

Bailey's Story



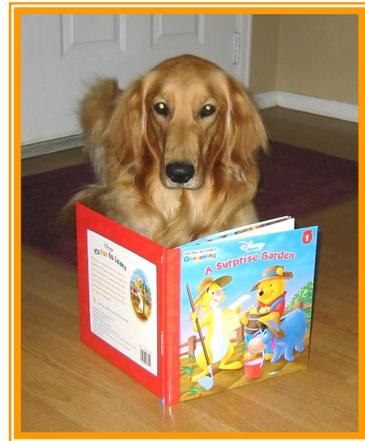
My desire to become a pet partner started way back in 1999. I have always enjoyed volunteering and had seen a lot of publicity about how animals brought such comfort. A friend and I went thru orientation at Lutheran Hospital thinking we could join their program. We both had great dogs. My dog was Brandy, a Collie-Shepherd mix. What a great dog she was. Unfortunately, Brandy developed an immune problem resulting in very sensitive ears. So, much to my disappointment, I forgot about volunteering at Lutheran.

In July of 2002 I retired from my job of 23 years. In August of 2002 my phone rang and a friend told me about a dog that needed a home. Her owner was moving into an apartment and couldn't keep her. She was a beautiful 9 month old Golden Retriever named Bailey. I already had Brandy who was about 11 years old and I didn't know if I wanted to have two dogs. Finally I decided to just go take a look. Bailey lived in Monument at the time. I went to the address given to me and coming up this dirt road was Bailey just bouncing around, smiling like Golden Retrievers do. I knew that she was the dog for me. I took her home that day. Brandy and Bailey got along well from day one.

In December of 2003 I read an article in the newspaper about a dog that didn't pass the pet partner evaluation. It was a great story about becoming a Pet Partner. It went into great detail about the classes, evaluation and some of the people involved in the program. I contacted Denver Pet Partners and signed up for the June class of 2004. Bailey and I went through evaluation in July and we officially became Pet Partners in September of 2004. Unfortunately during July of 2004, my Brandy dog developed a cancerous tumor and I lost her on July 15th.

With Brandy gone, it even became more important for Bailey and I to do things together. We started at Life Care Center of Littleton that September as an AAA team. We were also a R.E.A.D. team at the Bridge Project and Slater elementary school.

During our visits at LCCL, one of the residents we visited with every week enjoyed me telling her about the kids and how their reading skills improved, by just reading to a dog. The resident was so impressed with the program that she nominated Bailey and me for the "Channel 7 Every Day Hero" award. We were selected in February 2006. What a humbling experience that was. Denver Pet Partners has so many wonderful dedicated teams, I really felt honored that I was selected. At the time of the award, we were doing R.E.A.D. at St. Mary's School.





We continued to do AAA at LCCL. As things evolve, discussions were held to see if LCCL would be a good place for an AAT program. They have quite a few clients that are there for rehabilitation and not permanent residents. Bailey and I, along with one other team visiting at LCCL were selected to participate in the pilot AAT program. The program just got rolling when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. With the wonderful support of Maggie Wild, Bonnie McPartland and many DPP people, I got through the treatment and was able to get back where we left off. Bailey was always by my side and was such a comfort during my recovery. As of today, I am what they call a "two year survivor". My prognosis is excellent as my cancer was caught at such an early stage. It is so important to do self examinations each month along with an annual mammogram.



Bailey and I are still at LCCL doing AAT. It has been such a rewarding experience to see how people respond to Bailey. They love brushing her, throwing the ball, taking her for a walk. Sometimes we even play tic-tac-toe on her back. One gentleman laughed so hard when he thought of what his family would think if they knew he played tic-tac-toe on a dog's back. The AAT program has been a wonderful success and growing. We now have 6 teams doing AAT at LCCL.

I am so very proud to be a member of Denver Pet Partners and the Delta Society. It is amazing to see all the wonderful teams and all that they bring to our community.