

Dina Mauro and Tia



Tia, a beautiful one-year-old English Pointer, was found wandering along a highway in Utah having just delivered a litter of puppies. With no tags or microchip, she spent two months at a shelter, curled up in the back of a cage. Day after day, she watched people walk by who had no interest in adopting her. The day finally came when her “time was up.” With only hours left before being euthanized, a shelter employee called a Pointer rescue group in Utah, which came to her aid. She spent two weeks rehabilitating in a loving foster home before we adopted her and began the next chapter of her life as “Tia.” Tia spends her days happily patrolling a large yard in Colorado, volunteering at Swedish Medical Center and her nights are spent curled up on the couch with two “furry siblings” and a loving “human family” of five. Tia has thrived and come full circle. For the past

eighteen months, she’s brought joy and affection to countless patients and staff at Swedish Medical Center.

I knew Tia was special. She was calm, cool and collected in every situation. I knew I needed to share her with the world. I also knew I needed a hobby, but I didn’t know what it should be. I made a list of things I loved to do which included my dogs and connecting with people. I considered many places to visit and what came to mind was the wonderful local hospital where I delivered all 3 of my sons—Swedish Medical Center. I looked into the possibility, and if we passed the training course and evaluation, we would be welcomed with open arms by Denver Pet Partners.

I attended the 2 day training course and was a bit overwhelmed with all of the information. It was fantastic information and I really enjoyed the people I met along the way. What I couldn’t wait for most, was introducing Tia and being with her, but first, we had to pass the evaluation. I was terrified. Would she pull? Would she be too timid? Would a strange and unexpected reaction come out that I never saw before? After dedicating 2 days to the training course, I was committed and just needed Tia to be herself. She passed the evaluation with flying colors and I left there feeling ecstatic! I wanted to shout out to the world that it’s official – she’s recognized as a very special dog just like all the other registered teams with DPP. I suspect my feeling of nervousness will never subside. In fact, we have our 2 year renewal coming up and I think I’ll be just as nervous. I guess it’s the fear that something very out of the ordinary will happen which would shatter our ability to share the magic of a human/animal bond.

After becoming registered, Tia and I completed several shadowed visits with Jim Saunders, the volunteer lead, and his bloodhound, Sadie. Once that was complete, we were ready to go on our own. What I didn’t know at the time was that Tia and I were on our way down a new path in life and that this experience would change our lives forever.



One of my favorite experiences was the time when Tia broke through the shell of a 49 year old man who had never even touched a dog before. I truly believe that Tia could sense the man's fear and that's why she went right up to him. It was as if to tell him that he had no reason to be afraid, that she would help him—and she did. She is a gentle creature who has helped the very species that had

no use for her and planned to euthanize her. Tia's perfect, gentle, loving self-guided this man through forty-nine years of fears. That must have been a heavy burden for him. I was so grateful that we could be a part of this breakthrough. They thanked Tia and me continuously as we left. I could hear the celebration continue as we exited the ER.

On another occasion, a patient asked me to video tape her while she delivered a beautiful message into her camera which she would send to her daughter. I held the camera, but rather than looking through the lens, I preferred to watch her directly from the side of the camera. As I did, I would unintentionally lower the camera and had to correct myself, before she disappeared from the frame. I would have traded places with her for a short while, so she could actually visit her daughter. I imagined pulling the sheets away and letting her healthy body hop out of bed. As I lay in her place, her hospital gown would gracefully fall over my shoulders, like a tablecloth in an expensive restaurant. I would lay my head back and fall asleep, so she could experience what we all take for granted and so she could hug her daughter, twirl her grandchildren in a circle, and dance until her feet hurt.

As Tia and I conducted our visits, I was so touched and shared my experiences with my husband and children. It came to the point where my 3 sons looked forward to hearing about our visits. Over time, I began to journal and found that I thoroughly enjoyed doing so.

With the encouragement of a few friends, the approval of DPP and Swedish Medical Center, I recently published a book titled, "A Dose of Tia" which recounts our experiences visiting patients and staff at Swedish Medical Center, providing life lessons gleaned along the way.

I invite you to take a walk with Tia and I and help contribute to DPP as several copies of "A Dose of Tia" will be available for auction at the DPP Holiday Party. I look forward to seeing you all there!

