



New Position Will Explore Human-Animal Bond

A newly created position at the University of Denver will explore and test the effectiveness of animal therapy.

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The American Humane Association (AHA) and the University of Denver have joined forces to create a \$2 million endowed chair in the university's Graduate School of Social Work to explore the field of animal-assisted social work and the bond between humans and animals.

The AHA and the Animal Assistance Foundation provided seed money to establish the university's Institute for Human-Animal Connection, and the newly endowed chair furthers the partnership between the AHA and the university by focusing the research on the health benefits of animal interaction as well as connections between animal abuse and violence towards humans.

"As early as 1894, American Humane publicly discussed the suspected link between animal abuse and other forms of social violence," said Marie Belew Wheatley, president and CEO of AHA. "This chair and our partnership with [the University of Denver] will be instrumental in advancing the scholarly study of all aspects of the human-animal connection, including documenting the benefits – to both people and animals – of the human-animal bond."

A national search is underway to find a professional who will fill the chair, lead research efforts, and assist with animal-related academic programs.

Animal therapy has been shown to increase trust, improve communication, and enhance sensory-motor skills, according to the AHA. The new chair will test and try to confirm these results.