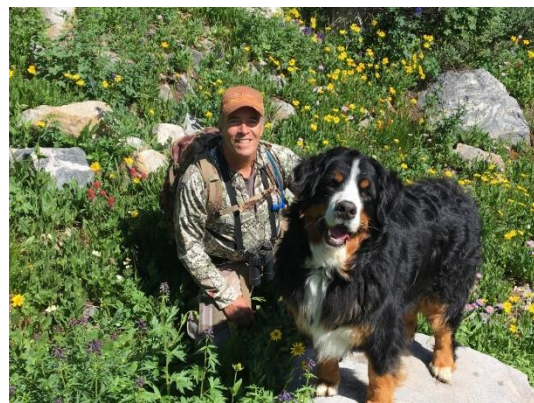


Scott Martin and Moose



Osa was our first Bernese Mountain Dog. Man, what a sweetheart. She brought such joy to our family, and truly was a family member. When we took her places, it was crazy. Perfect strangers would come up to us and want to pet our dog. They loved her and she loved meeting them. I really enjoyed sharing her. Most “Berners” just seem to be really friendly and all are beautiful. When they are clean and brushed, they are stunning and have such soft fur. Osa was our “therapy dog”, and would have been a great Pet Partner. She inspired me to investigate how to

be a therapy dog team when my wife decided it was time to get another Berner when Osa was 4 1/2. She had a mast cell tumor that was cancerous that we had removed. She was given maybe another year or so to live, predicting the cancer to spread through her lymph nodes. So, we had to get Moose before we lost Osa. We were ultimately blessed with her living to 10-1/2 to spite everyone and the cancer never spreading!



Moose was born to be a Therapy Dog, almost literally. His breeder picked him out for us when we told her we hoped to use him for therapy work. So, he was blessed to grow up going to obedience classes that he loved, and going places that he loved even more. He went to all kinds of stores and restaurants that allowed dogs. We live near the Castle Rock Factory Outlets that are dog friendly, including the Nike store at Christmas! He was the team mascot at our son’s football team that first summer, going to all

the practices and some games. Of course, when you take a Bernese Mountain Dog out in public, you frequently draw attention. Bring a bouncing baby fluffball puppy, you draw a crowd. Moose loved the attention; people really loved seeing Moose. He passed his Canine Good Citizen class at 1-1/2 years old with flying colors. He was pretty reliable in public by about 2. So, in mid-2017 I found Pet Partners and started figuring out how to be a team. I kept watching the Evaluations coming up. I never committed far enough ahead and the evaluations always were filled by the time I tried to register! Moose was 3 by the time we did evaluate in October 2018.

We started looking for a “gig”. It wasn’t long before we met Meme Martin and Linda Tieman that run the Angel Paws program at Castle Rock Adventist Hospital. They kept asking us about



volunteering at the hospital. I work full time, but have a flexible schedule. They wanted a regular commitment and a clean dog every week. You don't just wash a Berner right before you go somewhere, it's a chore. Both seemed a bit overwhelming, but maybe a good fit. Linda suggested for me to wash Moose in our shower at home, and they let us have Mondays so I could bathe him on Sundays.



Three and a half years later, what a blessing and joy it has been. Moose and I have had an amazing time and experiences.

Moose gets treated like a "rock star" at the hospital! He gets so much love and attention. He has a really special greeting and a big smile. His routine is to wait until I tell him "Moose say hi" as they finish with the hand sanitizer, he smiles at them, and turns around and sits on their feet. When they stop petting, he looks back at them and smiles to tell them "more please!" He has a big presence and a large personality. He gets noticed to say the least. At the hospital, we visit the waiting rooms, nurse's stations, some offices, and patient rooms. After a few years at a hospital, with a giant smiling fluffball, one has a lot of experiences. We have visited people with good news and bad news. We've met homeless people, people handcuffed to the bed, people alone, with families, in routine tests and procedures, and others whose lives have recently changed forever. Many people are not familiar with "Berners". So, we

have lots of conversations about Moose. He is a great distraction and fascination for many. What kind of dog is he? How much does he weigh? Does he shed? How much does he eat? The most common comment is "Wow, look at how big his feet are!". Some people don't like dogs or don't want to pet him, but they still like for us to visit with them and to just see and watch Moose. And, of course, when Santa shows up on the firetruck to visit the hospital at night, guess which dog they ask to work with him? Yep, Moose is the Christmas dog too!

The hospital is our main venue for visits. We have been blessed to visit some other places when we have time or make some a priority when they seem like a real good fit. Moose loves to visit the medical students at Rocky Vista University! He gets to just sit there and let others come to him there. One day he even got to hook up with Addie (Laura Ackerman's female Berner) and gave people a double treat of Berner love. He has visited Arapahoe Community College for test de-stressing and Rock Ridge Elementary respite parent's night out with significant needs kids. He visited Denver University on a night when students were learning about Animal Assisted Intervention. He was really up that night and was giving the students a huge dose of Dog Therapy. He was perfect



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DENVER PET PARTNERS



in a course of obstacles teaching the students what a dog's world looks like, and beautifully demonstrating well behaved interaction with the students.

Moose's most favorite visit ever was to Camp Wapiyapi! It is a sponsored camp for kids with cancer and their siblings in the Woodland Park area. They are also provided one on one college student counselors. (Several were from Rocky Vista University and knew Moose!) 5 therapy dog teams were there, spread out, and spent a couple of hours as the kids came by in their cabin groups and hung out with the dogs. Wow, what an experience! Those kids were so cool, and just loved all the dogs. They told us about their lives and about their favorite things. What strong, loving, and lovable kids. Moose and my heart will forever remember them. We can't wait for Covid to be over so that we can go back again in person!



Moose will be 7 this coming May. The big dogs don't live as long as many others. He is slowing down. Our visits are a little shorter now. Moose has some joint problems that have caused him some pain at times. Life is getting harder for him. He is mostly a "rug" at home. However, when I get his leash and backpack, he comes to life! He absolutely loves going places and seeing people. That is his life. Being a therapy dog is just his nature. Whether it is at the hospital, at Home Depot, the Outlets, wherever, Moose is just drawn to people and they to him. His big smile, wagging bushy tail, huge personality, and loving nature have had an impact on countless hundreds or even thousands of people. He truly is a Pet Partner. His love will live on in people's hearts long past his days on this earth.

Moose is doing his best to pass on his skills and legacy to the newest furry member of our family, Teva. She is 11 months old, an English Cream Golden Retriever. She is really loving, crazy smart, and tries so hard to please. Moose tries to teach her to keep all 4 on the floor and to be calm, but puppyhood is part of the process. They are buddies and he is teaching her to enjoy going places. She is doing pretty good so far. Moose will live on in her heart too. Maybe someday she can take his place as a Pet Partner. We are grateful to Denver Pet Partners for the training and opportunities to have our lives blessed and enriched by being a blessing and enriching the lives of so many others.



DPP Team of the Month (April 2022)

