

Aging in Place with Pets Internship

A Caring Partnership Between Cathedral Square, Support and Services at Home (SASH), and the Center on Aging at the University of Vermont

In pursuit of the mission, in fulfillment of the vision, and in keeping with the values of [Cathedral Square](#), [SASH](#), and the [Center on Aging at the University of Vermont](#), we are excited to announce the launch of this new and exciting program that promotes a sense of well-being and a high quality of life for older adults by facilitating their and their pets' health and welfare to help ensure that they can continue to provide each other with invaluable social and emotional support.

In this unique, hybrid (combining in-person and remote work) internship, students address barriers to the instrumental activity of daily living (IADL) of the care of pets among older adults, which has notably been referred to as the “forgotten” (and, unfortunately, even “neglected”) IADL for this vulnerable, and diverse, population. Students will have the opportunity to establish, and maintain, relationships with older adults over a semester- to year-long internship, so that they, like their pets, can reduce their sense of social isolation and loneliness within the comfort of their home, and improve their sense of belonging within the safety of their independent (or assisted) living community.

We are looking for students who are creative, innovative, empathetic, and, most importantly, holistic, and dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of both older adults and their pets. In collaboration with Cathedral Square residents and/or SASH participants, interns provide support and services such as:

- Developing or updating “healthy living plans for pets” to promote safety, independence, and effectiveness in the care of pets.
- Performing important tasks of this IADL such as grooming cats and dogs and walking dogs.
- Facilitating arts and crafts groups (and other groups) relating to pets such as making toys for cats and dogs and clothing for dogs.
- Collaborating with veterinarians and other veterinary medicine professionals.
- Collaborating with other nonprofit, social service organizations such as with animal shelters to support the adoption and prevent the relinquishment (or, more aptly, “surrender”) of pets.

This internship was created and is directed by **Dr. Blake Randell, OTD, OTR/L**, who is an occupational therapist that specializes in and advocates for the care of pets among adults with disabilities, older adults, and, particularly, older adults with disabilities.

Participant Testimonials among Residents of Grand Way Commons (an Independent Living Community with an On-Site SASH Coordinator and Wellness Nurse):

“This program makes an immeasurable difference in my life. It provides me with the support that both my cat and I need for the quality of life that we both deserve. I would highly recommend that other Cathedral Square residents (and SASH participants) actively take part in this program in pursuit and fulfillment of both their health and well-being and that of their pets who cannot advocate for themselves.” - **Marjorie (Grand Way Commons resident)**

“I’ve had dogs for the past 40 years. Although I haven’t adopted another dog since moving into this independent living community, I’ve been helping other residents with taking care of their dogs and cats. For example, I help other residents when they’re away from their homes, while they’re going on a vacation, or unfortunately when staying at the hospital. *I recommend that other residents, even if they don’t have pets, volunteer in this program.* I have found fulfillment in connecting with people through our shared interest of promoting the health and welfare of pets.” - **John L. (Grand Way Commons resident)**

Intern Testimonials among Students of the University of Vermont:

“I believe that this is an important endeavor because the ability to care for a pet is valuable for both human and animal wellness. It promotes sociability and the human-animal bond, which is powerful in reducing stress and improving quality of life for people and their pets” - **Kyliegh Gonet (Major in Biological Science with Minor in Animal Science)**

“This internship has enabled me to work with populations of people I never would have come into contact with, and has led to valuable experiences. Knowing that you’re preventing somebody from relinquishing their pet, when they are so reliant on that pet for social, emotional, and mental health reasons, it feels like you are making a big, meaningful difference in their lives.” - **Devon Whelchel (Major in Psychological Science with Minor in Behavioral Health Studies)**

“This internship has allowed me to explore many facets of my interests and has given me real world experience that I can now transfer into more experiences! I have learned just how important pets can be for one’s mental and physical health, and how motivating pets can be for one to better themselves and their community.” - **Emma Watson (Major in Psychological Science with Minors in Animal Science and Art)**

“This internship has unlocked an enhanced sense of appreciation towards older generations who are dedicating their time towards improving their pets' lives.” - **Sadie Gidner (Major in Animal Science with Minor in Psychological Science)**

“This internship allows me to establish meaningful relationships, as I truly feel like I’m making a difference in another person’s life. There’s nothing better than being able to pet a dog and see their owner’s gratitude for our help.” - **Campbell Kohls (Major in Psychological Science with Minors in Music and Neuroscience)**

“This internship has provided me with an in-person experience of the interconnection between emotional well-being and the care of pets. Seeing the benefits firsthand has given me the needed skills I otherwise wouldn’t have experienced, both for the communities we work with and myself.” - **Eli Armieri (Major in Health and Society with Minor in Emergency Medical Services)**

“This internship has shown me how impactful pets can be to their caregiver’s life in giving them companionship, emotional support, and love. The relationship between the pair is mutually beneficial as it enhances the quality of life of not only older adults and people with diverse needs, but also their pets in fostering their nurturing tendencies.” - **Viannie Rivera (Major in Psychological Science with Minor in Human Development and Family Studies)**

“What I love about this internship specifically is that every aspect emphasizes the care of both animals and people. I appreciate the holistic and genuine approach we take and it’s amazing to be part of a cause that helps make someone's life happier.” - **Miles Ess (Major in Animal Science with Minor in Zoology)**

“This internship has given me the opportunity to understand the role of facilitating, and strengthening, the bond between older adults and their pets. I have learned effective interpersonal skills while gaining a broader understanding of the importance of assisting older adults in independent living communities. By strengthening the social and emotional well-being of older adults, we support both the residents and their pets in and of themselves.” - **Riley Maher (Major in Psychological Science with Minors in Behavior Change Health Studies, Sexuality and Gender Identity Studies, and Integrative Health and Wellness Coaching)**

Eligibility and Submission Requirements

This internship is eligible for students who are completing undergraduate or graduate degree programs including (but not limited to):

- **Major or Minor Degree Programs-**
 - Animal Science
 - Animal Science Art*
 - Behavioral Change Health Studies
 - Biological Science
 - Biology
 - Health and Society
 - Human Development and Family Science
 - Integrative Health

- Integrative Health and Wellness Coaching
- Neuroscience
- Nursing
- Psychological Science
- Public Health Sciences
- Social Work
- Sociology
- Writing
- Zoology
- **Graduate Degree Programs-**
 - Counseling
 - Nursing
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Physical Activity and Wellness Science
 - Psychology
 - Public Health
 - Social Work

*Students completing an undergraduate degree program in art have the option of creating portraits of pets and hand-delivering them to Cathedral Square residents and/or SASH participants.

To submit an application for this internship, please email [Dr. Blake Randell](#) by **August 31, 2024** for the **Fall 2024 Semester**, **January 18, 2025** for the **Spring 2025 Semester**, and **May 24, 2025** for the **Summer Semester**.



"I have two pets, my dog Harry and my cat Pearl, who both provide me with the comfort that I need to help me relax at home. Harry has a lot of energy! He (and I) love when interns take him on long walks. **I am grateful for this service and other services that are available through the Aging in Place with Pets program at my independent living community.**"

CHERYL, Grand Way Commons resident