

## *Pippin's Story*



After six months of patient searching, on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003, God brought into my life a small two and a half pound ball of fur who was to become my future Partner. Everyone, including our fifty pound Border Collie/Golden Retriever mix, adored Pippin. She quickly fell into our home school routine, sleeping in her bed under the kitchen table as we worked on school each day. When she was twelve weeks old she began going with us to our home school PE classes. My kids participated and I helped with the paperwork so we were there for five hours every Thursday. In that timeframe Pippin received hugs and kisses from upwards of fifty

children each week. It soon became clear that Pippin loved children and they obviously loved her.

When Pippin was about a year and a half old the opportunity to do some formal obedience training presented itself. So, off to classes we went. Pippin enjoyed her classes and we loved working together. I loved the closeness and rapport that grew between us as I worked with her each day. Three months after completing Basic Training we started Intermediate Training. As we progressed through training I couldn't shake the nagging feeling that there was something more Pippin and I were suppose to do, something that had meaning and purpose. I had no idea what that was, yet that nagging feeling persisted. One day as my daughter lay ill on the couch she observed that Pippin would not leave her alone. Pippin had been by her side the entire day. After explaining that Pippin knew she was sick and was "taking care of her" my daughter remarked, "You should take her to hospitals to visit sick kids." That nagging feeling disappeared, this was the journey Pippin and I were to take.



Shortly thereafter, while helping at a gymnastics clinic sponsored by our PE group, we encountered a six year old girl with cystic fibrous. By all accounts she was terrified of dogs. For the next three mornings Pippin and I worked with this little girl. It was amazing to watch her struggle to take a few extra steps or throw just two more beanbags so that she could pet Pippin and get kisses on her nose!



In June, 2006, I took the Denver Pet Partners Training Workshop and in July, Pippin and I headed to our evaluation. As anyone who has ever been evaluated knows, being extremely nervous heading into an evaluation is just par for the course. All was going well until our beloved Jim dropped the metal bucket on the floor behind us. Pippin barely noticed but the volunteers there had to peel me off the ceiling! After a good laugh we continued our evaluation and happily walked out the door having passed.

Last fall we welcomed Trinity Lutheran School in Franktown into Denver Pet Partners' family of facilities. Pippin and I, along with three other teams, implemented the Literacy Program. The teams worked with children in the second, third, and fourth grades. Pippin and I began working with three fourth graders. It wasn't long until we were both hooked. We became very fond of the kids, their personalities differed quite a bit, but they each had such endearing qualities. On weeks that there was no school Pippin seemed to actually pout and seem bored, as though she was wondering why we didn't go to visit "her" kids. Throughout the school year we enjoyed watching the kids improve in their reading skills. I will never forget one boy in particular. He was very mild mannered and calm with a gentle quiet smile. Each week he would take a breath and begin reading. He didn't pay much attention to punctuation and would change words, add words, or completely eliminate words. Very often in the middle of a sentence he would grab another breath and begin again. As he sped through the story it was apparent that he didn't comprehend much of what he was reading. As he changed words, dropped words, or added words, he didn't notice that the story no longer made sense. Pointing this out to him and trying to remind him to slow down just wasn't helping. My husband, Gary, suggested that I have him give Pippin a treat at the end of every paragraph that he used the punctuation to guide his reading. What an idea! He got so good at reading and slowing down that we had to change the treat to every page and then every other page because Pippin was getting too many treats. He was even practicing his reading at home. It was so exciting to see him get excited about reading; he told me that now he understood what he was reading much better! I am the Team Lead at Trinity Lutheran School and I know that the other teams have wonderful stories as well. I am lucky to have had such wonderful teams helping me to develop our program. We're hoping to be invited back to Trinity Lutheran School next fall to continue the Literacy Program.

Pippin is a wonderful companion and partner. As special friend recently said of Pippin, "We can all be very proud of what big mountains little Pippin can move!" I couldn't agree more, she certainly does have that canine magic.

We've had a great year with Denver Pet Partners and have made many friends and had many memorable experiences. We look forward to learning more and continuing to reach others through the incredible human/animal bond.

