

Sandy Langley and Greyson



My desire to visit patients in a hospital came several years ago, when my son, Geoff had to spend the night at Akron Children's Hospital for testing. The most memorable experience Geoff had of that stay was the dog that came to visit him. With two active middle school boys and a calendar full of volunteer commitments, the dream of visiting patients in a hospital with a dog would have to be put on the back burner.

Our first dog was a tri-colored sheltie named Zeus who came into our life at the age of 9 months old in 1999. Zeus started his life across the street from us, so we had the pleasure of seeing him and playing with him at the bus stop each morning. The family Zeus started with had to move and couldn't take him with them. It was one of the most exciting days of my life to tell our boys, Geoff and Mark that Zeus was going to be our dog now. Zeus soon became known as "my shadow". He followed me everywhere I went. He was the sweetest most loyal dog anyone could ask for. Fast forward to the fall of 2012, my husband, Don and I were officially "empty nesters." Don's employment kept him out-of-state more than in-state and suddenly the house became extremely quiet. I was watching TV with Zeus by my side one evening and it occurred to me that if Zeus left me too (after all he was 14), I would be left alone. This thought did not set well with me. So we (really I) decided it was time to add to the family with another pup. The search began...



Greyson, a blue merle Sheltie, came into our life in January 2013 at 8 weeks old from a breeder in Ohio (that's where we lived at the time).

Mark and Geoff were home from college for Christmas break and before they had to return to school, I wanted them to meet Greyson, who was then 6 weeks old. We all took turns holding Greyson and playing with him, when all of a sudden he crawled onto my lap and fell asleep. That was it....instant love! I now had to wait two long weeks before I could bring him home.

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I was very concerned once Greyson arrived in our home, about how Zeus would react. After all, he was our one and only fur baby for 14 years. Not surprising, Zeus was amazing and took to Greyson instantly. That's not to say he didn't get annoyed with the little squirt's high energy and constant badgering, but Zeus put him in his place when needed.



The breeder told us to socialize Greyson as much as possible. I took him everywhere I went. Greyson became a regular attendee at the Bible Study I attended at my church and got passed from lap to lap in the two hours we were there, sleeping and cuddling with all. Within six months of bringing Greyson home, Don retired, we sold our home in Ohio and moved back to Colorado after leaving 20 years prior for a job promotion. Once we were settled into our new home, I came across the Zoom Room and started puppy obedience. Greyson and I progressed through all of the obedience classes and I decided it was time to make my dream from many years before a reality. I did a google search and came across Denver Pet Partners. I read about the program requirements and decided to sign up for the Handler Training Course at Swedish Medical Center. Diana M. and Ann R. taught the Handler Course that I attended. I was amazed with all the information they had to share and the passion within which they shared it. I'm telling you my head was spinning when I left. I decided to take some time to review all that had been discussed that day and decided to sign up for the AKC Canine Good Citizen certification. I felt if Greyson and I could pass this, we had a chance at passing the Pet Partner Evaluation. Much to my amazement, we passed! Greyson and I registered for the Evaluation a couple of months later and passed that as well.



It has only been a little over a year since we started our journey as a Therapy Team. We began by visiting at the Rocky Mountain Cancer Center in Aurora. My reason for choosing a cancer center was because my mother had fought cancer for almost 10 years, and I remember how much comfort her dog, Charlie gave her during this time. I hoped that Greyson and I could bring comfort to those who were fighting the same fight that my mother did so valiantly. Greyson has become a mainstay at RMCC and is not only loved by the patients, but also the staff that we now call friends. We have had so many wonderful experiences with the patients who visit with Greyson and me. We have actually walked into RMCC, had patients who were just finishing with their treatment and will wait in their chair until Greyson and I visit with them before they leave to go home.

We recently started visiting at The Aurora Medical Center South Campus on a weekly basis as well. Back in the day, I was a "Candy Stripper" and have fond memories of being a volunteer at the hospital in the

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town where I grew up. Last week we had the wife of a gentleman that we met while visiting at The Aurora Medical Center who was going to begin his first chemo treatment at RMCC. His wife requested that her husband start his treatment on a day that Greyson and I would be there because all he talked about was Greyson...Greyson...Greyson after our visit with him at TMCA. His wife knew he would be nervous and wanted Greyson by his side. You should have seen his face when we walked in!

I often wonder if our visits to the patients at TMCA have had an impact since we only see them once and for such a short time. I then think of my reason for wanting to start Therapy Team work in the first place...my son Geoff and his dog visit. Many of the nurses at the hospital tell me that they purposely work on Tuesday, because they know Greyson will be there!

I can't tell you how many times I have heard, "Greyson is so calm...my dog could never do this, he is to wild." I laugh and tell them that someday I'm going to video Greyson at home to show them he likes to chase rabbits and squirrels in the backyard just like any other dog. I explain that when I put Greyson's vest on, he knows he has a job to do. I am so proud of the job he has done and continues to do for so many!



We also get the pleasure of doing fun events as well. Just a few weeks ago, Greyson and I attended the Saddle Rock ER Trick or Treat for Health that was sponsored by TMCA. We met many wonderful people in the community and even had the pleasure of meeting two little boys, named Greyson. There were a couple of strange objects that Greyson kept his eyes on as we walked through the crowd. Eventually we got a photo taken with Ambulance Andy and the Helicopter that flew in and out for the event!



I want to thank DPP for honoring Greyson and I with being December's Team of the Month. I have the pleasure of being DPP's Program Coordinator, and want to thank Diana and Ken for believing in me and giving me this incredible opportunity. To them, the Evaluators, Instructors, Board members and volunteers who support me, I can't thank you enough. One of my favorite parts of this experience is to meet and hug all the pets that show up for the Evaluations. Greyson isn't too thrilled when I arrive home with all those smells, but I am soon forgiven!

Zeus took his journey over the Rainbow Bridge on December 10, 2014. He gave us 16+ years of love and loyalty and I miss him greatly. Greyson gave me comfort like no human could when we lost Zeus and I will always be grateful to this little guy. It's been almost a year and we are on the search again to add to the family with another pup. We hope this happens very soon!