

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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MEET GRYFFIN - CENTER FOR VICTIMS CANINE ADVOCATE AT CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF PITTSBURGH UPMC

Pittsburgh – May 17, 2017 – Tammi Potts, Center for Victims' Advocate and Gryffin's Trainer and , Gryffin have been available to be present both during forensic interviews at the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC and during therapy appointments at Center for Victims since April 3, 2017. What makes Gryffin different from other therapy or facility canines is the plan for Gryffin to follow children and their families through the various processes involved in child abuse such as investigation, prosecution, and trauma treatment. Gryffin's training for the role of Canine Advocate was completed through Center for Victims' partnership with Pups Providing Hope™.

Research shows that when children are physically connected and in the presence of dogs, there is a shift in their brain chemistry. Oxytocin increases and helps to lower stress, to increase ease of connection with others, and to promote a greater sense of safety and well-being. "Expanding options for children and providing trained dogs can help provide a calming presence to survivors of trauma. We believe that to improve the quality of life in our families and communities, healing and recovery efforts must be understood, promoted and accessible to all. We are proud to be working with Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh UPMC and Pups Providing Hope. The results we have seen first-hand have been life-changing for the child." – Laurie MacDonald, President & CEO

Tammi and Gryffin's integration with the Child Advocacy Center furthers our professional partnership with Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, and furthers our mission to provide the highest quality of care and services to all victims of crime in Allegheny County. The staff at the Child Advocacy Center feel Gryffin has been a wonderful addition, "Not only does he make the day easier for staff with his unconditional love, but he has really helped the kids," said Jamie Mesar, manager of the Child Advocacy Center at Children's Hospital. "We had one child tell us it was "so much fun being at the Center" and another commented how she "didn't want to leave and wanted to stay with Gryffin. He has really made our work so much easier."

*Gryffin's role at the CAC:*

- Gryffin meets and greets the child before the interviews.
- The child learns how to ask Gryffin to do a trick: spin, sit, or shake so the child enters the interview with a sense of mastery and control.
- The child walks Gryffin to the interview room on his leash.
- Gryffin stays during the interview to help the child stay calm and focused, including anything from pets to hugs and cuddles.
- When the interview is complete, the child engages in play with Gryffin to help physically transition the child from the interview setting.

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**Center for Victims** is the most comprehensive and inclusive provider of services, advocacy and education for victims of crime and their families in Allegheny County and in Pennsylvania. [www.centerforvictims.org](http://www.centerforvictims.org) [www.menchallenge.org](http://www.menchallenge.org)