



After 2011 when I lost my Border Collie Chance, I went through a long period of “freedom” from the responsibilities of dog ownership. In November of 2011 I experienced a bad fall skiing, blowing my right knee and needed to wait until Spring of 2012 to consider getting a new dog. I knew that I wanted a dog that would possibly qualify as a Therapy Dog and I also knew I wanted to rescue a dog.

I signed up with numerous rescue groups, but in the end I wanted what became my 3rd Border Collie. After qualifying with Western Border Collie Rescue I received a phone call stating that they had a dog that might perform well for therapy work. I was still going to physical therapy 3 days a week and was a little gun-shy of walking a dog that might pull me into a fall. The dog they had in mind was not truly a rescue but was located at a working Border Collie ranch in South Dakota. The owner said that Rhett preferred being with people to “working for a living”. It took me three months to prepare myself and by that time Jamie needed a decision thus lighting a fire under me to make the leap.

August 2012, my neighbor and good friend and I set off to pick up Rhett and bring him to his new home. We met Jamie Spring, the breeder, halfway between her home and mine. When I saw her pull up with Rhett all my fears disappeared as he jumped out of the van and into my life.

Driving the four hours back home was excruciating because I wanted to begin our new life as swift as possible. I live on a very uncommon block where literally everyone knows everyone else. All of my neighbors knew my story and understood how much I had grieved over the deaths of my previous 2 Border Collies. When I pulled up in front of my home at least 10 of my neighbors were around, kids and grownp-ups included. I let Rhett out of the crate and he dropped to the ground in front of them, rolled over exposing his belly and was thrilled to have everyone hug, pet and kiss him. When we went inside,



he took to the dog bed in front of the window favorably.

The sweetest comment made was from my next door neighbor seeing Rhett in the window who said, “Now everything is right again with the world.”

And it was.

The next couple of months were trying since I had never rescued a dog having always raised them from puppies. I didn’t comprehend “separation anxiety” but quickly learned that Rhett had it....and bad. Six dog beds and one remote later, I finally figured it out. He went from a Border Collie ranch running with probably 10 other dogs to being left in a cage when I had to work. Umm hello?

Rhett had most of the basics but I wanted to take him through the paces of training. We went to Zoom Room each week and quickly passed basic obedience 1 – 4. One month later the anxiety filled night of the Canine Good Citizens exam arrived. I, of course, was a nervous wreck and Rhett as usual, was calm and understanding. The woman who gave the exam was certain he would be perfect for therapy work and fell in love with him. He has that effect on most he meets. Back to school we went at Zoom Room taking their Therapy Dog classes. He passed all of these classes with flying colors and especially the class where we put as many items on our dog in less than a minute to measure their coping abilities.



Rhett passed the Therapy Classes and now it was time to get busy. One of my class mates Sheri and her wonderful dog Keona said she was taking the handler training course that Saturday with Denver Pet Partners so I signed up and passed the handler training class.

I finally decided to have my gallbladder out after years of pain and being afraid of surgery AND my doctor persuading me. My sister gracefully flew up to help and my worry was Rhett since he had only

been with me for 2 months.

I took Mr. Rhett to a boarding place for 3 days. When he returned he would not eat or drink water. I was worried about him and stressed because of my surgery trying everything possible to entice him into drinking water. He refused. So....of course it was a weekend and we rushed over to the emergency hospital with him. He was terribly dehydrated and spent the night at the hospital.

The next day, and \$1,000.00 dollars later, he came home and we both began to feel better thanks to my sister's nurturing spirit.

Now it was time to get back on track, stop procrastinating and schedule the Evaluation. We did and he was so precious during the evals, smiling at one of the crowd and happy to see everyone. I'll never forget Patty Standley, down on the floor petting Rhett while I was getting my paperwork together after he passed with a complex rating. This is also where I met Alyce Blevins and she wanted to recruit Rhett and I for Devereux.

I'm just saying...I was very proud of my boy.





At Christmas I had the pleasure of meeting Karen Davidson who also volunteered at Devereux. When told that I was considering Devereux, Karen hugged me and that sealed the deal. How could I not go somewhere that I was truly needed and wanted.

At Devereux Rhett and I meet with kids on the 72 hour hold unit. 98% of the kids at Devereux have had multiple traumas and have been through the system, foster homes, in jail, you name it. They are the tough cases.



Rhett and I work with the kids on assertiveness, positive feedback, hygiene, boundaries and numerous other issues they need to work on. Rhett moves from kid to kid allowing all of them to pet him and encouraging others who are a little afraid of dogs.

Rhett and I continue weekly at Devereux and have also started a pilot program at Denver Children's Advocacy center with Alyce Blevins.

At DCCA, we have a single trauma patient who Rhett is working with to help him vocalize his trauma.

I will probably never have a dog like Rhett again. He is the sweetest, most loving and gentle dog I have ever been around. We are lucky to continue our learning with the help of Karen Davidson, Chewy, Alyce Blevins, Finn and Riley as well as the amazing staff and therapists at Devereux and DCCA.

I am honored to be the April 2015 team of the month with my precious side-kick Rhett.