

Mandy Cole with Bristol and Banksy



Mandy and Bristol



Mandy and Banksy

I am very appreciative to be recognized as the Team of the Month for July. The therapy work has been a long time coming for me. I spend a lot of time with animals and my volunteer work over the last 15 years has mostly been fostering and doing other types of work for a boxer rescue. My husband and I have fostered 15+ dogs and have transported many for the rescue in addition to doing home checks. Two of my boxers were particularly good with people but still could not make it in the therapy world due to their issues with “strange dogs” and one licked people A LOT!



When I was dogless due to the unfortunate passing of my rescue dogs, I set out to find a dog that could do therapy work. I sought out a Golden Retriever after having had German Shepherds, Boxers, and Dobermans. I met a breeder who temperament-tested her puppies and helped select them for you depending on your plans with those dogs. I started both of my dogs in obedience training very early and Bristol earned her first obedience title at around 9 months old. She passed her evaluation at just over a year old, so we were on our way to do therapy visits!

DPP Team of the Month (July 2024)



I decided Bristol would like a companion, and I had the time to train a second dog, so I went and got a cousin to Bristol named Banksy. I started him similarly to Bristol, taking him to Home Depot, Aspen Grove, and obedience training as a puppy. He passed the evaluation at a very early age of 1 year and 6 days so just old enough to be eligible. He passed with a complex rating, so he showed his sister up a little bit. More likely, I was more prepared for the evaluation the second time, but we can still credit him for his performance.



Bristol's visits have been sporadic the past 8 months due to a skin infection from a lake visit after a busy start and many visits in her first year. I had no idea that having two dogs would be so handy!



We do visits every other week at Lifecare of Littleton, assisted living. I followed in the footsteps of Susan Horecki when her pup retired from visits at the same place. She is my neighbor and heard through the grapevine that I wanted to do therapy work, and she told me everything I needed to know and did the introduction for me at Lifecare.

The joy and gratitude expressed by the residents and employees during our visits serve as a reminder of the profound impact that therapy dogs can have on individuals' well-being. I have had many experiences that bring tears to my eyes on my way home. I knew I wanted to visit an assisted living facility because I spent time visiting my great-grandmother as a child, and it always stuck with me that she had to be there without her cats. I thought I would be so sad without my four-legged friends so, hopefully, these visits help the residents a little.

We have participated in conferences, and we have done the Lone Tree Performing Arts sensory inclusive performances, which was a fun time! Banksy's head turned like an owl at the sound of conch shells being played on stage during the performance, but he stayed his quiet and calm self the whole time. His goal in life is to be petted and scratched so he gets his payment in spades.



I'm incredibly proud of what Bristol and Banksy have accomplished. Our volunteer efforts have not only enriched the lives of others, but have also strengthened the bond between us as a team. As we continue our mission, I look forward to making even more people smile in the years to come.