

North Country Gazette

NYSBA Implements Pet Care For Patients Program

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ALBANY—A new voluntary program that ensures the pets of hospitalized patients will be given proper care while the patient focuses on his or her health and well being has been announced by The New York State Bar Association's Special Committee on Animals and the Law.

The program is being launched in partnership with St. Vincent's Hospital and the Not Home Alone Project. Under this new program, forms developed by St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan are now available for download at www.nysba.org/PatientPetCare .

The forms help hospital program coordinators determine whether a patient has pets and also provide the hospital with legal authority to access residences and make arrangements to see that pets are cared for while a patient is being treated. If a patient cannot return home, there are short-term and long-term options available.

Patients are typically responsible for the cost of their pet's care, which may be provided by volunteers or third-party commercial services. Hospitals may wish to work with local shelters and rescue organizations in implementing the service.

Committee member Rachel Hirschfeld, in conjunction with St. Vincent's Hospital Patient Pet Care Coordinator, Kate Fischer, are encouraging hospitals across the state to adopt similar programs, which will ensure that the pets of hospital patients are not left unattended, do not end up on the street or sent to a shelter. Individuals who may be interested in working on this program for other hospitals should contact Rachel Hirschfeld, at rhirschfeld@aol.com or the Not Home Alone Project at nothomealoneMA@aol.com.