



# SNUGGLES FOR SENIORS



For seniors, interacting with a pet can be life altering. Feelings of loneliness or isolation can melt away with a simple stroke and purring response. The physical and mental health benefits of interacting with a furry companion can be many—from reduced blood pressure to elevated serotonin levels.

According to metadata from UCLA (<https://www.uclahealth.org/pac/animal-assisted-therapy>), these health benefits include lower anxiety, reduction in loneliness and an increase of mental stimulation, which assists in memory recall helping seniors who have Alzheimer's disease.

The Hermitage understands the depth of caring involved in the human-animal bond, and created this program to help senior citizens who cannot have a pet of their own. Each cat is specially chosen for their temperament, and love of cuddles.

Snuggles for Seniors takes place at multiple retirement homes located in Tucson several times a month. One care provider told us, "Many of our residents were life-long pet owners. Now that they are unable to have or care for a pet, having cat therapy visits really fills a void in their lives." Another facility, the activities director told us, "We have residents who don't have many visitors, so [the cats coming in for a visit] really brightens their day and gives them something to look forward to. Many of our residents have dementia. This is great therapy for them because, not only is the physical sensation of petting the cats very soothing, but for them, it helps bring back memories and stimulates their minds."

**In 2018, we had 40 visits with 540 clients.**

