

Topics

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- Hormones and Metabolism

Janice Allen
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GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.— A woman from Caledonia is bringing smiles to the faces of seniors in West Michigan with the help of a very special puppy.

Alicia Junghans, the owner of **ComforCare Senior Services** in Grand Rapids, recently branched out to begin offering free "pet therapy" to various senior living centers in the area.

Junghans, along with her Great Dane/St.Bernard puppy Lucy, visit different retirement homes to interact with the residents. Junghans told FOX 17 the pet therapy is beneficial in a bunch of different ways.

"I think the biggest benefit for [seniors] is to help with loneliness. I think it's a great way to help with someone's depression," explained Junghans. "Relaxation... their anxiety is going to be lowered. They're going to feel happier. A lot of **hormones** are released, that releases

the natural body endorphins."

Lucy is a certified pet therapy dog. FOX 17 got to catch her in action as she stopped by Covenant Village Retirement Community in Grand Rapids Thursday. The residents dished out plenty of petting and personal attention to the puppy, who even gave some "kisses" in return.

"She is the cutest dog ever," said Junghans. "For them, it's a friendly visitor coming to visit, and it's just the simple thing of touching a dog."

Junghans plans to continue volunteering her time to offer the pet therapy. She has partnered with several retirement communities in the area to offer the free service.

"This is something I can do, I have the time to do it, it's something I enjoy," she told FOX 17 News. "Pet therapy is

without a doubt rewarding to me... I really believe that if you're doing things for others, it will come back to you tenfold."

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