

## *Annie's Story*



First, let me say that I am honored and humbled to have Annie and myself featured as team of the month. I feel so fortunate that I am a member of such an incredible group of people. And I am amazed and grateful that a dog like Annie came into my life when I desperately needed her. Annie is a rescued dog, but in the end she helped to rescue me from my own grief and loss when my husband passed away. I adopted Annie when she was almost 10 years old. She is now over 13 and I made the difficult decision to retire her last year. I know it was the right decision for her. She is now the top dog couch potato at home, and she doesn't have to worry about anything except when she will get her next cookie or go for a walk.

Annie and I met early in 2006 when I got a call from a friend who worked with a Golden Retriever rescue group. They had found an older German Wirehaired Pointer (GWP) desperately in need of help. My friend knew that I had owned and loved GWP's for many years and asked if I could help this girl find a home. Annie's brief bio (very brief) mentioned that she was a retired hunting dog who was good with other dogs, puppies, cats, kids, adults, loved to ride in the car and had an all around stable personality - a perfect dog, BUT if she couldn't find a home in the next couple of weeks, she would be put to sleep. I drove to Kansas to pick her up and immediately fell in love with her cheerful personality. I knew right away that Annie would be staying with me as her forever home. Acquiring a GWP for therapy work was the last thing on my mind but after Annie settled into my home and routine, I began to wonder if we would make a good therapy team. I remembered the Pet Partner who had visited with my husband while he was in the hospital, and Annie seemed to have that same sweet, joyful personality. I began to wonder if we both had what it would take to make a good team. I went online to see what the requirements were, started training with Annie, took my workshop and Annie and I became a team six months later.

Even though I was Annie's third home, she passed her test with no problems and she loved her time visiting. Her furiously wagging, stubby, white tail and joyful, confident spirit inspired smiles from everyone she met. In her heart, it was the pets and hugs she received that made her visits special to her. In my heart, it was the look of joy and happiness when Annie first entered a room. That, and knowing that such a sweet dog, had finally found her perfect place in life.



Annie's very favorite place to visit was anywhere there were kids, and the younger the better. She spent most of her time at Swedish Medical Center and Life Care Center of Littleton. She spent a year working with clients at the Easter Seals Stroke Recovery, and loved the times she got to work at Night Owls and Shots for Tots and anything else that came her way. She loved being around people and having them pet her and tell her how beautiful and sweet she was.

Annie has a great affinity for people, and I believe she could really feel when they hurt, whether it was physical, mental or emotional. One of our visits which comes to mind was when we were asked to see a client who was having a great deal of difficulty dealing with being in the hospital. He was giving everyone a hard time. I was asked to bring Annie into his room for a visit to see if he would calm down. Annie got up on a chair next to him and laid her head on his bed. He wouldn't make eye contact with me and was still angry with everyone else in the room, but he put his hand on Annie's head and seemed to relax a little. As soon as anyone would come near him he'd get upset, but he still kept his hand on Annie's head and never once made a move to harm her in any way. Annie calmly stayed in her awkward position for over half an hour until eventually he fell asleep. Another visit which always makes me smile, happened when we visited an older gentleman who mistook Annie for a dog he'd had as a young boy. For a few sweet minutes that day, Annie became a male, Airedale Terrier named Danny. I didn't mind and Annie was happy to get the hugs and pets, and that very sweet gentleman got to re-live fond and happy memories of a long gone but well loved dog. It is truly a blessing to be able to share our pets with those who miss theirs.

Even though I'm currently without a working therapy dog partner, the confidence and skills I learned as Annie's Pet Partner are helping me train and work with my young, Smooth Fox Terrier, "Macy", who I'm hoping in the next year or so will be able to pick up where Annie left off.

