

## Nora Burns and Whiskey Girl



### Whiskey Girl: From Puppy Mill Rescue to Lifesaving Volunteer

Whiskey Girl is my COVID cliché. When the world started shutting down rapidly between March 11-13, 2020, every phone call I took was from a meeting planner canceling their conference. As a keynote speaker, conferences are my primary workplace, so I realized I needed to do something positive for my mental health.

In those early days of the pandemic (oh, the naïveté of March 13, 2020), I thought I could use the “few weeks” of downtime to do something meaningful for my community, something that would bring joy and wasn’t feasible during my usual travel-heavy schedule. That’s when I decided to foster puppies.

On March 21, 2020, I welcomed the first two of what would eventually be nine foster puppies (and a few kittens, too) over the next year. These adorable goldendoodle pups arrived with no intention on my part of keeping either of them. At the time, Bella Love—my soul dog and a former therapy assistance pup—was nearly 15 years old. I didn’t plan to complicate her senior years with a puppy. Within two weeks, Bella made it clear that Whiskey Girl was *her* dog. And so, Whiskey Girl became a permanent member of our little family.



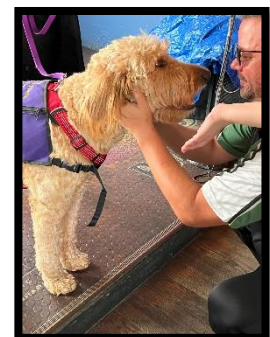
Thankfully, Bella stuck around for a few more years (until March 12, 2022) and taught Whiskey Girl how to “dog.” I attribute Whiskey Girl’s success as a great therapy dog partner to Bella’s influence.

### A Natural Therapy Dog



Whiskey Girl loves visiting workplaces, colleges, and the CU Dental School/Clinic. The moment her purple vest comes out, she knows it’s time to “go to work.” Even the phrase “let’s go see the kids” will wake her from a nap, and she’ll instantly run to the door, ready to go.

Her natural empathy continues to amaze me.



## *DPP Team of the Month (March 2025)*



Whiskey Girl can sense pain in a human unlike any dog I've ever met. There's a specific way she rests her head on someone that signals they're experiencing deep pain or recent trauma. This unique behavior occurs only every five to seven visits, and each time, the person she comforts ultimately shares a recent, unresolved trauma they're dealing with. From the man who had just been diagnosed with stage 4 cancer to the woman grieving her husband after a traumatic accident, Whiskey Girl instinctively knows who needs her most. She is truly well-suited to her role as a therapy assistance pup.

### **Lifesaving Blood Donor**

In addition to her therapy work, Whiskey Girl is also a blood donor through Wheat Ridge Animal Hospital. As a blood donor, she helps other dogs suffering from trauma or needing medical treatment that involves blood and blood products. Being a donor comes with perks: regular blood screenings and lots of love from the veterinary staff. Whiskey Girl, who has no fear of the vet, adores the team and absolutely loves her reward—a full can of wet dog food—after every donation. (This is the only time she gets canned food, so it's a special treat.) If your dog is over 35 pounds, great with the vet, and between 1–6 years old, I encourage you to explore the blood donor program!



### **From Rescue to Volunteer Extraordinaire**

From a puppy mill rescue to an active volunteer, Whiskey Girl is truly remarkable. Whether she's providing comfort as a therapy dog or helping save lives as a blood donor, she proves every day that even the smallest acts of kindness can make a big difference.



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