

Denver's Story



He came from the streets. I found it only appropriate to name him Denver as that is where he was and I knew nothing else about him. Rescue animals seldom come with their biography attached; however looking into his eyes that first time, I could feel his wisdom, unselfish devotion and realized his spirit held many questions and answers.

Initially, it took us a couple weeks to come together. I had tried to lend him a hand on several occasions. Each time though, he would do his best to maintain his distance. Then one glorious day, we became a team in so many senses of the word. Little did I know that this Yellow Lab would set into motion an avalanche of life altering events. Denver and I adopted and connected with each other and started out on our journey together.

His quiet demeanor and calming presence were the greatest gift. He sensed my inner being and brought tranquility and peace to my weary soul. From the start, he was my shadow. I could not walk from one room to the next without him sticking to me like glue. Every opportunity he had, he would initiate contact.

Based on his lack of weight and condition of his coat the vet figured he had been out on his own for several months. She put him between 3 and 5 years old - I settled on calling him 4. The 25 pounds he was lacking came very easily - the boy was a Lab and born to eat.

Denver didn't really need any training. He knew what to do. When I read of the upcoming Denver Pet Partners training, I knew we would make a great team. Passing the Canine Good Citizen test with flying colors was the first indication of what was to come. We became a Pet Partner team in April, 2003.

Our first "visit" was truly an event. An assembly at Fletcher-Miller school was scheduled to introduce the staff and students to Pet Partners therapy. There is nothing like jumping off the deep end and finding yourself and partner in a gym filled with 300 special needs students and their support systems. Had I really considered the potential implications, I probably should have declined.

All uncertainty aside, it went without a hitch. In my eyes, he was a shining star. Together we connected with the children and brought great joy to their day. I will always remember the small girl, all of 4 or 5, who initially was full of fear. As Denver and I were on the floor, surrounded by a group of children, I noticed her walking the perimeter of the troop maintaining her safety zone. She was exceedingly cautious. However, her curiosity was piqued with the others all giving and receiving Denver's attention and love. Her safety zone continued to shrink as she circled. Within minutes, she was next to us.





Denver, still lying on his side absorbing all the love and admiration of the children, lifted his head and noticed her then resumed his position. I am positive he sensed her fear and did not want to alarm her. I could see she really wanted to step through her apprehension and so I offered her to pet his back while I made sure he would remain still. That was all I needed to do, for within our therapy team, I am just a bridge. Denver does the rest. Within five minutes, she was lying next to him on the floor and doing the full body hug. As the assembly ended, her teacher had to literally pry her off. Denver had shared his

gift with the children that day and made a remarkable impact. Just one more of the many different ways his companionship continues to illuminate the paths of those he comes into contact with. As a team, we look forward to many more therapy visits together.



Editor's Note: When I first saw Denver, I was immediately impressed by his stoic confidence and calm nature. To see Ayn and Denver work together as a team is like watching a ballet dance; they compliment one another beautifully and it is very apparent that their partnership is built on mutual trust and respect. To see Denver at work as a therapy dog is an extraordinary example of how a child's life can be enlightened by the love and help of a dog. Denver is very deserving of commendation for overcoming adverse conditions and unselfishly dispensing great kindness and compassion. You are truly one of life's great blessings.