

The Healing Paws of Pets

After Sheryl Brereton, 70, of Severn, Md., fell in January, her beloved black Labrador retriever, Remmy, was brought to her hospital bedside. ■ “We placed Mom’s hand on his paw so she could feel it,” says Brereton’s daughter, Ashley. “Remmy kept his paw there as long as she needed.” ■ Hospitals have long recognized the comfort provided to patients by visiting cats and dogs. A visit with Valentine lifted Ethel Cohen’s spirits during her stay at Washington, D.C.’s Sibley Memorial Hospital. Now, though, more hospitals are allowing family pets to com-

fort patients during recovery or at the end of life. “The pet is often the one to curl up by your side and wants to help you feel better,” says Donna Dishman, executive director of PAWS Houston. The nonprofit group began

coordinating personal pet visits at Houston’s Methodist Hospital and expanded its program to other area hospitals and hospices. ■ The University of Maryland Medical Center allows pet visits for patients admitted for more than a few days, says the Rev. Susan Roy, director of pastoral care services. The trend is toward “recognizing what is important to the patient and family so that those things [like pets] can be a part of assisting” patient healing, Roy says. —Susan Kreimer



■ Valentine visits Ethel Cohen in D.C.