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## **American Kennel Club (AKC) Recognizes New AIR Therapy Dogs – Paws for Minds™ Program: Now It's Easier than Ever to Earn AKC Therapy Titles**

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY (March 11, 2020) – The American Kennel Club (AKC) has recognized the AIR Dogs –Paws for Minds™ program of Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR™), a nonprofit whose mission is save lives through mental-health and suicide-prevention education. The organization and this program have gained significant traction over the past few years, making it one of a few programs in which people can earn coveted AKC titles for their dogs for the work they do with AIR.

Starting next week, everyone who has certified their dogs under the AIR Therapy Dogs program will be eligible to earn numerous titles for their dogs from the AKC for the therapy work they do, both with the organization and on their own. This allows volunteers and their dogs to be recognized for the time and energy they contribute to bring love and smiles into individuals' lives.

"I have seen the AIR Therapy Dogs work their special magic time and time again," said Tricia Baker, YMHFA, CPDT-KA, Co-Founder of AIR and the AIR Dogs – Paws for Minds Program Director. "I see students upset and within minutes of spending time with a dog, they are able to calm themselves and relax. The students are able to talk openly and ask for help. Who would think that a little dog could have such a positive impact on a young person?"

Handlers who are certified through AIR will soon be able to earn the following titles from the AKC: Therapy Dog Novice (THDN) for completing 10 therapy visits; Therapy Dog (THD) for 50 visits; Therapy Dog Advanced (THDA) for 100 visits; Therapy Dog Excellent (THDX) for 200 visits; and Therapy Dog Distinguished (THDD) for 400 visits. Individuals can apply for these titles through the [AKC website](#).

AIR specializes in mental health and suicide prevention for young people. They have talked to more than 85,000 students in the past 10 years about mental health and the importance of destigmatizing mental illnesses. The AIR Therapy Dogs accompany them in their many different programs. AIR has certified many dogs, both facility dogs that work in companies and schools with their handlers (usually teachers or administrators) who are employed by the organizations, as well as dogs that participate in more traditional therapy visits.

The AIR therapy dogs have also been called upon to assist with crisis response in many schools over the past few months. The dogs are brought in after the tragic death of a student in order to help the students who are impacted to open up about their grief with school counselors.

"The dogs act to break down the barricade many people struggle with after the loss of someone close to them and allow the human professionals to step in when necessary," Baker said.

To learn more about AIR's programs, becoming a therapy dog team with your own dog, or applying for a title through the AKC, contact AIR by clicking [here](#). Free subscriptions to the AIR newsletter, which provides information on many issues related to mental health and suicide prevention, as well as volunteer opportunities with AIR, can be obtained by clicking [here](#).

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Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR™) was established by Kurt, Tricia and Katelyn Baker of Plainsboro, NJ, in 2010, soon after their son/brother Kenny died by suicide following a long battle against severe depression and anxiety. Their mission is to save lives by educating students about mental health, related disorders and suicide prevention. Since January 2011, they have presented to more than 80,000 students in middle and high schools and colleges in New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Missouri, Texas and Arizona. AIR also offers Youth Mental Health First Aid instruction and includes the AIR Dogs: Paws for Minds™ program, bringing dogs into schools to help students de-stress and engage in the conversation about mental health. In addition, AIR trains and certifies Emotional Support Animals and offers a lunch-and-learn program for businesses. For more information about AIR™, please visit <https://air.ngo> or call 609-945-3200.