

## *Kelly and Mark Lutinski with Peppa*

I did not grow up with pets and neither did my husband, Mark. We both traveled a lot for work but my goal was to get a dog 'once I got off the road.'

In February 2017, I was home and Mark was traveling. One of my co-workers fostered dogs and told me she had a special one that I should consider. On a Monday evening I saw Peppa (whose name was Honey at the time) and by Friday we were approved to adopt. Mark was still out of town and was expected to be home on Saturday. Every night that week I shared my progress with Mark and told him that Friday night Peppa would arrive on Saturday about the same time he (Mark) would get home! I don't think he really thought this was going to happen.



We have two nieces living across the street from us who were present when Peppa came to our house. Our oldest niece (10 years old at the time) had a list of about 50 potential names that none of us thought fit. The youngest, who was 7 at the time, was enamored with Peppa Pig and we all decided Peppa was a great name for this adorable puppy.

Peppa has become an integral part of both of our families. When people ask what kind of dog Peppa is, my niece says 'she is a family dog'! We had Peppa's DNA tested and she is 1/3 Chihuahua with about a dozen other breeds making up the rest. One interesting thing about Peppa is, while she does have Chihuahuas in her, she does not bark. But you always know when she is around because she nuzzles under your hand for a pet!!

My nieces have a guinea pig named Carmel. Peppa and Carmel get along well and hang out together regularly. Peppa has regular sleepovers at their house and stays with them when Mark and I are traveling. Now you know why she is a 'family dog'!!

## *DPP Team of the Month (November 2021)*

DENVER PET PARTNERS



Not knowing what we were doing when we got Peppa, we immediately signed Peppa (and us) up for dog training. Peppa eventually received her Canine Good Citizen certificate. It was at that time we started thinking Peppa would be a good therapy dog.



The dog school we were at also did therapy dog training, so we moved forward with that process. In December 2019, I was certified with Peppa as a handler and Mark was certified with Peppa a few months later.

Peppa has tried out a lot of different things being a therapy dog including attending distress events and seeing patients in hospice, nursing homes and hospitals. But her favorite place to go is the library where kids read to her. She will do anything for a treat and knows all sorts of commands. The kids ask her to 'high five' and then give her a treat after they are done reading.





There have been many touching experiences with Peppa. One of the more heartwarming visits we have had was with a 10-year-old girl that had challenges with reading and focusing. She read a book to Peppa from start to finish without stopping! It is a delight to see the kids hold up the book so Peppa can see the pictures. Peppa prefers to close her eyes and think about the pictures!

Peppa and Mark had the opportunity to visit the Batten Disease conference in 2019. It was very emotional to hear from the families attending

with their kids that have this fatal disease. They described how much visiting with the therapy teams mean to them. Peppa was very patient letting the kids pet her with their mobility challenges.

One of the other places Peppa loves to visit is at college distress events. Her eyes light up and her tail gets going when she sees so many people in line for the event. She somehow knows she is going to be the center of attention and is going to get so much loving! It is such a pleasure to see a student relax a little and talk about their dog at home.

Peppa was also involved with Denver University's Graduate Program, Institute for Human and Animal Connection. This was a great opportunity for the Graduate Social Work students to see, interact, get credit for certification and to learn about the positive impact that therapy dogs can bring to humanity. We are pretty sure Peppa got an A+ in class that day!

As with all of us, COVID has put a damper on doing much therapy work, but we are all looking forward to getting back to making people happy.

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