



Susan Paller and Blueberry



We first met “Blue” in the summer of 2008 during a Meet & Greet adoption at the Women’s Correctional Facility in Cañon City. She was two years old and had been rescued, along with her brother, from a Kansas puppy mill. They had been left out in the elements in a kennel no bigger than they were for two years. They were the only two adult dogs that the correctional facility thought could be socialized, then adopted and the puppies were dispersed to the area Humane Societies. The women at the correctional facility socialized, loved, and gave her basic training. After six months, she was put up for adoption where we first met and fell in love with her. My daughter, Sierra, thought she was awkward, but beautiful and couldn’t wait to take her home. The trainer said she would be challenging to manage because of her myopic drive to hunt, but we thought she was sweet and had something very special in her. On our way home she stuck like glue to my daughter’s side, but her nerves got the best of her and she shed most of her fur on the back seat of the car and all over our daughter. We had a long drive home, but she never whined or barked. We talked to her the whole way home, trying to assure her that everything was going to be okay. We worried that she might not adjust after her traumatic experience as a mill dog.

The first couple of weeks were rough. We had never had a hunting dog. We always had terriers. She spent all day outside patrolling the perimeter of our 1/3 of an acre property looking for squirrels, bunnies, or anything that moved. She would only come in when called and insisted on sleeping in her kennel. We thought these behaviors are going to make it difficult to bond with her, but as the weeks faded like the summer sun, she became more attentive, wanting more and more attention, and Blue decided to sleep in Sierra’s room, then in Sierra’s bed. They were the best of buds. Blue was my daughter’s side kick. They did homework together, watched television together





and hung out together with Sierra's friends. Blue had become a happy, loving, attentive dog. Therefore, Sierra thought she needed a "Happy" name, so Sierra called her Blueberry or Lulu, because of the big black spot on her rear and she wagged her tail, played chase, and a funny quirky personality emerged. The name stuck!

Sierra, now a senior, spends less time at home and more time doing activities, so Blueberry and I became the best of friends. I felt she needed an activity to do, especially since Sierra was going to leave for college soon. I thought about it for a while, Blueberry loved visiting my class and seeing all the children. The children doted on her because she gave them her full attention. So, I started looking around to find a program we could do together. I found Pet Partners in August 2011, but at this time they were having some difficulties, so I ended up being trained in Fort Collins with the Delta Society. I knew being a therapy team was going to be wonderful for both Blueberry and I. Blueberry passed the evaluation the first time, but only in a Predictable setting. There were several issues that lead to this: First, the long drive to evaluate her, my nerves that she felt, and she was still a little high strung. Therefore, I needed to place her in a setting where she would be successful and happy and voila, a reading program.



We were ready, but there were no settings available for us at Pet Partners to be on, so I took her to school. We were the Friday reading event for ILC, students with special needs. The children were very apprehensive at first, reluctant to look, talk, or read to her. After some time, students would ask, "Where's Blueberry?" I would have to say, she's coming on Friday. This helped immensely with the student's behavior during the week, because they wanted to read with Blueberry. They love being with her and they do read to her. They love to stroke her soft ears and on a really bad day lay with her on the rug. This is a huge feat!!!! I continued to attend all the Pet Partner meetings trying to find our fit in the programs. In May, Tami asked us to sub at "Paws to Read"

at Englewood Library. We loved the program, but they had all the teams they needed, so we continued to sub. In August 2012 we became a permanent team. It was a perfect fit. In March 2013, we became R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dog) trained. This was an exact fit with my profession, Reading

DPP Team of the Month (October 2017)



Specialist in CCSD and Blueberry's demeanor. Blueberry and I had found our home.

Presently, Blueberry and I are the team lead at Englewood Library and we also are a reading team at Bemis Library with Paul Rogalla. She also assists in my Kindergarten classroom on Fridays. Blueberry is a true blessing in our lives. We know we can't live without her! She has a very special place in our hearts. People say she's lucky to be rescued, but I feel we are lucky because she rescued us. She rescues children with her love and attention every day!

