

The Meaning of Dogs in Seniors' Lives

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Canada



Old age is the period when people are most strongly and deeply attached to their animals.

Companion animal may be only friend.

A vital part of daily existence.

(Hart, 2006; Huss, 2014; Suthers-McCabe, 2001)

ElderDog Canada

- national non-profit and registered charity
- dedicated to senior people and senior dogs
- national office in NS
- operational since 2012
- 100% volunteer run
- Pawds (chapters) coast to coast
- no fees for any of our services



ElderDog Canada Beginnings



Ageing People
Ageing Dogs



ElderDog Pawds

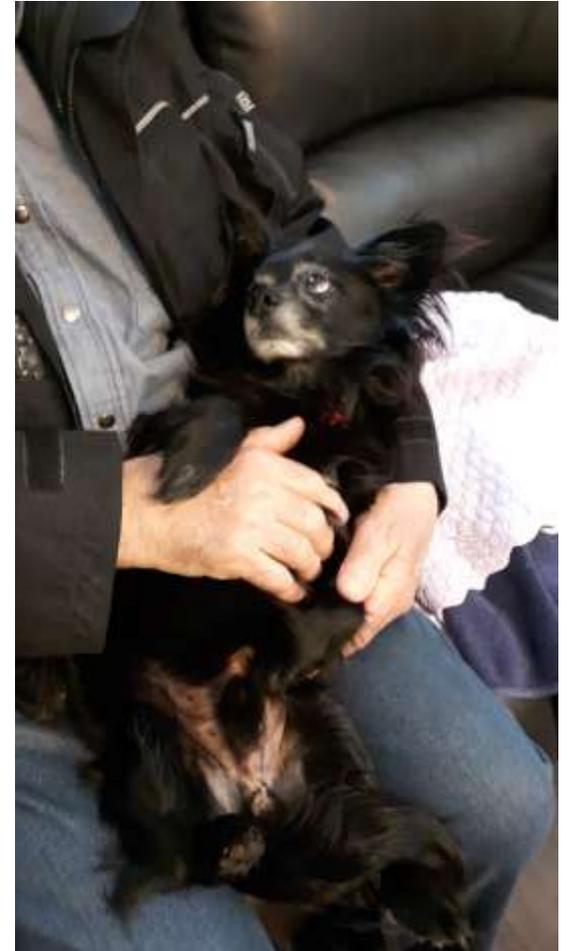
- local chapters
- coordinated clusters of volunteers
- reflect ElderDog goals and programs
- supported by community groups, organizations, and local businesses



Our Mission and Values

To honour and preserve the animal-human bond based on guiding principles of:

- dignity and respect
- health and well-being
- comfort
- quality of Life
- tribute
- integrity
- sustainability



What We Do



Dog Care Support for
Seniors



Older Dog Care and
Re-homing



Education, Outreach,
and Research

1-855-336-4226 or info@elderdog.ca



Research Says

- 🐾 physiological benefits: improved heart health; increased physical activity; lowered levels of hypertension
- 🐾 mental health benefits: enhanced well-being, self-worth, and overall happiness; reduced stress, anxiety, and depression; countering loneliness
- 🐾 social benefits: enhanced social interaction and civic engagement

Older Adults Say

🐾 She is my best friend.

🐾 I don't know what I would do without him.

🐾 I can't imagine life without her.

🐾 He is my one true companion.

🐾 She is always there.

Beyond benefits...

Grow Old Along with Me: The Meaning of Dogs in Seniors' Lives

- 🐾 What does it mean for a senior to live in the company of a canine companion?
- 🐾 How can such a relationship be adequately described?
- 🐾 What happens in those quiet moments of being in relationship with a canine companion?

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42413-019-00034-w>

Participants and Process

- 🐾 14 older adults, mid 60s to 99
- 🐾 16 dogs, 4 to 16+, small (e.g., Havanese) to mid-sized (e.g., Australian Shepherd) to large (e.g., Greyhound)
- 🐾 rural, town, urban

Phenomenological study:

- 🐾 in-depth conversations
- 🐾 shadowing
- 🐾 photographs

Beloved Attachment



Unconditional Love



Steadfast Friendship



Joyful Responsibility



Call to Action

Perhaps the happiest and most beneficial relationships between pets and people are realized when the community as a whole recognizes the value of a companion animal and offers ... assistance to [those] who want to promote this vital dimension of living.



Cusack & Smith, 1984,
Pets and the Elderly: The Therapeutic Bond

www.elderdog.ca

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Become Involved

- Join
- Volunteer
- Register
- Adopt
- Donate
- Purchase
 - www.elderdogcanadastore.ca
- Spread the word

