

## *Laurie Williams and Cerys*

In 1986, my husband, John, and I welcomed our first dog into our lives, Jamie, a Golden Retriever. Our next two dogs were also Golden Retrievers, Callie and Blaze. Blaze, my 90lb boy, developed arthritis about the same time that I did. It made me realize that our next dog would need to be smaller.



Then, on a trip to South Carolina in 2016, I saw my first Corgi and told my husband that this would be the perfect size for our next pup. I also saw that a friend of mine had Corgis, and she recommended a breeder. When I contacted Loyce about wanting a Pembroke Welsh Corgi, she said one of her dams was expecting. In December, we got our first picture of Cerys, and Loyce let me choose her name for her AKC registration. Being part Welsh, I wanted to give her a Welsh name. *Cerys* means “beloved” in Welsh, and *Bronwyn* means “white/fair chested.” January 17, 2017, we brought Cerys Bronwyn home from Wimberly, Texas. Where our Golden Retrievers looked like little bears as puppies, Cerys was a teeny, tiny pup that looked like Eddie Munster!



One thing I learned from having dogs before, especially a timid dog, was that I needed to introduce Cerys to things right away. She got a nightly massage and light brushing every evening, as well as tooth brushing. Now, 9 years later, those are things she loves and relaxes to! One of my Golden Retrievers, Callie, was fearful of everything, especially the vet. So with Cerys, we went for a meet and greet with no check-up, just treats and pets. Vet visits have never given her anxiety. As new Corgi parents, we learned that they are quick learners. For example, she was quick to learn to walk on a leash. And in April 2017, she passed her first training class. We also learned that the herding instinct is strong in Corgis. At first, Cerys would grab a pants leg with her sharp little teeth and pull us where she wanted us to go. I lost several pairs of jeans to those little teeth. Later, she would nudge us from behind. Now, she does the Lassie thing and walks ahead and looks over her shoulder for us to follow her. When she was about 3 years old, we took a trip from Austin to Denver to visit our son, and we got to see her herding mode. At the

## DPP Team of the Month (July 2026)



time, he had an office in Wash Park, and we walked around the park waiting to go to lunch with him. As we walked with Cerys, Canada geese were grouped in the grass on our left. Cerys zipped forward and herded the flock over to the right side of the sidewalk.

In May of 2017, John and I were having dinner at a brewery/restaurant in our neighborhood in Austin. After dinner, a waitress told us about an event they were involved in called Barks for Beers.



She gave us a Pawsport to 30 breweries in Austin



where you could take your dog. You'd get a glass and Pawsport for \$30, and go to any or all of the breweries during the month of May for a glass of beer. We decided to try it out and bring Cerys with

us. The breweries we went to all had displays about Divine Canines and members of Divine Canines were at the breweries to talk to people about therapy dogs. Barks for Beers is the organization's big fundraiser. At the first brewery we stopped at, I chatted with DC teams to find out more about therapy dog work and realized this was something I could do with Cerys. I also realized that Cerys and I were going to need a lot of training.



In 2018, Cerys was continuing training, but when we went to Barks for Beers that year, one of the breweries wanted to use her in a picture to advertise the event there.

Cerys was also the face of Miss November in a calendar that was put out by a local corgi group.



In the fall of 2018, we took our handlers class, and Cerys and I became team members of Divine Canines! We began by working at a Brookdale Assisted Living Center near our

## *DPP Team of the Month (July 2026)*



house. We then added visits at another, larger Brookdale Assisted Living Center in the Austin suburb of Westlake. In December of 2018, I began the process to work with Cerys at St. David's Hospital in downtown Austin. At the same time, the head of Divine Canines asked for someone to lead a team at a mental hospital close to our house. I stepped up to take the position and led a group of 6-7 teams. Cerys and I were getting really busy. We also worked at events similar to Barks for Beers where we could talk to the public about the work we do.

In 2019, I had to scale back to 3 locations instead of 4. We had begun working at the hospital downtown in the ICU and ER. The first time we went to the ICU, a nurse helped me put Cerys up on a patient's bed, where he petted her for several minutes. When we left the room to visit with another patient, the nurse ran out and caught me saying, "He's been here for a week, and it's the first time I've seen him smile!"



In March of 2019, we were asked to send Divine Canines cool pictures of our pets. I took one of Cerys in Bluebonnets, which ended up on our local NBC news channel cycling through the day as they talked about therapy dogs.



May of 2019 was our first full participation in Divine Canines big fundraiser, Barks for Beers. One of the vendors used a picture of Cerys to make coffee cups, drink cups, stickers, and dog blankets with Cerys' picture that were sold on Etsy with some of the proceeds going to Divine Canines.

## DPP Team of the Month (July 2026)



Then 2020 hit, we couldn't work in the nursing home, the mental hospital, or the hospital—Covid. One thing we did was Zoom and Google Meet sessions with clients at ARC of Texas. We were also asked to take a picture and include a message to send to the clients we worked with.



Before you could buy masks at places, I contacted my Divine Canines Teammates, telling them that I would make as many masks as they needed. This was a picture I had sent to them to show them the kind of masks I was making.

As we moved into 2021, we slowly began going back to work. At the hospital, we could only visit staff. And of course every place we worked at, we wore masks. Also, as you can see in this picture, Divine Canines did not have a policy about costumes. Here we were visiting the nursing home at last.



By 2022, things were getting back to normal. At the hospital, we worked in teams of two. Cerys was paired with Nemo, who we also worked with at the nursing home. By 2022, we had put in 200 hours of work with Divine Canines!

In 2023, we stopped working with Divine Canines. We packed up and sold our house in Austin and moved to Aurora, Colorado. I had begun the process of joining Denver Pet Partners prior to leaving Austin. When we got to Colorado, we were slated to be evaluated in August...but Cerys got sick, and we had to postpone until November. It felt strange not working as a therapy team for so many months. I was hoping to continue working in a hospital setting with Cerys, but that is a long process to get things going. In the meantime, we worked in stress-relief settings at

## *DPP Team of the Month (July 2026)*



colleges and businesses numerous times, and in an informational setting about therapy dogs at a National Alliance on Mental Illness Conference. Then, in 2024, we began the process of working at AdventHealth Hospital in Parker. It was like being home. Cerys just took it in stride. In March, Cerys was named Therapy Dog of the Month at the hospital, and her picture appeared on all the hospital computers. Now, everyone at AdventHealth knows who she is! At AdventHealth, we visit the patient rooms on



the first floor, the CathLab, and Neurology and Spine. We end our day visiting the Cancer Center and sit with families and patients awaiting treatment.



For a short time, Cerys and I worked at a memory care in Parker, CO. In the nursing home we worked at in Austin, we were in an assisted living situation. This new setting was very different; we had to stay in the communal areas. This was fine until they changed their scheduling, and I had a hard time deciding to move on. Thanks to Susan Horecki, who helped me come to grips with the change, and I began thinking about where to work next.

This Spring, I began the process of working at another hospital. After a lot of governmental hurdles, Cerys and I began working as the 2<sup>nd</sup> DPP team at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center. We work on two of the inpatient floors and visit people on the main causeway through the hospital. We really enjoy bringing smiles to the people we meet there.



Cerys and I were also certified to work as an Animal Assisted Crisis Response Team in 2025.

We've almost reached 400 hours of work, and 7 years of working as a team. As one client recently told me, Cerys and I bring joy, peace, and smiles!

*DPP Team of the Month (July 2026)*

