

# Life on Capitol Hill

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DR. LINDA CHASSMAN OF 'ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY PROGRAMS,' 1540 Race, raised Mazey from a feral kitten to a major partner in her therapy with children & adults.

Animal Assisted Therapy Programs of Colorado (AATPC) has opened the nation's first counseling agency to provide animal-assisted therapy as its focus. The practice is located at 1540 Race.

Professional and licensed therapists work with a trained animal partner to accomplish therapeutic goals. Animals assist in mental health counseling and therapy services for children, teenagers and adults with behavioral, emotional and social concerns.

Therapist Dr. Linda Chassman's website says, "People often address issues faster when animals are present. The therapy takes less time and is therefore more cost-effective."

Her practice provides treatment teams, training of parents on how to use family pets therapeutically, special work with veterans and others exposed to trauma, in-home counseling, and free or low-fee training and workshops for the public.

Chassman has more than 25 years of experience working with children and teenagers as a licensed marriage and family therapist. Hers is the first counseling agency in the US to specialize in teaming professional therapists and trained therapy animals to accomplish the client's treatment goals.

Dr. Chassman believes animals can have a major therapeutic effect on healing, and that doing the formidable work of feeling better doesn't always have to be difficult. She states that animals bring lightness and hope to therapy, facilitating the use of humor, creativity, openness, and release.

While raising her last litter of kittens, Chassman met Mazey, her younger therapy cat. With a calm, loving and nurturing nature, Mazey became the inspiration for opening AATPC.

Chassman said research has demonstrated that therapeutic interaction with animals can facilitate rapport and openness with children, teenagers, adults, seniors and couples; lower anxiety, stress and blood pressure; teach caring, gentleness and healthful boundaries to children; help develop attachment-related receptivity; reduce anger, loneliness, and depression; and enhance self-esteem.

AATPC can be reached at 720-266-4444 or via their website, [aatpc.com](http://aatpc.com).