

## *Jackie Thorland*



Serendipity may aptly describe my first interaction with Diana McQuarrie and Denver Pet Partners. I was in the right place at the right time to witness a truly extraordinary program in its early stage of development. I was the Volunteer Manager at Swedish Medical Center and reported to an amazing Director, Sally Jo Thomas. We often discussed pet therapy and agreed it would be a great outreach for the hospital.

In the summer of 2001, Diana McQuarrie visited our offices and the rest is history. She had an inspiring proposal to bring such a program to Swedish. Her enthusiasm was contagious and it wasn't long before we were able to bring the other hospital departments and staff on board. Much brainstorming by our spearhead committee took place and soon a pilot with Diana and our remarkable Shana was ready.



The patient was actually one of our Junior Volunteers and the request had come from her concerned mother. We watched as Shana interacted some with the patient but even more with the mother. Shana knew exactly what was needed and who needed her more. Her intuitiveness never ceased to amaze us. It's a quality we've seen often in our therapy animals and why they're so successful.

The program has certainly come a long way over the years—growing, changing and facing new challenges. But the dedication of Diana, her talented and supportive husband, Ken, our tremendous teams, volunteers, and supporters remains a constant. I may not have a therapy animal myself: however, I've watched our teams bring heartfelt joy and

much needed comfort to others. I've seen the smiles and the tears and heard the praises and words of gratitude.

So whether you call it serendipity, fate, or luck, I feel truly blessed to have been a small part of such an outstanding outreach. So thank all of you for your heartfelt dedication and for making a difference in my life and the thousands of lives you have touched over the years!

