Cincinnati Children’s Family Pet Center
Cincinnati, OH

SQ FT
3,950 BGSF

OWNER/AFFILIATION
Cincinnati Children’s

ARCHITECT(S)
GBBN

COMPLETION DATE
2013

Cincinnati Children’s Family Pet Center

Patients experiencing long-term hospitalization often feel stressed, isolated, and depressed, which can slow recovery. The Family Pet Center at Cincinnati Children’s takes the benefits of animal-assisted therapy one step further by providing a safe, controlled, park-like setting for children to interact with their own beloved pet.

GBBN collaborated with a bus shelter manufacturer to design the modular structure, which required no major foundation work and can easily be moved. Inside, a random pattern LED lighting system creates a starry night effect.

Image Sources: https://www.gbbn.com/work/cincinnati-childrens-family-pet-center/
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Meeting with the pet
Patients who stay five days or more may be able to have their pet visit, if medical staff approves.

On the day of the visit, a Child Life specialist will bring the child to the Family Pet Center, and a volunteer will meet the family as they arrive with the pet to escort you to the center. Waiting families will be allowed to park in a designated spot by the Emergency Department entrance.

Cincinnati Children’s research pointed to a cascading emotional boost for patients as they anticipated the arrival of their furry friend, experienced the interaction, and relived the visit in the following days.

Use of leftover space
Located outside of the hospital in an underused courtyard, the Family Pet Center is a small project that promotes healing by giving patients and families a moment of normalcy amidst a prolonged hospital stay.

Pets are really important in people’s lives, especially children. The interaction between patient and pet can be very therapeutic by bringing joy, comfort, and a positive mindset to those suffering especially from cancer.

- Dr. John Perentesis, Co-Director, Cincinnati Children’s Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute

Site Plan

Design Strategies

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Integrate Pet Center into the hospital

As the first pediatric hospital-based facility in the U.S. to reunite patients with their own pets, we wanted to evoke a distinct feeling of being at the park or in your own backyard. In order to keep pets in a more controlled setting and outside of the hospital itself, the project was conceived of as a simple shelter with a prefab system for quality control, schedule, and cost.

Its location was determined by site constraints: a compact site of leftover space close to an existing door at the core of the hospital campus with close vehicular access. A major design challenge was integrating the external Pet Center into the hospital surroundings without creating any life-safety issues that would impede code approval.

PROJECT SUMMARY:
▶ It is rare to find a project of this scale that is so carefully considered and crafted with such optimism. The purpose of the project is itself innovative and the design team responded with a bit of whimsy and a lot of skill to activate a dreary outdoor space for an important patient experience.

▶ This diminutive, but important, intervention brings joy and hope to hospital patrons and their four legged companions. Every children’s hospital, and many adult facilities can take a lesson about the need for patients to heal by connecting with their pets in this little gem of a design solution. Outstanding concept and very well executed!

▶ This insightful solution solves myriad challenges – accessibility, weather protection, cost effectiveness, site constraints – elegantly and seemingly effortlessly.

AIA/AAH DESIGN AWARD WINNER
Category D: Innovations in Planning and Design Research (Built and Unbuilt)

JURY COMMENT
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