

“These pups have a *paws*-itive impact on thousands of kids!”



PAWsitve Play therapy dogs and their handlers visit with children to lift their spirits, give them comfort and reduce anxiety at Texas Children's Hospital

As a child life specialist at a children's hospital, Adair Winget, her pup, Bailey, and a team of other handlers and dogs are helping make children's worst moments a little brighter—and healing so many hearts!



Bailey and Adair

“Come on, Bailey!” Adair Winget called, her golden retriever trotting beside her as they walked into Texas Children's Hospital.

As a child life specialist, Adair's job was to help children through diagnoses, procedures and surgeries, with her trusted animal-assisted therapy dog, Bailey, at her side. Together, the duo provided whatever the patient needed, whether it be a cuddle, a pet or a playmate.

But tonight, Adair and Bailey were on a mission. Earlier, Adair had received a message that one of the children she worked with in the cardiac unit had finally received a lifesaving heart transplant.

“They're in recovery, Bailey!” Adair said to her furry friend, whose wagging tail seemed to say, *Let's go visit!*

And so the pair made their way through the unit as memories filled Adair's mind. This young, vivacious patient had brought so much life to the ward, but sadly, that spark of life had waned as the little one grew sicker and weaker.

In that time, Bailey had become the patient's best friend, snuggling close to share a smile and a sniff of encouragement. And Adair knew one thing: She wanted Bailey to be the first thing the child saw upon waking.

Labor of love

This was not the first time Bailey had seen a child through a life-changing medical moment. In fact, Adair and her pup were part of Texas Children's PAWsitve Play program, which joins a child life specialist with a therapy pup to help pediatric patients cope and heal.

From 2016—when PAWsitve Play founder Sarah Herbek and her furry companion, Elsa, began their work in the pediatric wards of the hospital—the magic



Kids play games with therapy pups



The team is full of dogs trained to provide whatever a child might need



Some pups even stop by for a simple snuggle to lift spirits

of the program was clear. Once, Sarah watched a child without the strength to smile or sit up do so just to snuggle Elsa. In another instance, she saw a child stand for the first time after surgery...all thanks to Elsa's loving encouragement.

As the program grew, donations began pouring in to train more dogs. Soon, Bailey joined as one of the six sweet pups on staff, which now includes Pinto, Cohen, Pluto and Angus. Equipped with their own staff badges, each dog helps boost children's moods and elevates their self-confidence, while decreasing their anxiety, pain and isolation.

But today, as Adair and Bailey passed through the doors of the ICU, it was her own mood that was lifted as she heard that the young patient had made it through surgery... and the patient's first question was, “Where is Bailey?”

A legacy of hope

“Adair, you don't understand!” the patient's mother had said, tears of joy in her eyes as Bailey reunited with her child later on. “My child wasn't afraid to come and

get the transplant, and simply said, ‘I'll get my heart and I'll wake up and get to be with Bailey...and it'll all be fine.’”

Adair's heart soared hearing just how much comfort Bailey had been able to provide—comfort that each of the dogs on the ward has given to countless children and their families.

“Our daughter spent months in the hospital, and there were times that Sarah and Queen Elsa were the only thing that brought a smile to her face,” one mother had said. “They will forever hold a special place in our hearts.”

That gratitude shines through in the donations the program receives from

outsiders (at [TexasChildrens.org/pawpositiveplay](https://www.texaschildrens.org/pawpositiveplay)), as well as from the children and families themselves. And for the families who are faced with the tragedy of losing a beloved child, the PAWsitve Play team is always humbled to hear them say it is their greatest wish to honor their child's memory by giving back to the program.

“When I hear a parent say that their child was happiest when they were with Bailey, it hits me to my core,” Adair shares. “It is extremely rewarding and humbling to form relationships with these children. In such a scary time in their lives, they often don't know who is going to walk through the door—but when we do, we provide a touchstone of joy and hope. We're just excited to widen our ability to *paws*-itively impact even more lives!” —Alexandra Pollock

3 ways to spread hope to hospitalized kids!

1 Send snail mail
Deliver smiles to more than 100,000 kids in hospitals in all 50 states by simply visiting [CardsForHospitalizedKids.com](https://www.CardsForHospitalizedKids.com). Click “Make cards” for card-making guidelines or to host a card-making event with a group of your own. Even better: You can nominate a sick child you know to receive a card too!

2 Craft a ‘pillow pet’
Make a cuddle buddy: Measure a pillow and cut two pieces of fabric measuring the pillow width + 1" x pillow length + 1". Use fabric glue to seal the two pieces together, leaving one end open. Add Velcro to the lining of the open side; attach googly eyes and a pom-pom ball for a nose. Insert pillow and Velcro it closed.

3 Provide playtime
Studies show that playing games helps hospitalized kids forget their pain. Visit [PlaytimeEdventures.com](https://www.PlaytimeEdventures.com) to send fun bedsheets with activities and puzzles pre-printed on them for hospitalized kids to enjoy!



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