

Lisa Anderson and Chanel



Throughout my entire life, I've had a pet, always a dog and the occasional cat, hamster, rat, bird or lizard. As I reflect on all the conversations I've had with my dogs and kitties, I can't help but wonder how I would have gone through life without them. I've cried to them, laughed, danced and shared all my secrets with them. They've always responded with unconditional love and never judged me or given away my secrets. The question arises: "Is there a more perfect creature than an animal companion?"

It is this joy that I wanted to share with the world! About 8 years ago I started to give back by volunteering to ease the pain of these beautiful creatures at the Foothills Animal Shelter. This brought me immense joy and fulfillment but at the same time I wanted to contribute differently. I was working inside Swedish Medical Center and saw the joy that dogs were giving to this community of patients, visitors and staff. Linda Forsyth and Ed Exum inspired me to dive into this world of pet therapy.



I decided then to seek out the perfect partner for me. I did some research and found a breed of dog that was gentle, smart, loving and non-shedding... a sheep-a-doodle! I found a breeder and waited a year for my fur baby – Chanel. I was eager to get started and pre-maturely took the handler class even though Chanel was a tot. While she matured, we adopted a sister for Chanel, Coco, and life got very busy.

I never lost sight of our dream to work together. I continued to train Chanel and prepare her to be my therapy girl. After both babies had grown, I retook the handler class and Chanel passed her evaluation two years ago.

DPP Team of the Month (March 2020)

DENVER PET PARTNERS



Since then, we have been volunteering at Swedish Medical Center, Suncrest Hospice, Destress Events and many other special events. Chanel is especially fond of the DU Destress event where she receives full-body petting for 1 ½ hours. To see the joy and the gratitude the students have for Pet Partners and what we all do is worth every minute of service.



There have been so many moments that people see Chanel and are filled with joy and gratitude. There are moments when hospital visitors hug her and cry, saying this is exactly what they needed. Or patients that can't express enough how much our visit made their day.

One patient in particular sticks in my mind. She was near end of life and had little physical function, was tiny and frail, and communicated little. She did want to see Chanel but was unable to pet her on her own. I was able to assist her and run her fingers through Chanel's fur. Her eyes lit up and I could see the joy in her face. Just the sensation of fur moving through her tired fingers made her so happy. The visit was brief but made a lasting impact on my heart and hopefully hers.

This is why Chanel and I give back to this community, there are no words that can heal as much as the silent communication of a pet partner. Chanel is now 5 ½ years old and I pray we continue volunteering for many, many more years.

