals, so many healthcare workers and students were able to enjoy a free meal at the block party. But the real stars of the show were a rotating cast of 9 Dogs on Call therapy dog teams. Funds were raised by selling meal tickets, t-shirts, and other Dogs on Call-themed merchandise.

**Calendar Sales (November & December 2025).** Our Dogs on Call calendars, presenting photos of our Dogs on Call teams in action, were once again very popular in the VCU/VCU Health community. We were able to find 28 sponsors for this year's calendar, and we sold hundreds of copies!

**Close at Heart.** Throughout the year, members of the community are able to make donations in memory of, or in honor of, a pet, pet owner, organization, or anyone who loves animals. Both the donor and the honoree or family of the honoree receive signed letters from CHAI's Director, and the honorees also have their names memorialized in the Close at Heart book that we display prominently in our main office. Donations greater than \$1,000 are honored with a name plate, which we post on plaques hanging in the CHAI main office. We mailed out hundreds of Close at Heart letters in 2025, with each letter individually prepared and signed.

**Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC).** The Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign is the annual charitable giving program for state employees, allowing them to support approved nonprofit organizations through convenient payroll deductions. CHAI is proud to be one of the approved charities, making it easy for employees to contribute directly to our mission of advancing human-animal interaction research and programs. Our CVC code is 200018, and if you would like to learn more about giving through CVC information can be found at <https://cvc.virginia.gov/>

*Thank you to everyone who supports our mission!*

To Donate, Scan Here



# CHAI Educational Accomplishments



Our educational goal is to improve understanding of the benefits of the human-animal interaction. We accomplish our mission by teaching students, mentoring academic professionals, engaging in public education, and disseminating the science of Human-Animal Interaction in the media (see Press).

## Students

6

**Six** medical students in their fourth year (M4s) completed a 1-month elective rotation at CHAI. During their time at CHAI they split their time between working with CHAI's Director on research projects and helping with CHAI's day-to-day operations as well as supporting Dogs on Call teams in the hospital. They also helped prepare and distribute stuffed animals for children, courtesy of our partners at PetSmart.

4

**Four** PhD students worked under the guidance of CHAI's Director on research projects, dissertations, and presentations. These students came from a diverse international cohort, with residences in the United States, Czechia, Denmark, and the Netherlands. One student from Czechia also traveled to CHAI for in-person observation and hands-on work with Dogs on Call therapy dog teams.

## Human-Animal Interaction Mentoring

4

**Four** academic professionals were mentored by CHAI's Director on how to incorporate Human-Animal Interaction into their careers. The mentees included faculty members from Wayne State University, Purdue University, and Virginia Commonwealth University, as well as a psychiatrist and Humphrey Fellow from Egypt.

## CHAI

Research & Academic Accomplishments



3

**Randomized Control Trials (RCTs)  
Experiments**

11

**Journal Publications**

3

**Chapter Publications**

3

**Conference Presentations**

5

**Additional Invited Presentations**

In addition to these accomplishments, Dr. Nancy Gee also joined the “Theme 2: Wellbeing” team on the Building a Centre for Human-Animal Connections & Collaboration proposal, submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada in February 2025 and funded in 2025!

# CHAI Publications & Presentations

## Peer-Reviewed Journal Publications



Friedmann, E., **Gee, N. R.**, Simonsick, E. M., Resnick, B., Gurlu, M., Adesanya, I., & Shim, S. (2025). Pet Ownership, Pet Attachment, and Longitudinal Changes in Psychological Health—Evidence from the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging. *Geriatrics*, 10(6), 156. <https://doi.org/10.3390/geriatrics10060156>

Friedmann, E., **Gee, N.R.**, Eltantawy, M., Cole, S., (In Press). A systematic review of pet attachment and health outcomes in older adults. *Pets*.

Fuglsang-Damgaard, L. H., Lunde, S. J., Christensen, J. W., Vase, L., Videbech, P. B., **Gee, N. R.**, Thodberg, K. (2025). How the presence of a dog and types of interaction affect physiological responses to experimental heat pain induction in healthy humans – a randomized controlled study. *Physiology & Behavior*, 302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2025.115097>

**Gee, N. R., Townsend, L.**, Friedmann, E., **Barker, S.**, & Mueller, M. (2025). A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial to Examine the Impact of a Therapy Dog Intervention on Depression, Mood, and Anxiety in Hospitalized Older Adults. *Healthcare*, 13(15), 1819. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13151819>

**Gee, N., Townsend, L.**, Friedmann, E., **Barker S.**, Thakre, T., & Mueller, M. (2025). A pilot randomized controlled trial to examine the impact of a therapy dog intervention on loneliness in adult patients hospitalized in a psychiatric unit. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1582767>

Koodaly, L., Friedmann, E., **Gee, N. R.**, Simonsick, E. M., Resnick, B., Nahm, E.-S., Galik, E., & Holmes, S. (2025). Pet Attachment and Influence as Moderators of the Relationships of Psychological Factors to Physical Function in Community-Residing Older Adults. *Pets*, 2(1), 10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/pets2010010>

# CHAI

## Publications & Presentations



### Peer-Reviewed Journal Publications (Cont.)

Makhinson, M., Pollack, L., Hallowell, R., Murray, C., Maddock, J., Stewart, S. M., Basu, A., King, D., Hansen, H., & **Ecological Medicine Working Group**. (2025). A consensus statement for ecological medicine: Moving toward connection-based medicine. *Ecohealth*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10393-025-01757-3>

Shoesmith, E. K., Ratschen, E., Riga, J., Mills, D. S., Gibsone, S., McMillan, D., Wu, Q., Clarke, C., Sprange, K., Meints, K., **Gee, N. R.**, Nieforth, L. O., Dillion, N., Fine, A., & Hall, S. (in press). Guidance for protocol content and reporting of dog-assisted interventions in randomised controlled trials: Explanation and elaboration of the SPIRIT 2025 and CONSORT 2025 extensions. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*.

**Townsend, L.** (2025). [Review of the book *Animal-assisted counseling and psychotherapy: A clinician's guide*, by L. Chassman Craddock & E. K. Winston]. *Anthrozoös*, 38(5), 933–934. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2025.2520054>

**Townsend, L.**, **Gee, N. R.**, Friedmann, E., Mueller, M. K., Thakre, T. P., & **Barker, S. B.** (in press). Feasibility of Recruiting Psychiatrically Hospitalized Adults for a Randomized Controlled Trial of an Animal-Assisted Intervention. *Healthcare*, 14(2), 154. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare14020154>

**Townsend, L.**, Phillips, G., & Hoy-Gerlach, J. (2025). Understanding and accessing the continuum of human/animal support services: A scoping review. *Human-Animal Interactions*, 13(1), 0037. <https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2025.0037>

## CHAI Publications (Cont'd)



## Chapter

**Gee, N. R.**, Fine, A. H., & Kaufmann, M. (2025). Animals in educational settings research and practice. In A. H. Fine, M. K. Mueller, Y. N. Zenithson, T. C. Griffin, & P. Tedeschi (Eds.), *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Foundations and guidelines for animal-assisted interventions* (6th ed., pp. 323-341). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-443-22346-4.15009-7>

**Gee, N. R.**, & Wells, D. L. (2025). Examining the trajectory of human-animal interaction research: Past, present, and future. In A. H. Fine, M. K. Mueller, Y. N. Zenithson, T. C. Griffin, & P. Tedeschi (Eds.), *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Foundations and guidelines for animal-assisted interventions* (6th ed., pp. 83-94). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-443-22346-4.00006-8>

**Gee, N. R.** (2025). Global best practices in applying AAIs: Snapshots of unique programs. In A. H. Fine, M. K. Mueller, Y. N. Zenithson, T. C. Griffin, & P. Tedeschi (Eds.), *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Foundations and guidelines for animal-assisted interventions* (6th ed., pp. 449-488). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-443-22346-4.00028-7>

## Conference Presentations

Duckworth, J., Dimolareva, M., **Gee, N.**, Meints, K., Brelsford, V., (2025, June). Pawsitive impact: Measuring the Dog Mentor's effect on neurodivergent students [Podium presentation]. 34<sup>th</sup> International Society of Anthrozoology Conference, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

**Gee, N.R.**, **Townsend, L.**, Friedmann, E., Mueller, M., Thakre, T. P., & **Barker, S. B.** (2025, June). A pilot randomized clinical trial of a canine-assisted intervention demonstrates reduced loneliness in adults hospitalized for mental illness [Podium presentation]. 34<sup>th</sup> International Society of Anthrozoology Conference, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

**Townsend, L.**, **Gee, N. R.**, Friedmann, E., Mueller, M., **Barker, S.**, & Thakre, T. P. (June, 2025). Feasibility of recruiting psychiatrically hospitalized adults for a randomized controlled trial of an animal-assisted intervention [Poster presentation]. 34<sup>th</sup> International Society of Anthrozoology Conference, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.



## CHAI Publications (Cont'd)

# Invited Presentations

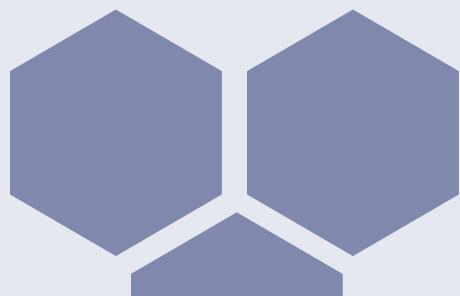
**Gee, N.** (2025, March 12). Examining the trajectory of human-animal interaction research: Past, present, and future [Online Presentation]. Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals.  
<https://aaaiponline.org/past-events/>

**Gee, N.** (2025, April 7). The paws that refresh us: Improving mental health through dog therapy [Keynote address]. Animal Abuse & Human Violence Symposium. Newark, Delaware, United States.  
<https://dvcc.delaware.gov/animal-abuse-human-violence-symposium-resources/>

**Gee, N.** (2025, November 6). Are companion animals good for us? [Online Presentation]. VCU Libraries Community Zoms.

**Gee, N.** (2025, November 18). Exploring the human-animal bond through collaboration, compassion and coexistence [Keynote address]. 2025 Soothing Paws® Program Atlantic Health System Conference.  
<https://events.atlantichealth.org/event/2025-soothing-paws-program-conference>

**Gee, N.** (2025, December 4). Human-Animal Interactions for Medical Students [Presentation]. Blue Ridge Mountain Society of Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.



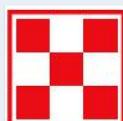
# CHAI Externally-Funded Research Projects

The Center for Human-Animal Interaction generates new knowledge by conducting rigorous empirical research. External grant funding supported three randomized-controlled trial (RCTs) examining the impacts of a therapy dog intervention on loneliness, depression, anxiety, and related health outcomes among three vulnerable inpatient populations: older adults, adults with mental illness, and children. Intervention data collection was completed for all three projects this year and publication of results has already begun. Stay tuned for more journal publications and conference presentations!

The Center for Human-Animal Interaction is grateful to the following external funders for supporting our ongoing research:

**MARS**  
Petcare

*A Better Paw  
World For Pets*

 **PURINA**

  
**habri**  
human animal bond  
research institute

# CHAI Social Media Reach



## Social Media Reach

3,521 Instagram Followers

5.1 K Facebook Followers  
(Across all Accounts)

## Top Posts of 2025



101 Likes  
4,799 Views



95 Likes  
1,481 Views



88 Likes  
2,440 Views



147 Likes



106 Likes



67 Likes



## CHAI In the Press

CHAI faculty and programs have again garnered a steady stream of media coverage for VCU and VCU Health in 2025, locally, nationally, and internationally.

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Posit Science (2025, March 19). The surprising health perks of having a pet. **AOL**. <https://www.aol.com/surprising-health-perks-having-pet-170500021.html>

Wright, S. (2025, April 9). The dog-ter is in: The Dogs on Call therapy program grows at VCU Health Community Memorial Hospital. **VCU News**. <https://www.vcuhealth.org/news/-the-dog-ter-is-in/>

Stephens, M. (2025, March 17). With a nuzzle, paw and kiss, dogs offer a potent antidote to human loneliness. **VCU News**. <https://www.vcuhealth.org/news/with-a-nuzzle-paw-and-kiss-dogs-offer-a-potent-antidote-to-human-loneliness-/>

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LaCross, J. (2025, May). The power of touch. **Just Labs**. <https://justlabsmagazine.com/the-power-of-touch-mj25-lacross/>

Kogan, L. (Host). (2025, August 14). Understanding and accessing the continuum of human/animal support services: A scoping review [Audio podcast episode]. In American Psychological Association Human-Animal Interaction Podcast. **American Psychological Association**. <https://www.human-animal-interaction.org/podcast/understanding-and-accessing-the-continuum-of-human-animal-support-services-a-scoping-review/>



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**Waltham Petcare Science Institute.** (n.d.). Therapy dogs bring moments of calm to older adult inpatients. <https://www.waltham.com/therapy-dogs-bring-moments-calm-older-adult-inpatients>

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Mercado, M. (2025, September 10). Do dogs actually raise our serotonin levels? They sure feel like the key to happiness. **Kinship.** <https://www.kinship.com/dog-lifestyle/do-dogs-raise-serotonin-levels>

Tupponce, J. (2025, October 7). Leading the pack with clinical compassion. **VCU Health News.** <https://www.vcuhealth.org/news/leading-the-pack-with-clinical-compassion/>

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# CHAI's Gratitude

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