



Patt Bisant and Jake



Jake, my Yellow Labrador Retriever, came to me on October 28, 2008 via the Pikes Peak Humane Society in Colorado Springs, CO. I saw his picture on a dog adoption internet site as I was searching for a replacement for my 15 year old Yellow Lab who had succumbed to complications from diabetes two weeks before.

After clicking on his picture, I learned he was 10 months old, un-neutered, and in quarantine for a severe case of kennel cough. The adoption went smoothly, and I immediately rushed him to Denver to be treated by my Vet. She told me his temperature was 106, and had I not adopted him that day, he probably would have died from pneumonia within two days. Fortunately, he quickly recovered, and returned to “puppy mode” with his unbridled enthusiasm, clumsiness, and endless energy.

Over the next two years, Jake continued to slowly mature, but not without the steady stream of chewed up shoes and pillows, a shredded couch, and numerous counter surfing episodes of stolen pizzas, sandwiches and cupcakes. During this time, he also displayed some very genuine “caring” (sensitive) qualities such as a general calmness in chaotic situations, compassion for people (including me) who were distressed or hurting, gentleness with children and the elderly, and a desire for affection from anyone including strangers.

As Jake turned three years old, a sudden metamorphous came over him. In typical Labrador style, he suddenly “grew a brain”. He quickly began obeying commands, would come when called, and displayed good manners most of the time. I soon realized it would be an ideal time to begin his training to become a registered therapy dog. My other dog, Kody, had been a registered therapy dog with DDP for over two years, and had been visiting at Platte Valley Medical Center (PVMC) and the Anything Library in Commerce City on a regular basis.



In 2011, Jake and I took our evaluation test to become a registered therapy team. On his first testing in May 2011, Jake was rated “Predictable” and began visiting at Platte Valley Medical Center in June. Jake continues to visit at this facility and loves his job in providing comfort and encouragement to both patients and staff at the hospital. In addition, he actively participates in AAT work in the PVMC Children’s Physical Therapy unit, and has directly impacted one small seven year



old boy with a serious brain condition. When we are present, the physical therapist told me this young boy works harder, laughs louder, and is so “proud” to show his newly achieved skills to Jake. In March 2015, PVMC’s Foundation awarded Jake the “Spirit of Planetree Medal” for Therapy Animal of the Year.

Jake also made monthly trips to the AnyThink Library in Commerce City in 2013 and 2014, and actively participated in the “Tails to Tales” R.E.A.D. program for more than two years.

In June 2013 and May 2015, Jake took his second & third evaluation tests and passed with flying colors. Both times, he was rated “Complex”, and therefore qualified to do more intensive therapy work in more difficult and complicated situations.

In October 2013, Jake and I became involved with grief support at a special monthly children’s communal burial service (called the “Angel Bed Project”) at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. Two small white caskets, called Angel Beds, contain the remains of 20 babies (all of them stillborn or miscarried) which have been collected from the morgues of Denver area hospitals. The Archdiocese of Denver Mortuary gently collects these babies, places the remains in a hand crocheted yarn bag, then into the Angel Bed, and buries them on a donated site at Mount Olivet Cemetery.



The Angel Bed Project is non-denominational, and managed by a very caring and loving mother, Pat Padia, who recruits volunteers to build, paint and finish the Angel Beds, as well as coordinates all the volunteers who carefully crochet each yarn bag for the baby’s remains.

The parents of these babies are invited to attend the burial service for their child, which is usually held once a month at the cemetery. Many of these parents are not able to afford a traditional funeral, and this offers them a dignified burial for their child.

My role with my Pet Partner, Jake, is to offer support, encouragement and love to the grieving parents, siblings and other extended family members who attend the burial service. Many people are surprised to see a therapy dog at this type of service, but once they interact with Jake, they immediately understand why he is such a benefit to them and their families.

So many of these “hurting” people have difficulty expressing their grief, and Jake gives them an opportunity to show their emotions without judgement. His unconditional love seems to boost their spirits, makes them smile, and gives them a brief respite from their sorrow. Many times when we leave these services, Jake’s neck and head are completely wet with the tears of parents and children who have shared their grief with him.

DPP Team of the Month (October 2015)

DENVER PET PARTNERS



In late July 2015, Jake and I became involved with AAT work through the Adams/Broomfield Counties 17th Judicial District Attorney's Juvenile Diversion Program. In conjunction with a Client Manager, Jake and I do individual AAT work with non-violent offenders. Jake is very enthusiastic about his work with two teenage boys to help them learn new social and coping skills. In addition, beginning in early September 2015, Jake began working with the Child and Adult Victim Units through the Adams County Judicial Court system in Brighton.

Jake is an amazing Pet Partner, and the work he does is invaluable to those who he impacts. His large size (90+ pounds), his very calm demeanor, and eagerness to provide support, comfort and unconditional love make him a unique and precious dog. I've been asked by many people, "Where can I get a dog like Jake?" I always respond with a smile and say, "There are angels among us—Jake is one of them!!"

