**CHALLENGE THERAPY DOG**

***“Chance”***

PURPOSE:

Provide an additional way of improving our cadets social, emotional and mental functioning.

BENEFITS:

A wide range of mental health conditions are now treated through pet-therapy. Interactions with animals are considered to offer benefits to patients suffering from [post-traumatic stress disorder](http://dogtime.com/one-dog-changes-the-lives-of-two-war-veterans.html), autism and challenging psychiatric disorders. Abundant research demonstrates the beneficial effects of animals on a multitude of groups including children that suffer from mental illness & depression. Therapy animals have been found to bring social support and other psychological benefits to those that they interact with. Petting an animal is believed to cause the release of endorphins (feel-good neurotransmitters) which can have an extremely positive impact in individuals dealing with depressive disorders. More detailed and developed interventions are often based on the premise that by focusing on the animal and its needs, the individual’s attention is drawn away from their own problems. Individuals also have an opportunity to develop their nurturing skills and are encouraged to develop a sense of empathy with the animal allowing them to relate that to human interactions.

Evidence Based:

Vulnerable children adults have benefited from animal-therapy programs in numerous residential settings throughout the county to include Massachusetts Department of Corrections, The Joseph Harp Center in Oklahoma, The Kit Carson Center in Colorado and assisted living home in Bryan College Station in Texas.