

Cathy Huber and Joey



I'd like to introduce you to Joey. He is long and low, a little bit ridiculous, a lot scruffy and one hundred percent lovable.

Joey came into my life in the summer of 2017. I was living in New York at the time and had recently lost my German Shepherd, Kerry, with whom I had worked in the world of animal-assisted therapy for many years.

My work with Kerry, visiting with kids on the autism spectrum, hospitals, hospice patients and at-risk middle schoolers, had been an important part of my healing following the death of my husband in 2012. After Kerry's sudden death, I knew that I needed another therapy dog.

One of the local Pet Partners evaluators also owned a shelter outside of the city. Knowing that I was looking for a smaller pet with therapy dog potential, she suggested Joey.

Joey had come from a shelter in Arkansas. His papers listed his name as "Swifty." I guess that should have been my first clue as to what would follow. Joey was a bit of a loose cannon when I got him. Estimated to be two years old, his lack of training was difficult to ignore. He could jump higher and run faster than any



dog I had ever known, not always the best situation in my small city apartment. In the months that followed, I sometimes wondered if we would ever be able to pass the Pet Partners evaluation.



However, with time, patience and effort, Joey did settle down. His loving nature and eagerness to please, have made him the ideal companion and a wonderful therapy dog.



We moved to Denver in January 2020, just before the pandemic hit. With in-person therapy visits not being an option, Joey and I continued with one of our new New York programs, where kids would read to dogs via Zoom. While I looked forward to the connections established with the kids, there really wasn't much enjoyment for Joey and he would often disappear as I would set up for one of our sessions.

Fortunately, we were finally able to get started making in-person visits in the

Spring of 2022. Since then, I have been visiting with the wonderful folks at Laradon. Laradon is a day center in north Denver serving children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Joey and I try to bring the adults there a bit of happiness and purpose. They sometimes brush Joey, give him treats, or go on a double-leashed walk. I leave every visit with gratitude in my heart for these very special people, and for the staff members at Laradon who give so much of themselves.



Joey is living his best life in Colorado. His favorites are trips to the Cherry Creek Off-Leash Dog Park and agility class at Denver Paw School. At the park Joey can run to his heart's content and cool off with a mud bath or a dip in the creek. Agility class is just plain fun and also helps with those impulse control issues. Well, except when it comes to squirrels. A squirrel is just awesome,

whether it be in Central Park or Wash Park. The dream lives on.

As for me, I'm just grateful to have Joey in my life and for the opportunity I have, through Denver Pet Partners, to make a difference in the lives of others.

DPP Team of the Month (September 2022)

