

Christopher Bates and Buddy



Gentle Giants

I have always had a special affinity for the Great Pyrenees breed, as well as for volunteering and giving back to my community. What I appreciate most about the Great Pyrenees is their calm and steady nature. They are large dogs, but they often have a quiet presence that makes them easy to be around. That combination of size, patience, and calmness is one of the reasons I believe Buddy is well suited for therapy work.

I have previous experience with therapy dogs. From 2007 to 2015, my Great Pyrenees, Hannah, and I were a therapy team. At that time, Pet Partners was known as the Delta Society. That experience taught me what to look for in a dog that may be suited for therapy work, including patience, confidence, and an ability to remain calm around different people and environments. When Buddy came into my life, I

began to recognize many of those same qualities in him.

Buddy joined our family in 2023. I was volunteering at the Great Pyrenees Rescue and Sanctuary in Peyton, Colorado, when he was brought into the rescue. He immediately caught my attention because of his relaxed and friendly demeanor. He was comfortable around people and other animals and seemed to take his surroundings in stride. I adopted him that day.

Buddy adjusted to our family quickly and developed a particularly close relationship with Luna, our older Great Pyrenees. As he became more comfortable, his personality became even more apparent. He is friendly without being overly excitable, enjoys attention without demanding it, and genuinely seems to enjoy being around people. These qualities are what first made me consider him for therapy work.

Buddy as a Therapy Dog

Buddy's greatest strength as a therapy dog is his temperament. He is naturally calm and patient and is comfortable allowing people to approach, pet, and interact with him. If someone wants to spend only a few seconds with him, he is content. If they want to spend several minutes petting him, he is equally comfortable. He does not need constant activity or attention and seems happy simply being present.

His size also makes him memorable. Buddy is more than three and a half feet long, so he is difficult to miss when he enters a room. People often notice him before they know anything about him, which gives them an immediate reason to ask questions and start a conversation. Once they meet him, however, his personality quickly becomes more important than his size. They discover that this very large dog is calm, gentle, and happy to stand there and be petted.

Buddy at CSDB

Buddy and I currently volunteer at the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB). These visits have allowed me to see firsthand how well his temperament fits the students and staff. When Buddy arrives, people notice him immediately. His size gets their attention, but his calm personality keeps it. Students and staff often want to pet him, talk about him, or simply spend time with him.



Buddy also provides a valuable tactile experience. Because he is such a large and fluffy dog, students can easily explore his size and coat through touch. For students who are blind or visually impaired, this provides a natural opportunity to interact with an animal without relying on vision. Buddy's patience allows students to interact with him at their own pace without worrying that he will become overly excited or move away.

For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, interaction with Buddy can also be largely nonverbal. Students can communicate with him through touch, gestures, body language,

and facial expressions. His ability to remain calm and responsive makes him a good fit for this environment.

The Value of Therapy Visits



One of the things I appreciate most about therapy work is that the interaction does not have to be complicated to be meaningful. Buddy does not need to perform a trick or entertain a group of people to have a successful visit. Sometimes a student simply spending a few minutes petting him is enough.

A therapy-dog visit provides students and staff with a change from their normal routine and an opportunity to relax, interact, and enjoy a positive social experience. Buddy's presence can create conversations and connections naturally.

For me, Buddy represents what I value most about therapy work: providing comfort, creating connections, and simply being present. His size may be what people notice first, but his patience, calm temperament, and genuine enjoyment of people are what make him a wonderful therapy dog.

