

## *Greta's Story*

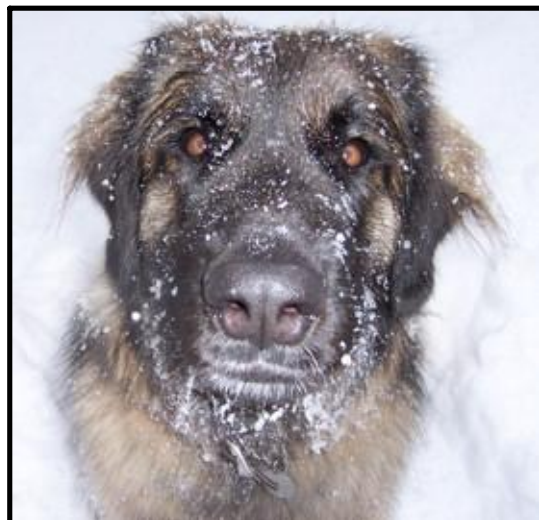


**Many of our therapy visits start something like this...**

No, she is actually petite for her breed. 98 pounds. 3 years old already. Greta. A Leonberger. A L e o n b e r g e r. A rare breed originating from the town of Leon, Germany. No, they don't have a "purpose", per se. They were actually bred to look like a lion, to match the symbol and crest of the town. But in reality they were used to do many of the things their ancestors did -many believe they were bred from Newfoundlands, Great Pyrenees, & Saint Bernards. She does Water Rescue work with Newfies. She barks like a Pyr. Nope, no barrel and no whisky like the Saint. Thank you, she thinks she is pretty too.

### **Our story...**

I wanted a Leonberger and I knew I wanted to do therapy work. I realized that combination would require patience and perseverance, especially since there are no breeders in Colorado. I spoke with several breeders and then finally I spoke to the breeder I liked the most about my dreams of doing therapy work and how important it would be to have the appropriate temperament to do this special work. She agreed and assured me only a special puppy would do! The perfect breeding took place and along came along Forever Green's Mountain Girl-Greta. Her Dam is from Minnesota (ironically about 20 minutes from where I grew up) and her Sire is from Switzerland. Both are Champion Leonbergers and active in the Leonberger Club of America. Her father is a therapy dog himself doing awesome work with kids in the Chicago area.



It took over 2 years of research, conversations, visits, and "interviews" before Greta was actually in my hands and home. But, the moment I met her, I knew Greta was worth every ounce of energy and moment of anticipation!

### **Let the adventure begin...**

From Day 1 we started socializing, exposing, and some positive reinforcement training. We attended basic obedience classes and took advantage of every opportunity available to experience new places and people. When Greta was 14 months old I attended the Delta Society workshop. I knew she was pretty young to try to pass the evaluation and start therapy work but I figured we could give it a try and see what happened. At 15 months (on our first try), we passed our Delta Society evaluation. I was so excited!

### **Special visit experiences...**

#### **At the hospital**

On a particular visit to the hospital, I crossed paths with a doctor who asked me if I had a minute. Of course I did. He told me that he was about to speak to a patient that he knew loved pet therapy visits. He explained to me he felt it would be very helpful if I could wait outside the room until he was done and then be available to come in after he left. Of course I agreed to do as he suggested. I waited, he left, I entered. The patient reached out for Greta and hugged her, and cried and cried. The patient then began talking to Greta about her grave diagnosis. She pet Greta and cried and hugged her again. As she leaned in, Greta leaned up into her and "kissed" away her tears.

#### **At the library**

Greta absolutely loves her work with kids! Therefore, we love our time at the library when we can hang out with the readers and we love the library staff too!

I'll never forget a reading session I had with a little boy at the library. He wasn't able to read yet and I'd guess he was 3 years old. He sat down next to my big, gentle giant of a dog, settled right in and got down to business. He didn't pay an ounce of attention to me sitting beside Greta. He looked at the pages of the book and read the pictures on the pages with intonation second to none! It was a passionate and beautiful story he made up from the pictures! Being a teacher myself, I was in awe of both his pre-reading skills and his focus. And, then with an equal amount of intensity and sincerity he looked over at me and asked, "Now do I get the dog?"

#### **Making a difference...**

Becoming a part of Denver Pet Partners and Delta Society was a life changing experience. In all honesty, I knew I wanted to participate in Pet Therapy but I didn't really understand what it meant. Now I understand that it means having the honor and the responsibility of being Greta's partner (even though she does the vast majority of the work). Pet therapy allows us to touch the lives and hearts of people that want or need us for a moment in time. And, that moment in time may be a flash or may last forever.

Now, after two years of experience, I consider being a part of Denver Pet Partners and Delta Society to be life defining. I am proud to be Greta's human. Together we are a Denver Pet Partner team.

