

# Pets & Retirement Living: A Wealth of Health Benefits

By Nicole Skinner  
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According to a recent survey by the American Pet Products Association, more than 79 million U.S. households, or 65 percent of us, own a pet.

Of those households, 42 percent have more than one pet.

New studies are also showing this is especially true for seniors; and that owning a pet during retirement can enhance a person's overall well-being. Special adoption programs have been created to match seniors with pets that need a forever



Resident Sharry Carbon was welcome to bring her dog, Puddin, when she relocated to Riverview Retirement Community. *Photo courtesy Brian Plonka.*

Research has touted a variety of health benefits for pet owners over the years. In 2014, the Center for Disease Control published data that owning a pet can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, triglyceride levels and feelings of loneliness. Having a pet can also increase one's opportunities for exercise, outdoor activities and socialization.

home. Pet therapy is a growing strategy in retirement homes and communities where residents may not be able to own their own pet.

What if you have a pet and want to transition to a retirement lifestyle in a senior living community? Can you bring your pet?

At Riverview Retirement Community, Marketing Representative Lori Sage says yes.

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**“Pets are a part of many individuals’ lives prior to transitioning to our community. We allow residents to move their pets in to our independent and assisted living community without any pet deposit or monthly fee for their pets.”**

Riverview’s pet policy just requires that the resident(s) must be able to take care of their pet’s needs and provide current immunization records, and in the event the resident has to be in the hospital, they list a contact for the pet.

“Many times when I’m touring families around the community, not only is it important that we allow pets in our community, they are pleasantly surprised we don’t charge fees of any kind to keep their pets,” she said. “Other communities may charge a non-refundable pet deposit or a monthly rent for the pet.”

Resident Sister Rita Lemire was excited to hear Riverview doesn’t charge pet fees when she initially talked with Sage. She was planning to get a dog so this was an important factor in her decision to choose Riverview. Since moving in, she adopted a sweet dog from a local shelter and named her “Angel.”

Residents who own pets aren’t the only ones

that reap the rewards. While some residents in the Terrace building of the Riverview campus are unable to manage caring for their own pet, they can still enjoy other pets.

“We also have some caregivers in the building who bring their small pets while working, which enables all the residents to enjoy those,” Sage said.

Sage estimates that around 10 percent of Riverview Terrace residents own a pet, mostly dogs. If a resident is going to be away, often neighbors, family or even a campus employee may offer to help care for the pet while they are gone. Staff can also suggest pet sitting contacts from several area services.

Resident Sharry Carbon has enjoyed the experience.

**“The decision to move here was easy when I learned that I could bring my dog, Puddin. I wouldn’t know what to do without her,” she said.**

With so many pet lovers on campus, Riverview hopes to create special opportunities for pet lovers to socialize with their pets this year. No matter which reason is the specific driving factor for making a move, such as staying connected, finding support and care, or increased quality time, it’s comforting to know that modern senior communities can offer all of those and more.

**Special adoption programs have been created to match seniors with pets that need a forever home.**

***For more information about Riverview Retirement Community visit [riverviewretirement.org](http://riverviewretirement.org) or call (509)483-6483.***

