

## Valor Dodd and Sophie



On January 1, 2020 tragedy struck Sophie. That morning Sophie was fine and acting like her normal playful self. After leaving home for a couple of hours to run some errands, I returned home and found Sophie barely walking. By that night her two rear legs were useless and I had to help her do her outdoor duties. Alarm and sadness quickly overcame me. Sophie had been my loving and faithful companion for 11 years.

I've always been a dachshund lover and Sophie was my fourth. My very first long-haired dachshund had fallen down the stairs and injured his back.

Unfortunately, we had to put him down. So, the first thing that went through my mind was that Sophie was "doomed".

The next morning the veterinarian diagnosed Sophie with a slipped disc in her lower back. The options were an expensive \$8000 surgery which may not work or put her down or try rehabilitation. The choice was easy!!! Sophie was going to do doggie rehabilitation and we were motivated! It also helped that I had just retired and could spend as much time with her as needed.

For two months and twice a week we went to a rehabilitation clinic in Castle Rock which consisted of underwater treadmill work, acupuncture, deep-needling and a hefty dose of steroids. **AND IT WORKED!**

Sophie could walk but was "wobbly" and would occasionally fall down. She was a fully functional dog around the house and could go in and out the dog door by herself. A further month of strength building and she was walking better, but

could not walk very far without dragging her rear feet and still a little “wobbly”. The next step was a dog cart (doggie wheelchair) which we purchased on the internet after a recommendation from our Vet. After a few adjustments for fitting, Sophie tried it and loved it. Her tail started wagging again.



Before Sophie had gotten injured, we had just obtained her Canine Good Citizen award and were contemplating being a Therapy dog team. Could Sophie still qualify?

After some research and contacting Denver Pet Partners, Sophie and I decided that we were going to be a therapy dog team. Denver **Paw School** offered a six week therapy dog workshop. I knew this would really determine our outcome for being a therapy dog team, so we worked extra hard and engaged with the wonderful staff at Paw School. With their additional help and their overtime special one-on-one sessions, we were ready!

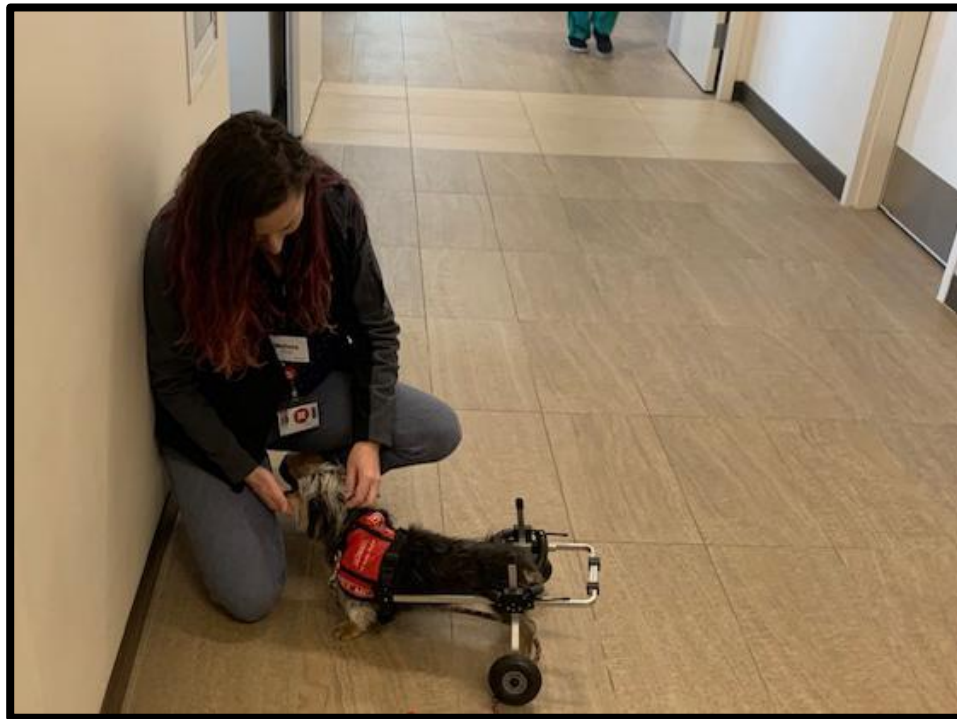
Then COVID hit. “What else could go wrong?!” It further delayed us, but allowed us some extra training and further convinced me that we could be a team. We

## *DPP Team of the Month (August 2023)*

passed our evaluation in March of 2021 in Colorado Springs with the stipulation that she required a dog cart. Sophie was a “Rock Star” and won the hearts of all the evaluation team. Sophie also just passed her second evaluation in May 2023.

Now Sophie and I visit UHealth Anschutz campus, UHealth Hospital Highlands Ranch and Castle Rock Adventist Centura Hospital. We average 10 visits a month and Sophie is still going strong.

For Sophie and me, we feel this is not a job. It is an honor, a pleasure and fun to visit our local hospital staff, patients and visitors in the hope we give them all a smile and a brief respite from their work and pain. It is therapy for all we visit as well as for Sophie and I. Our only reward is to see a smile or hear how “you made my day” from a client. That keeps Sophie and me coming back for more!



Melissa Strickland (Manager Hospitality Services) at UHealth Hospital Highlands Ranch spoiling Sophie. The staffs at our three hospitals love Sophie and always are very kind and thankful for our visits.

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Thank you, Denver Pet Partners, for your great support and in honoring us as your August team of the month.

Thanks to my special loving, faithful companion and “Rock Star”, Sophie!

