



## **HELPING OLDER RESIDENTS OF WASHINGTON DC OVERCOME LONELINESS AND DEPRESSION- WITH 1,000 ROBOTIC PETS!**

**Washington, DC (November 18, 2024):** It is estimated that 74 percent of older adults living in the district are aging solo and experiencing social isolation. As we approach the holiday season, often referred to as the season of loneliness, three not-for-profit organizations who focus on improving the lives of Washington, DC residents joined together to provide comfort and joy to older adult residents living alone.

The three organizations are The Washington Home investing \$150,000 to acquire 1,000 companion robotic pets and support the distribution, Capital Caring Health which is coordinating the delivery, and The East River Family Strengthening Collaborative overseeing the distribution and care management of the pets to DC residents 60 and older who live in Wards 1,7, and 8.

Numerous studies have shown that social isolation and loneliness put older adults at increased risk for health issues, including high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, depression, cognitive decline and premature death. Robotic Pets which respond to sight, sound, and touch like real pets but without any upkeep have proven to be a high impact way to mitigate declining health in older adults living alone.

Remarking on their grant making, Crystal Townsend, CEO of The Washington Home stated, “We are pleased to follow the lead of New York State which over the years has provided 40,000 robotic pets to older adult residents with remarkable results, and to invest in this impactful collaboration that integrates food distribution and social engagement addressing holistically the needs of our older adult residents.” Aisha Bailey, Deputy Director of the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, went on to say, “New York State found that 70 percent of pet recipients reported a reduction or significant reduction in loneliness plus a 75 percent decrease in chronic pain.” She added, “we are pleased to follow New York State’s success as the 2nd program in the nation helping single elders have a real shot at improving their daily lives- both physically and mentally.”

And newly appointed CEO of the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, Rahman Branch added, “With the generous funding provided by The Washington Home, ERFSC is able to initiate the robotic pets program in alignment with our mission to empower families, youth, seniors, and communities to become more self-sufficient through integrated and collaborative community-based services.”

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For further information on this remarkable effort, please contact:

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