



Kelli Applebaum and Rooster



Kelli and Rooster – So Happy Together

I've always had dogs in my life and have always found comfort in their steadfast love for their humans. I saw the tremendous benefit of the therapy dog teams at Parker Adventist Hospital where I work, as well as at the airport when traveling and became interested in becoming a handler with my dog Rooster. Rooster is a 5 year old English Labrador Retriever from Waterbound Labradors in Texas and he is our 3rd dog from this breeder. As a puppy we could see that Rooster had a very calm temperament and enjoys being around people. He is eager to please and likes having a job to do, whether it is bringing in the newspaper every morning or retrieving birds in the field. I knew he would be a great fit for therapy work with both children and adults.

He received his basic obedience training by myself, my husband as well as a professional dog trainer. He is very well socialized with other dogs, adults, children and a variety of places such as outdoor dining establishments, hardware stores and parks. He is naturally affectionate and seeks out the attention from people. In the summer of 2018, I took the online Pet Partners Handler course and continued working with Rooster on the various skills needed to become a pet therapy team. Shortly thereafter, we had our evaluation and passed with a predictable rating in November of 2018.



Rooster at approximately 3 months old



Rooster at Parker Adventist Hospital

We joined the Paw Pals Therapy Dog Program at Parker Adventist Hospital in January of 2019. At the hospital we visit with visitors, patients themselves as well as hospital staff in waiting rooms, patient rooms, emergency department and other departments such as the rehab office and human resources office. Rooster has 2 signature moves when we are making the rounds. He likes to sit on people's feet while they are petting him. I joke and say it's his way of making sure they don't get up and stop petting him. His other trick is to lay down for belly rubs in the middle of the hallway or offices. I know he loves his job at the hospital, because he gets excited when I put his volunteer vest on.

DPP Team of the Month (January 2021)

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We have also volunteered for a reading program at an elementary school in Palmer Lake, Colorado. Although it's different work from the hospital, Rooster enjoys the attention from children just as much. The kids have the opportunity to visit with Rooster and ask questions about dogs in general or about Rooster specifically. They always enjoy getting a high five from him and seeing him roll over to play "dead" when they say "bang".

In addition to being a therapy dog, Rooster is also a trained bird hunting dog. He loves to get in the field and put his nose to work finding birds alongside his dad and canine sibling, Trigger. Together they both are a great team.

At home, Rooster is the oldest dog in a pack consisting of his 4-year-old brother, Trigger, and 6-month-old sister, Pistol. He enjoys long walks, hiking in the mountains, swimming, playing in the snow, retrieving tennis balls, and car rides. Since COVID, we have not been visiting at the hospital in order to do our part in keeping patients, visitors, staff and our community safe. We look forward to returning to in person visits when it is safe to do so; however, in the meantime Rooster is enjoying time at home playing with his canine siblings.



Volunteering at an elementary school reading program



Rooster and Trigger hiking in the La Plata mountains



Rooster playing in the snow