



Beverly Cudsik and Pepper



On March 20, 2012, God sent us our angel, Pepper, in the body of a Black Labrador/Border Collie mix puppy. She was 7 months old, and the calmest, sweetest, smartest, well-behaved little puppy. Unfortunately, her family had abandoned her—they packed up their possessions and horses and moved out of state. They dropped Pepper and her kennel at a friend's house and said "find her a home".

A woman contacted my daughter, who runs a non-profit called Lady's Legacy which provides homes for retired/senior equine companions. In their conversation she asked my daughter if she would like a black Lab puppy. My daughter couldn't take on another dog because she already had three as well as two cats. But, she said she knew of someone who might. That someone was me.

My husband and I were just thinking about starting to look for a rescue dog. We had lost our very special black Lab, "BB", the previous July. I was still mourning his loss and wasn't sure if I was ready. But God has his own timing and plans. My daughter gave me the lady's phone number and I called her to find out about Pepper.

Pepper had since been moved to another person's home because the original friend couldn't keep her. This all happened in a matter of a couple days. Well, we finally got to meet her and, guess what – it was love at first sight on my part and ultimately, Pepper chose me. My plan was to have her spayed and get her shots before I took her home, but needless to say, I couldn't leave her. I decided I'd take her to my Vet. She immediately jumped into our truck, curled up in the bucket seat and slept all the way home. When we got her into our house, she sat down and waited for me to take off her leash. And that was just the beginning of our amazing relationship.

A week after we brought Pepper home she got very sick. She was vomiting and had diarrhea. She couldn't keep anything down and was getting dehydrated. So we took her to our emergency Vet. They ran several tests, but weren't sure what she had. One test showed she might have some sort of obstruction. While this is going on, the charges are mounting. The hospital kept us posted as to the rising costs. The veterinarian taking care of Pepper said to us "I know you've only had her a week; do you want to proceed?" My husband and I looked at each other and said "absolutely, she is family". Well, we had to leave her overnight, not knowing if she'd get better or if she would have to have surgery.

When they called in the morning they said "we've got 'good news' and 'bad news'. The 'good news' is she doesn't have to have surgery, but the 'bad news' is she had Parvovirus. It's horrible to think she almost died because her former owners didn't bother to get her the necessary puppy shots. All her suffering could have been prevented. My husband and I feel that she was meant to be ours because God knew we could provide her with the care she needed.

DPP Team of the Month (June 2016)

DENVER PET PARTNERS



Because the Parvovirus is very contagious, Pepper was kept in quarantine in a large kennel in the back of the hospital with one of those horrible cones on her head to keep her from pulling out the IV's. The next day we were able to visit her. When I entered the kennel, she jumped up, came over to me and somehow managed to get my head inside the cone with her so she could give me kisses and hugs. She was happy to be alive! The Vet Tech said he'd never seen a dog recover so fast. We were able to take her home that afternoon.

To this day Pepper wakes up happy every day and seems to be happy no matter what she's doing. She even goes to bed "happy". Pepper knows we saved her life and she never stops being happy about it.

When Pepper finally got healthy I enrolled her in obedience classes at PetSmart. We started out with Puppy classes and took every class they had, including Tricks. She was so smart and eager to learn that she advanced very quickly through the classes. She loved going to class – always ready to learn something new and proud to show off. When we ran out of classes at PetSmart, I enrolled her in classes at Zoom Room in Longmont. We took more obedience, agility and Rally O. She has a competitiveness about her. She'd watch the other dogs do their exercise and then she'd do it, but better.

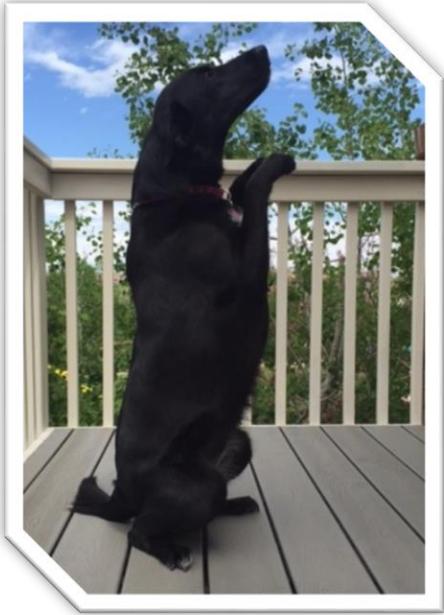
I wanted to do Pet Therapy work since I retired in 1999. I went through all the obedience training, took the Handler's Course and signed up for the Evaluation. But, it wasn't meant to be – my black Lab "BB" didn't like kids (I think he was afraid of them). Then Pepper came into my life and I just knew she would make a wonderful Therapy Dog. She is so gentle and kind. She enjoys being around people, especially kids; enjoys being petted and loved on. She is just a happy dog and likes making others happy, too. In February of 2015, I took the Handler's Course and in April of 2015 Pepper and I passed our Evaluation and became a registered team.

In June we started volunteering at Platte Valley Medical Center in Brighton every Friday. Pepper loves her job. She enjoys bringing comfort and happiness to patients, staff and visitors. Prior to being on our own, we had to be "shadowed" by another DPP team member. I remember going into one gentleman's room in ICU. He was in bed and not able to move but he wanted to see Pepper. Well, she got up in the chair next to his bed, reached over ever so gently and touched her nose to his cheek. He was able to pet her and he smiled. When we came out the doctor asked if we had gone into Room 2215. I said "yes" and explained what happened. He said that was the best medicine he could have been given. I'll never forget that moment, and now I know what people mean when they say the dogs know what people need. I have since had other memorable experiences and I am always in awe of the things that Pepper does.

Another time at the hospital, we went into a room where the woman in bed was obviously very sick. She was not even aware we were there, but her family asked us to come in. Pepper went over to the bed and laid her head next to the woman. (She had never done this before). One of the gentlemen said, "she knows, doesn't she?" I was so moved.

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We have some fun moments at the hospital with the staff. They always enjoy seeing Pepper and they have treats for her. She knows where they keep them and when she comes in to their department she goes to where the treats are and “sits pretty”. That usually gets her some “extra” treats.

Last October we started volunteering at the 17th Judicial District Adams County Courthouse in the Victims/Witness waiting room. It is a stressful time for victims waiting to testify, and Pepper enjoys helping to make them feel more relaxed and help pass the time. Sometimes she even makes them laugh.

Pepper and I also volunteered at the Winter Holiday Paws and the Spring Break Holiday Paws events at DIA sponsored by United Airlines. It was fun to meet with passengers and crews and to hear that the dogs being there helped relieve the stress of flying and waiting.

We just recently volunteered at the gHealth Fair at Platte Valley Hospital in Brighton. We were mainly there to walk around and visit with people while they were waiting for tests.

A couple of times a year we volunteer at the De-Stress Events at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Pepper really enjoys the interaction with the students. They get down on the floor and play with her and have her do tricks. It’s a fun time!

Once a month Pepper and I volunteer with the Cancer Support Group at Platte Valley Medical Center. She really looks forward to these Saturday morning visits. She is able to interact with the group, and seems to know who needs her on that particular day and she will go and sit or lay by them. Sometimes it may be more than one person who needs her. So, she will spread her love around. They’ve gotten to know that she likes bananas so everyone wants to share their banana with her.

Last fall was the first time that Pepper and I, along with six other DPP teams, participated in the Annual Children’s Mass at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Wheat Ridge. This special event celebrates all the children who have been buried at the cemetery over the past year. After the Mass, all the families gather around a reflecting pool for a balloon release to honor the lives of the children who have died. I can’t begin to describe how emotional it is.

When Pepper is not volunteering, she enjoys playing Frisbee, playing catch with her balls or stuffed animals, going for walks, and riding on my golf cart around the neighborhood. Well, she thinks it’s hers and I’m just her driver. She acts like a little princess.



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Pepper and I are so happy and proud to be a member of Denver Pet Partners. It's a great group and very supportive. They do so much for the community. I enjoy the meetings and getting to meet the other team members and their partners, and sharing experiences. Also, the training sessions are very beneficial.

Pepper is an awesome Pet Partner. She approaches each new challenge with eagerness and enthusiasm. She is always happy to try something new. Although we are new to the Pet Therapy Program, I'm sure Pepper has had a positive impact on many people. We look forward to participating in new opportunities as they become available. Our goal is to do something with kids – they are her greatest love, especially my granddaughter.

