

Purina Cat Chow Brings Therapy Cat "Therapod" to NYC Students for World Mental Health Day

Brand launches "Cats as Therapy Project" benefiting Pet Partners to showcase the healing power of cats

ST. LOUIS, Oct. 6, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Cat Chow believes that cats have a profound impact on our mental well-being, and in honor of World Mental Health Day on October 10, the brand is launching the "Cats as Therapy Project" to promote mental well-being through the healing power of cats.

In partnership with Pet Partners, a leading pet therapy organization, the campaign kicks off in New York City with the Cat Chow Therapod, a mobile wellness pod that will offer college students – a group facing constant connectivity and social media pressure – relief from screen fatigue and a break from daily life by spending time with cats. The only requirement? Entrants must temporarily turn in their phones for admission.

The Therapod Experience

Recognizing the healing power of cats, Cat Chow is rolling out the Therapod – a cozy, mobile space where college students ages 18 and up can enjoy a 10-minute session with a therapy cat in a quiet, welcoming environment. From Wednesday, October 8 to Friday, October 10 on World Mental Health Day, the Cat Chow Therapod will make stops across New York City near select college campuses:

- October 8 from 1 pm to 5pm ET at the High Line Gansevoort Plaza, 820 Washington St; on the corner of Gansevoort St. and Washington St.
- October 9 from 10am-4pm ET at 100 Washington Square East, near NYU (between Waverly Place and Washington Place)
- October 10 from 10am-4pm ET at 113 W 60th St New York, NY 10023, near Fordham University

Appointment slots for the Cat Chow Therapod are open now at bit.ly/catchowtherapod for college students who would like to try to secure a spot. Reservations are limited and based on availability. A small number of appointments will be available on-site each day on a first-come, first-served basis. A valid, current student ID is required to participate.

A Mental Health Crisis & The Healing Power of Cats

One in five adults¹ – approximately 59 million Americans – struggles with daily mental health challenges, and Gen Z is particularly affected. A recent report found that 83 % of Gen Z² believe they have an unhealthy relationship with their phones, citing negative impacts on mental health, focus, and overall quality of life.

Amid the digital overload, a surprising source of healing has emerged: cats. Research from the American Educational Research Association reveals³ that college students who spent just ten minutes a day petting a cat experienced a measurable drop in cortisol, the stress hormone, suggesting that even small doses of feline interaction can offer meaningful relief.

"There is a real sense of urgency to address emotional burnout among young adults, as we're seeing a generation overwhelmed by digital noise and emotional fatigue," said Board-Certified Psychiatrist and researcher, Dr. Judith Joseph MD. "Even brief, intentional moments of calm —like those involving therapy animals— can have a big impact to help regulate the nervous system and restore balance."

People aren't the only ones that benefit from interactions with a cat. Purina scientist and Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist Annie Valuska, PhD CAAB, highlights the unique role cats play in emotional support. "A cat can be a great choice for a therapy pet! And the engagement can be mutually beneficial: studies show that cats form social bonds with us and that having friendly contact with people can improve their well-being. In addition, cats are a great fit for this role because so many of their natural social behaviors – like quietly resting near us, seeking gentle physical contact, and purring – are a great fit for a calm, relaxed pet therapy session."

Outside of New York, cat owners and enthusiasts nationwide can visit [catchow.com/catproject](https://www.catchow.com/catproject) to explore the therapeutic benefits of feline companionship and learn more about the Cat Chow Cats as Therapy Project.

For more than 60 years, Cat Chow has provided trusted nutrition that fits cat's needs, lifestyle and taste preferences – including Cat Chow Natural formulas. For more information, visit www.catchow.com.

About Nestlé Purina PetCare

Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations.

Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Dog Chow, Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Friskies and Tidy Cats. Our more than 11,000 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 46 million dogs and 68 million cats every year. Nearly 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than \$150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive.

Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit [purina.com](https://www.purina.com) or subscribe [here](#) to get the latest Purina news.

About Pet Partners

Pet Partners is the national leader in demonstrating and promoting the health and wellness benefits of animal-assisted therapy, activities, and education. Since the organization's inception in 1977, the science proving these benefits has become indisputable. With thousands of registered teams making millions of visits annually, Pet Partners serves as the nation's most diverse and respected nonprofit registering handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams. Pet Partners teams visit with patients in recovery, people with intellectual disabilities, seniors living with Alzheimer's, students, veterans with PTSD, people who have experienced crisis events, and those approaching end of life, with the goal of improving human health and well-being through the human-animal bond. With the release of its [Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Interventions](#) and international expansion, Pet Partners is globally recognized as the industry gold standard. For more information on Pet Partners, visit www.petpartners.org.

¹**National Institute of Mental Health. (2024).** *Mental illness*. U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services. <https://www.nimn.nin.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

²**BePresent. (2024, July 12).** *BePresent 2024 Digital Wellness Report*. Fitt Insider.

<https://insider.fitt.co/press-release/bepresent-2024-digital-wellness-report/>

³ **Pendry, P., & Vandagriff, J. L. (2019).** Animal visitation program (AVP) reduces cortisol levels of university students: A randomized controlled trial. *AERA Open*, 5(2), 1–12.

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