



Estelle Thomas and Cooper



Estelle and Cooper

While planning my approaching retirement several years ago, I knew that volunteering at a hospital was in the top five on my bucket list and after some research, I chose Swedish which remains one of my favorites to date. I genuinely enjoyed working with the wonderful folks at the front desk and various departments within the hospital, but when I saw the Denver Pet Partners teams in action, I knew partnering with a pup was a must for me. About that time my husband and I were considering getting another dog and though we had been 'Golden Retriever people' for many years, we decided that a smaller dog was in our best interest given our age. So, after much searching, we found Cooper at Goldendoodles in Colorado Springs and it was a case of love at first

sight! Cooper is named after the street we live on.

I immediately enrolled Cooper in intermediate and advanced classes at PetSmart and it was a great pleasure to be working with him and watching his progress. Cooper was a natural! During that time, he passed his AKC Good Citizen program as well, which is a plus for therapy dogs. Obviously, one of the requirements in training a therapy pup is "paws on" experience so I did some research, made some phone calls and I was able to visit some assisted living facilities to aid in our training. Those visits were very valuable for Cooper and me, but most of all for the residents.



Cooper and Zoey



Our next step was to pass the Denver Pet Partners evaluation/qualification and though I was a nervous wreck, Cooper was completely calm and comfortable with the process. My heartfelt thanks to the DPP team for helping Cooper and me expand our horizons in so many different scenarios.

Many of our visitations are at Swedish in the surgical waiting areas, ER and the Oncology Infusion Center where the animals are always a welcome sight. My favorite visit was with a little girl in the

DPP Team of the Month (April 2021)

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pediatric unit. A very tragic event left her without her family, yet she was a happy kid and most happy when she was with the Pet Partners' teams. It was such a joy to see the laughter in her eyes and she never tired of petting and walking the dogs. Another long-term patient had requested a visit from Cooper and she was overjoyed to spend time with us. She suggested I just leave Cooper for the day so they could play and take naps together!

A few years ago, Swedish held a Children's Health Fair (8-9 year olds), that included health checks, general sanitary skills, etc., and the last part of the fair was a hospital room setting so the kiddos would get an idea of what goes on in a hospital and that it didn't have to be scary. Because of his calm demeanor, Cooper was stationed at this part of the fair and was terrific with the kids.



Over the years we have visited the Colleges and Universities during finals week which is always a treat because there's nothing like a good snuggle from a pup to help wind down from the intensity of studying. It's fun to watch the students rejuvenate as a result of the visits.

But the proudest I've been of Cooper was within the judicial system at the Broomfield Combined Court in the district attorney's waiting room where there was a woman who had recently lost her son. Cooper instinctively knew she was in rough shape and without any encouragement from me he went over and gently put his head in her lap. It's moments like this that make me realize how very fortunate I am to be a part of DPP.

It's so remarkable what Denver Pet Partners teams do for folks on so many levels and I'm very honored that Cooper & I have been selected for DPP team of the month.



Pay up, or else!