

Kathy, Ron and Snicker's Story



Ron, Snickers & I are honored to be named Team(s) of the Month for February 2011. We can think of no better organization to be part of than American Humane Animal Assisted Therapy. Being involved with sharing Snickers' special qualities with others brings us as much or more pleasure than it does to the people we serve.

We joined AHA AAT in the summer of 2009 and have volunteered at Skyridge Medical Center since the fall of the same year. I first became aware of animal-assisted therapy when I worked at Swedish Medical Center. I realized then how much just spending a few minutes with the visiting therapy animals made my day better too so when our dog, Snickers, turned out to be so calm and good-natured, we had to look into

it.

Ron and I have been together in a second marriage for 26 years and, after raising four children together and taking a break (i.e., eight grandchildren), decided that a dog would be a good addition to our two-cat family. Snickers is an 80 pound three-year-old black Labradoodle. (Recently, a lady was telling someone she met Snickers and said "I think his name might have been "Milky Way"!") We got him as a pup (the last one not promised in the litter) and we feel that everyone else missed the very best dog of all. He seems to be "born" to connect to people plus he is the perfect height to walk up to hospital beds, park his head and accept all the love they have to give him. When we arrived at the recent banquet, "A Round of A Paws", a lady indicated that she had come, mainly, to see if she could find Snickers again. She had back surgery this past summer and told us how much it meant to her to have him visit her when she was so uncomfortable. She said she didn't really recognize Ron right away (who was with Snickers) but she would know Snickers anywhere and was so thrilled to see him again. At the end of the evening she donated a check for \$100 to AHA AAT in Snickers' name.

Since we began at Skyridge, their program has grown considerably. We very much enjoy working with Caroline Shovlowsky, our lead and we now are able to visit two medical/surgical floors, the Cancer floor and now, the cardiac floor as well. One of my most memorable visits was on the Cancer floor when several of the nurses asked us to come into a room where the gentleman was very near death. He didn't speak

but watched Snickers intently as we approached the side of the bed. I truly wasn't sure how to direct Snickers so we just stood quietly so he could see Snickers. With no direction from me, Snickers walked up to the bed and laid his head on the man's hand and then started licking his fingers. I can only hope that it meant as much to him as it did to me.

We have been so warmly received by so many people and thanked by so many people for doing what we do that I sometimes come home feeling almost overwhelmed. The warmth that an animal can bring when people are in need of a "warm fuzzy" and a little companionship is beyond anything that we could have imagined...

Kathy, Ron & Snickers Borgman

