

## *Jamie's Story*



We retired to Colorado Springs on January 1, 1999 from our jobs in Green River, Wyoming. We had just lost our dog, an untrained Sheltie, which seemed to have an inborn ability to sense which people in a retirement center would welcome her attention. As a result, I sought out Sheltie Rescue of Colorado to find a Sheltie for our new home. In those days, the rescue group simply kept track of dogs available in shelters up and down the Front

Range. On February 28, 1999 they called to say there was a Sheltie available at the Pueblo Pound. We drove down immediately and brought Jamie home. The vet figured he was about 3 years old at the time. He quickly breezed through basic obedience and Canine Good Citizen and we visited in Colorado Springs at Liberty Heights Convalescent Center.

We moved to the Denver area in December of 2004 and I saw ads for the PAWS reading program. The librarian directed me to Denver Pet Partners and we have been here ever since. Jamie and I make weekly visits to Fletcher-Miller Special School (students with multiple disabilities), and monthly visits to the Englewood Library and schools requesting visits



of teams. Jamie is willing to listen to students read in English, Spanish and sign language. He is happy to hear even A,B,C books and picture reading. Students take Jamie for "walks" in the halls. I usually read a story to the class. We sing songs and do simple "doggie" crafts.



Jamie has been part of several fine experiences, especially at Fletcher-Miller School. Several children were so terrified of dogs that when he first came, they would stay as far away from him as possible. Now most children eagerly hand treats to him, greet him in the hall (by voice or signing) and stop to pet him or hug

him. Some children that seemed totally unaware of their surroundings smile when he is near. One student, who was apparently deaf, blind and unable to move at all, slid herself to be next to him and sink her fingers into his long, soft fur. These children enjoy watching him do simple things like lapping up water from a dish or sitting on his mat on command or brushing him. Several students took first steps after leg surgery because they wanted to walk Jamie. He is a great motivator for movement. We use the BINGO song and substitute Jamie for the letters. Even non-readers will happily show him pictures. This way reading can be fun as well as work.

Now that Jamie is about 13 years old, he is moving more slowly and seems to tire more easily. If the human/animal bond is strong, you can tell that your friend needs the quiet of retirement, so we'll retire in August. Jamie has earned it.

