

Linda Forsyth and Katie



“May I pet your dog?”, says the little girl (I’ll call her Emily) as she peeks around a chair in the waiting room. “Of course,” I say. “This is my therapy dog Katie, and she REALLY loves it when children pet her.” So begins a very special visit recently in the waiting room of a local health clinic. After some introductions and conversation Emily says,

“You know, I’ve always felt like I have a special connection with dogs.” We talked about how she could help so many dogs by volunteering at a dog shelter when she got a little older. Her special skills would be so meaningful to the dogs

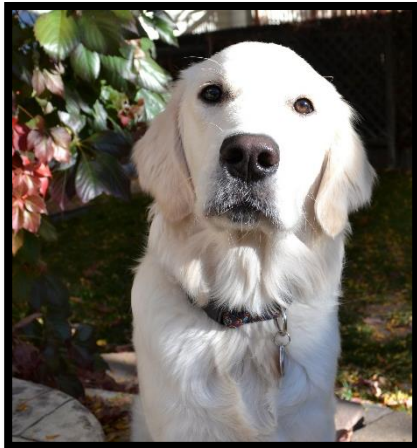


and people there.

Emily agreed and continued, “Katie is talking to me you

know.... she is telling me not to be afraid today and that I will be brave.” “Well,” I say, “Katie does have a way of speaking to people she meets.” Katie and I continued to visit with this delightful little girl and her mom until their appointment.





Katie is now a senior dog, 9 years old with almost 8 years of experience bringing her special brand of love to people in the Denver area. When she was younger, I wasn't sure she could ever be a therapy dog! Sure, I'd been practicing with a dog trainer, but she was our crazy, lively, always running around with her toy in her mouth young dog when my previous dog, Toby, died in 2015. Although smart as a whip, I was never sure Katie could settle enough to do therapy work.

And then, a miracle happened. When Toby left us, she seemed to know that she had some big paws to fill. Toby and I had been a therapy team at Swedish Hospital and various libraries for 9 of his 11 years. Katie stepped up and passed her evaluation on the first try. My 'little girl' had grown up before my eyes.



Since then, Katie and I have volunteered at Swedish Hospital, CO Retina Associates, Bemis and various Jeffco libraries, RVU, numerous workshops, trainings, and special events. She just passed her fourth evaluation, even the 'come when called'... a special challenge for her since it's such a treat to be petted by the evaluator!

When I speak to people about what Katie and I do, and

why I decided to do this animal-assisted volunteering, I tell them how Katie brings peace, calm and smiles wherever she goes. Of course, she also shares her beautiful white golden hair with visitors. But no matter... Katie's heart shines through with whomever she visits. And we never leave home without a lint roller.



DPP Team of the Month (June 2023)

Later, the day of the visit with 'Emily', as I was reflecting on the special nature of that experience, I received the following email from a clinic staff member –

"I wanted to share with you that I had a patient's mom call me today. Her 10-year-old daughter was diagnosed with a serious condition and today was her initial consult. The daughter hung out with Katie while awaiting to see their doctor. When she got in the exam room, she told her doctor and mom that Katie made her feel brave, and she was glad she was there to comfort and calm her. Thank you for making such an impact on our patients' lives."

Thank you, Denver Pet Partners, for honoring us as Team of the Month. And my love and thanks to my special therapy partner, Katie!

