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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aging Together offering “companion” pets through special funding

Thanks to funding help from Northern Piedmont Community Foundation (NPCF), Aging Together is offering Lifelike Companion Pets for older adults and those with disabilities. The actual article is a furry, lifelike animal that responds to stimulus such as touch. Cats or dogs can be hugged, receive caresses, or just snuggle next to a person. They move, purr, and appear interactive and attentive.

The pandemic magnified social isolation as an adverse condition especially among those in long term care facilities such as nursing homes, and those who live with critical challenges such as dementia are particularly stressed. Lack of human companionship, or even the necessity to give up a beloved pet, intensifies loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Robotic pets (the official name) have a proven ability to bring comfort and lower stress in older adults.

“We have been providing iPads to facilities since the onslaught of the pandemic in 2020. Now we are excited to add these lifelike pets as a contribution for those who can’t communicate well, or who could use some form of interaction that offers response”, says Ellen Phipps, Aging Together’s Executive Director. These lifelike pets can even improve mobility skills as a person “pets” an animal and receives a purr or movement response. They are interactive without making a person feel judged or self-conscious for inadequacy in communication due to cognitive challenges. And they offer a sense of companionship.

“They are actually quite therapeutic”, suggests Phipps. And they are low maintenance for those who can no longer care for a pet but for whom pets were lifelong companions.

The seed funding from Northern Piedmont Community Foundation allows Aging Together to purchase enough robotic cats and dogs for limited delivery to long term care facilities in all five counties. The intent is to grow the program so that eventually support can also include those living in their own homes.

For more information contact Aging Together at 540-829-6405 or info@agingtogether.org.

(photos follow)

The mission of Aging Together is, through partnerships, to connect people to communities and resources to improve quality of life as we age. Aging Together serves the counties of Culpeper, Fauquier, Orange, Madison and Rappahannock. #####



Photo courtesy of Trinity Senior Village, Locust Grove, VA