



A Special Place for Lilly



Lilly was born at the Guide Dogs for the Blind Campus in San Rafael, CA and raised by Lizz Landert, a long time GDB puppy raiser here in Denver. Lilly will be 8 years old on May 23rd. The stories I am told have Lilly flying through her harness training at the campus. She was very motivated and willing to serve. Lilly graduated and was placed with Deborah. She was her guiding eyes for only a couple of years, as Deborah became wheel chair bound and could no longer walk with Lilly. GDB retrieved Lilly and as is their custom, offered her back to her puppy raiser. Liz had several dogs at the time and offered Lilly to my family and me.

What a gift!

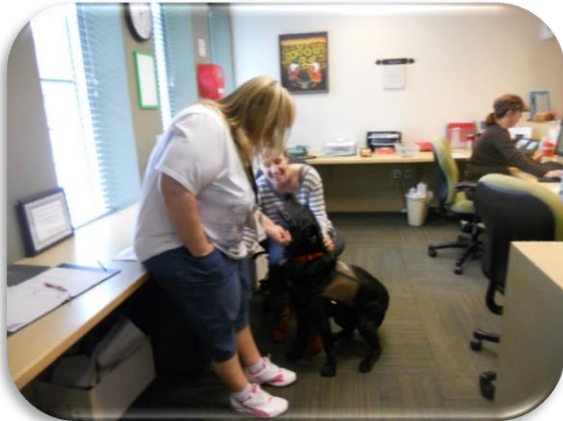
It took an incredibly short time for both Logan (my better half) and me to fall in love with this dog. We are both retired, love to travel, garden, fish and enjoy life and Lilly fits in perfectly. She is a great traveler, having visited all the National Parks in the western US over a 6-week road trip. Lilly has a few quirks like not liking water. She will only wade up to her elbows. She loves to sleep on her back, doesn't understand retrieving balls, will empty an entire basket of chew toys during the day, is a world class shedder, and just seems to love everyone she meets.

We became Pet Partners in 2012 as, like most of you, I felt I really needed to "share this dog". Lilly tends to sit and then lean in on people which limits her ability to interact with a fragile population like nursing home situations. Mary Anne Vogt approached me about trying The Gathering Place. It is known as a refuge for rebuilding lives. TGP is a large brick building on Colfax Avenue near downtown. It is a community of safety that serves women, children and transgender individuals who are experiencing poverty and homelessness. These





folks sleep in a shelter at night but during the day have nowhere to go. The Gathering Place provides a food bank, a clothing store, a nursery and childcare, a roof top vegetable garden, a warm noon meal, computer access, and GED training. And perhaps most important, a place to gather and share their lives, get counseling and comfort. That's where Lilly comes in.



Each Thursday we visit, starting at the parking lot where Lilly has a couple of favorites that are in motorized wheelchairs. After several good licks, we go in to the main gathering room. Usually, there are 4-5 women sitting and talking, but by the end of our visit we often have over 20 women with Lilly "working the room". One of the staff calls her the "Ham". I pass out treats and Lilly gets put through her paces: sit, down, shake, rollover. It sometimes ends with the woman getting licked all over, with much laughter. We often see the same women over and over, and Lilly truly has bonded

with some of them. Many of these women carry Lilly's business card and have her picture on their phone screen savers. One told me the last time we visited that "Lilly was pure love".

Dogs seem to know when someone is troubled and needs their help. One such woman comes in regularly. She won't make eye contact or talk with anyone, just sits and mumbles to herself. Except with Lilly. She takes Lilly's head in her hands and she talks to her in complete sentences. It can't help but touch your heart. Another favorite is a transgender individual who is really good with dogs. She and Lilly really hit it off and she is in the process of teaching Lilly some new tricks. And there are the quiet ones, who are happy to just give Lilly a treat and rub her ears. One group of African American women loves to sit together in the corner. They are good friends, teasing and joking together. Lilly stands in the middle of their group, making eye contact, really listening to the banter while one of the women rubs her head and another her rump. She thinks she is part of their group.



DPP Team of the Month (June 2015)

DENVER PET PARTNERS



So Lilly and I have found a special place. I ask Lilly “Do you want to go visit the ladies?” and she wags her whole rear end. Each time I leave The Gathering Place, I have a grateful heart. My life is comfortable and easy. These women face such turmoil and struggle. I love the fact that Lilly makes them smile, even laugh out loud. I am also grateful for Lilly, to be able to share this wonderful dog.

