

Gabriel's Angels



Pets Helping Kids®

2017

# Program Evaluation

*Our mission is to inspire confidence, compassion,  
and best behaviors in at-risk children  
through pet therapy.*



# GABRIEL'S ANGELS

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## 2017 Program Evaluation Report



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# Introduction

Gabriel’s Angels, a non-profit organization founded in 2000 in Phoenix, Arizona, is dedicated to improving the lives of children through interactions with animals. The agency’s mission is to inspire confidence, compassion, and best behaviors in at-risk children through pet therapy. Our work is driven by the passionate belief that the unconditional love of a dog can heal a child. Moreover, the work of Gabriel’s Angels is informed by knowledge of the dynamics of animal cruelty and its co-occurrence with other human problems, such as family violence, child abuse, and increased criminality (Ascione, 2005), a phenomenon commonly referred to as “the link.”

Gabriel’s Angels’ core service is delivering pet therapy<sup>1</sup>, or animal assisted activities<sup>2</sup>, to children. This service is provided by volunteer Therapy Teams, which consist of one human volunteer whose occupation or profession varies, and one animal that has been registered as a therapy animal by either Pet Partners or Alliance of Therapy Dogs.

***Gabriel’s Angels mission:  
Inspire confidence,  
compassion, and best  
behaviors in at-risk children  
through pet therapy.***

Over the past 17 years, the program has grown from one team serving 250 children in Phoenix to approximately 183 Therapy Teams serving over 14,600 at-risk children at partner facilities in the Phoenix metropolitan area as well as in northern and southern Arizona.

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel’s Angels uses the term “pet therapy” due to it being easily understood by the general population as animals visiting with human clients. Note: Pet Partners uses the terms “animal-assisted activities” and “animal-assisted therapy”. These are the terms that human service providers and volunteers use when referring to the involvement of animals in human treatment programs. Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) involves working directly with a licensed healthcare or human service provider to help a patient meet specific goals to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning; the results of each AAT session are recorded.

<sup>2</sup> Pet Partners defines animal assisted activities (AAA) as casual “meet and greet” activities that involve pets and their handlers visiting people to provide opportunities for motivational, educational and/or recreational benefits to enhance quality of life.

## Evaluation Overview

The current Program Evaluation covers calendar year 2017 (January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017) and is divided into two categories – program outcomes and volunteer satisfaction. Surveys were distributed to all Partner Agencies and to Therapy Teams (which includes both Handlers and Helping Hands) that were active during the year 2017.

The Agency survey was created and targeted to the appropriate staff person at Gabriel's Angels' Partner Agencies. Previously, two separate surveys were distributed to partner agencies, differentiating between demographics served by the agency and their services offered. In an effort to simplify the evaluation process and increase response rate, we combined these two surveys into a single survey. The survey was distributed via e-mail through Constant Contact.

Volunteer information was obtained through a separate survey developed to gauge the volunteers' level of satisfaction. The Volunteer Survey was also distributed via e-mail through Constant Contact.

The e-mails to Partner Agencies and to Therapy Teams included brief instructions to complete the survey with a link directing recipients to the online survey. The Partner Agency Response rate was 69% (51/74). The Volunteer Response rate was 56% (83/148).

# Evaluation Findings

## Partner Agency Characteristics

Partner Agencies are located throughout the following counties: Cochise, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yavapai.

The services provided by Partner Agencies are designed with varying degrees of emphasis on addressing abuse, neglect, trauma, and the behaviors that may be related to exposure to these stressors. Agencies described their organizations in many different ways including a children’s behavioral health center, crisis nursery, domestic violence shelter, group home for children, head start preschool, juvenile detention center, outpatient behavioral health center, public elementary school, residential treatment center for children, special education classroom, therapeutic after-school program, therapeutic preschool, and a transitional housing program.

## Children Served

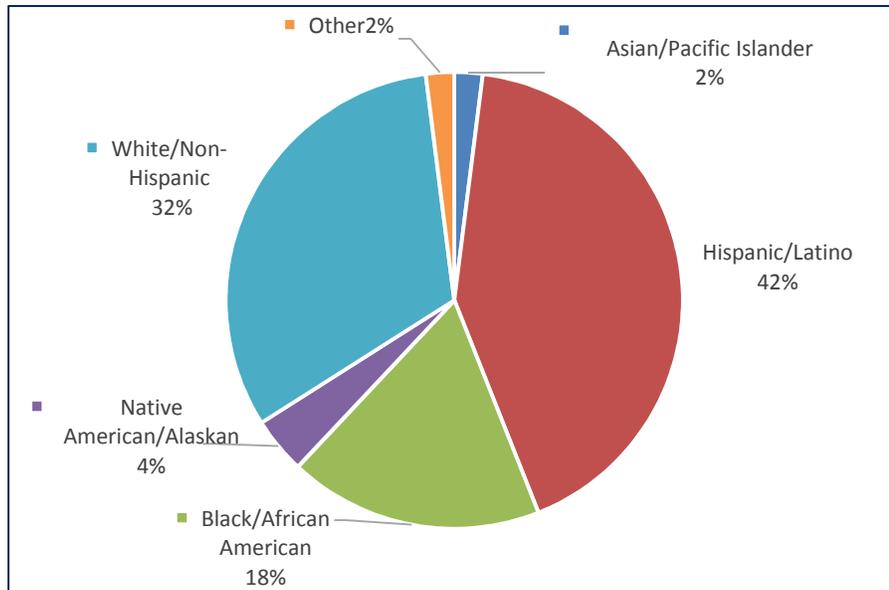
Gabriel’s Angels Partner Agencies serve a diverse age range of children. Reported ages of children vary between infant and 17 years. Data shared from 51 agencies revealed the top three age groups served are Elementary School (5+ to 9 years), Middle school (9+ to 13 years), and High School (13+ thru 17 years). Table 1 summarizes the age groups served by our Partner Agencies.

<i>Table 1: Age Groups Served by Partner Agencies</i>	
<b>Age of Children (Total Agencies Reporting = 51)</b>	<b>Number of Agencies Serving Age Group</b>
Birth to 18 months	5
18 months to 36 months	4
3 years to 5 years	15
5 years to 9 years	40
9 years to 13 years	37
13 years thru 17 years	21

Gabriel’s Angels was able to impact an ethnically diverse population of children during visits in 2017, as reported by the 45 agencies that provided information about the ethnicity of the

children served. (Six agencies either do not track, or did not provide this information.) Chart 1 summarizes the data provided on the ethnicity of children served by Gabriel’s Angels Therapy Teams in 2017.

**Chart 1: Ethnicity of Children Served by Gabriel’s Angels Therapy Teams in 2017**



### Changes Observed in Behaviors

The goal of Gabriel’s Angels’ program is to effect behavioral changes in abused, neglected, and at-risk children. Volunteers work primarily to foster core behaviors that are essential for healthy development.

Gabriel’s Angels identified precise behaviors based on expert research from numerous sources—predominately that of renowned child development expert Dr. Bruce Perry. Dr. Perry’s research identifies six core strengths, each of which represents a vital “building block” in a child’s healthy growth and development (Perry, 2002). Gabriel’s Angels has incorporated Dr. Perry’s expertise along with additional research to identify the following seven core behaviors: Affiliation, Attachment, Confidence, Empathy, Respect, Self-Regulation, and Tolerance.

The Services Survey included questions pertaining specifically to the seven core behaviors. Respondents were asked to assess the level of change, if any, in each of these seven categories. Fifty-one respondents provided data for all or most of the categories.

According to agency staff, children served demonstrated behavioral improvements in each of the seven categories, with the majority of children exhibiting Notable or Significant Improvement. Children showed the most progress in demonstrating the behaviors “Empathy,” “Attachment,” and “Respect”/ “Tolerance” (tied at third largest improvement). Table 2 summarizes the responses for each of the seven categories, and presents alphabetically.

**Table 2: Changes in Behaviors Observed by Partner Agency Staff**

Core Behavior	Improvement In Demonstrating Behavior					
	None	Some	Moderate	Notable	Significant	Notable + Significant
<b>Affiliation</b>	0.0%	7.8%	23.5%	31.3%	37.2%	68.5%
<b>Attachment</b>	0.0%	15.6%	11.7%	49.0%	23.5%	72.5%
<b>Confidence</b>	0.0%	11.7%	19.6%	33.3%	35.2%	68.5%
<b>Empathy</b>	0.0%	13.7%	11.7%	43.1%	31.3%	74.4%
<b>Respect</b>	0.0%	7.8%	21.5%	41.1%	29.4%	70.5%
<b>Self-Regulation</b>	0.0%	15.6%	21.5%	33.3%	27.4%	60.7%
<b>Tolerance</b>	0.0%	13.7%	15.6%	43.1%	27.4%	70.5%

Partner Agency staff also provided detailed descriptions of their observations regarding behavioral changes as well and overall impact of Therapy Teams on the children during visits to their facility. Appendix A includes a sampling of comments from facility staff regarding these behavioral observations.

## Partner Agency Feedback: Gabriel’s Angels Volunteers and Staff

Based on feedback, Partner Agencies highly regard their relationship with both Gabriel’s Angels’ staff and volunteers. See Tables 3 and 4 below for details. Appendix B includes a sampling of the comments facility staff provided regarding Gabriel’s Angels staff and volunteers.

**Table 3: Partner Agency Staff Satisfaction with Therapy Team Visits**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Results</b>
How important do you think it is that Pet Therapy visits continue with the youth you serve?	100% <i>Moderately or Very Important</i>
Do you feel volunteers are adequately prepared for their regular visits?	100% <i>Yes</i>
Do you feel your facility is well-matched with your Pet Therapy Team?	100% <i>Yes</i>

**Table 4: Partner Agency Staff Satisfaction with Gabriel’s Angels**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Below Average</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Above Average</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Overall, how would you rate your relationship with Gabriel's Angels volunteers?	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	15.6%	82.5%
Overall, how would you rate your relationship with Gabriel's Angels staff?	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	9.8%	88.3%
Based on your TOTAL experience with Gabriel's Angels, what is your overall assessment of working with our organization?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.7%	88.3%

## Gabriel’s Angels Volunteer Survey

Gabriel’s Angels recognizes the importance of the volunteer Therapy Teams, which consist of one Handler, one registered therapy pet, and in some cases, a Helping Hand.

There was a 56% response rate to the Volunteer Survey. Seventy-four respondents were Handlers (89%). The remaining nine respondents were Helping Hands (11%).

Most respondents (22.9%) indicated they have been with Gabriel’s Angels for over five (5) years. The following table illustrates the information volunteers provided regarding how long they have been with Gabriel’s Angels.

**Table 5: Volunteer Reported Length of Time Volunteering with Gabriel’s Angels**

Less than one year	21.7%
1 - 2 years	21.7%
2 - 3 years	14.5%
3 - 4 years	9.6%
4 - 5 years	9.6%
5+ years	22.9%

Gabriel’s Angels volunteer base is comprised primarily of female volunteers with 93.9% of respondents identifying as female and 6.1% as male. Volunteers also tend to identify as White/Caucasian (86.7%). One (1) percent of respondents identified as Hispanic, and 12% identified as Other or left this item blank.

The Volunteer Survey addressed several areas of volunteer satisfaction. The following table highlights findings from the 2017 Volunteer Survey:

**Table 6: Gabriel’s Angels Volunteer Survey Responses**

Question	YES
Do you feel that you are making a difference in the lives of the children you visit through your Gabriel's Angels visits?	95.2%
Do you feel you have been adequately prepared by Gabriel's Angels prior to being placed at a facility?	97.6%
Do you feel that you have a good understanding of the goals of your Gabriel's Angels visits?	97.6%
Do you feel that the Gabriel's Angels staff is responsive to your needs as a volunteer?	94.0%

Volunteers overwhelmingly indicated it is a positive experience to be part of Gabriel’s Angels—92.8% of volunteers rated their overall experience volunteering for Gabriel’s Angels as “Excellent” or “Above Average.”

## Summary

Findings from the 2017 Program Evaluation convey broad enthusiasm and appreciation for Gabriel's Angels and its Pet Therapy services. The satisfaction with the organization is demonstrated by the length of relationships most respondents have sustained as well as the overall positive comments and success stories shared by Partner Agencies.

Therapy Teams provided activities to a diverse group of children and youth at a wide array of human service and other organizations. Staff members at partner facilities observed changes in each of the behavior areas with the most change overall indicated in the areas of "Empathy," "Attachment," "Respect" and "Tolerance." Partner Agency staff overwhelmingly indicated a high level of satisfaction with Gabriel's Angels services, offering praise and sharing success stories.

Gabriel's Angels' volunteers also voiced positive experiences working with the organization as evidenced by the number of years of continued service and overall satisfaction with the experience of volunteering.

## Evaluation Limitations

Although the 2017 Services Survey is intended to measure changes in children's behavior, it does not utilize a baseline against which to measure these changes. A baseline measurement would be difficult to obtain for many reasons including significant staff and client turnover at Partner Agencies and a lack of adequate resources to compile such a baseline. Instead, reports from agency staff regarding progress made toward the identified behaviors rely on a single reflection of the children's behaviors that were observed throughout the previous year.

Additionally, the current instrument utilizes a *global* assessment of *individual* behavioral changes. This can make it difficult to receive accurate information, as staff members may report

observations primarily focused on one child even though the rest of the group may not have made the same amount of progress (positive or negative).

## References

Ascione, F. R. (2005). *Children and animals: Exploring the roots of kindness and cruelty*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Perry, Bruce D. (2002). *Training Series 2: Six Core Strengths for Healthy Child Development*. Retrieved April 8, 2013 from [http://www.lfcc.on.ca/Perry\\_Six\\_Core\\_Strengths.pdf](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/Perry_Six_Core_Strengths.pdf).

## Appendix A

2017 Partner Agency Staff Open-Ended Feedback:

Observations of Changes in Children's Behaviors

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-  The kids light up when they see the Gabriel's Angels dogs! They come out of their shells and they open up in a way I have never experienced.
-  This organization is a top-notch program that has a direct impact on the academic and behavioral growth and achievement with our students.
-  Many of the children who participate in the visits struggle with emotional self-control, trust, and expressing emotions appropriately because of the trauma they have had. Their positive reactions to the therapy dogs last beyond each visit. They show more empathy as a result of the visits.
-  The therapy dogs provide them with a relief and also helps with their traumas.
-  Gabriel's Angels touches many children's lives even for the most challenging student. This program definitely assists students with their ability to practice areas of empathy [and] gentleness.
-  Since participating in the Gabriel's Angels program we have seen a dramatic and positive change in the youth. They have become more open, communicative, and HAPPY!!!
-  The students in the program are building such great bonds not only with [the dog] but with themselves as well.
-  These programs are instrumental to the growth and success of our students. They are building confidence within our students through the ABC program. Students are smiling, positive, and enjoying their time with the Therapy Teams.
-  The Pet Therapy visits make the students week brighter. The students feel important and show increased caring after a visit.
-  The therapy dogs offer patience, non-judgmental friendship, and a soft and gentle presence. The children are able to develop a bond with the therapy dogs at their own pace, in their own way, and by doing so learn self-confidence and trust.
-  The therapy dog seemed to draw out social behavior in [a student with limited interaction with his peers]. The student would spend a lot of time giving the dog attention and based on his emotions showed that he was very happy and excited while interacting with the dog. The student was also very willing to try all of the care and play activities involved, and he successfully engaged in these.
-  Our students absolutely LOVE visiting with the teams. We see improved self-regulation and social skills when students have access to teams.
-  It is so wonderful to see the bonds being formed - by students, teachers, staff and animals- through this wonderful program!

# Appendix B

2017 Partner Agency Staff Open-Ended Feedback:

Relationship with Gabriel's Angels Volunteers and Staff

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-  The Volunteer communicates very well. I always know when she will be coming. The children get excited when the volunteer comes! They enjoy seeing the dog and taking care of him.
-  We are extremely excited to have Gabriel's Angels Therapy Teams continue to be positive, influential, and dedicated to helping students of all levels towards success!
-  The pet therapy teams have been very gracious volunteers. The girls really enjoy spending time with the dogs and it is very beneficial to their treatment.
-  Gabriel's Angels had provided an amazing experience for our students.
-  Gabriel's Angels gives kids a chance to enjoy time with friendly animals and handlers where they don't have to worry about everything they have been through. Most of our kids think Gabriel's Angels is the highlight of their week.
-  The volunteers are always professional, compassionate, and very engaged with the children and staff. We feel we have consistently positive communication with the volunteers.
-  Gabriel's Angels has been a wonderful addition to our schedule here 2 times a month. I feel they meet their described objectives and have always worked with our folks professionally and compassionately. Our members enjoy their groups so much!!
-  I am very impressed with the Gabriel's Angels program. The volunteers are reliable, professional, and always prepared to work with the students. It is good to see a change in student participation, involvement, and confidence as they participate more in the program.
-  We absolutely love working with Gabriel's Angels and feel that it is an extremely beneficial program, not only for the families we serve, but for our staff as well.
-  I cannot express what a positive experience it has been to work with the teams! Our students look forward to their sessions every week. We are so happy to now have the ABC program as well.
-  It is a pleasure to work with Gabriel's Angels. Their understanding, attention, dedication and caring level is amazing. Our children sense it and are always looking forward to work with them!
-  Gabriel's Angels does an amazing job with providing volunteers who truly want to have an impact on the individuals they serve. They breathe and live their mission daily.
-  Gabriel's Angels is truly making a difference in the lives of children each and every day! Thank you for believing in our school and students along with providing the support that fosters excellence in our students.