

## *E.j.'s Story*



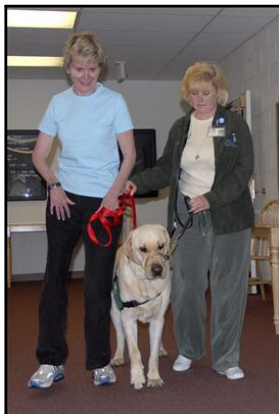
What an honor it is to be featured as team of the month. We are greatly appreciative for being recognized. Firstly, I would like to thank Denver Pet Partners (DPP) for the wonderful opportunities and eventful experiences that they have opened for us on this rewarding adventure. Secondly, I would like to thank all of you, for the great friendships we have made, as I cherish each and everyone of you. Thirdly, to my beloved Pet Partner, E.j. - without him none of this would be possible.

We acquired E.j. as a rescue dog when he was four months old. He was living in a car at the time. By the way, E.j. stands for Edward John, named after both my husband's father and my father, who were heroes in our lives. We picked the dog up, or should I say the family member who changed our lives, on one August evening at ten thirty, in a shopping center. He had contusions, marks,

and sores all over his body, which showed he had been neglected and abused. With the help of his "godfather" it took us about three months for E.j. to get over his fear of the car. Today, his favorite thing to do is ride in the car, with the moon roof opened, and his ears blowing in the wind. As we drive along, the smiles and laughs on people's faces is just another way of E.j. working to make a difference in others, even for a moment. Some dogs just have the temperament to be trusting and loving to everyone, that's E.j. It's true when they say therapy dogs are born, not made.



With the help of a trainer our little yellow puppy was on his way to becoming a well-mannered dog. If it weren't for our trainer making the suggestion that E.j. had all the qualities of becoming a therapy dog, I wouldn't have even captured the idea. So, thank you Mark Freeman for your insight and efforts in helping E.j. become such an awesome therapy dog. In his early puppy years, he had some of the "Marley" antics that took determination and diligence to keep him on track. He loved chewing on seat belts. Not only did we have to replace the seatbelts in my, my husband's, and his "godfather's" car, but even in a rental car!



After I successfully completed the Pet Partners handler training course, when E.j. was two years old, we passed our therapy team evaluation and began our wonderful journey into animal-assisted therapy work. E.j. knows he is going to work as soon as we get out our visit bag. He's letting me know, "let's go!" He waits by the door, ecstatic, until I let him in the car so that I can finish getting ready.

We have visited in various settings to expand our experience visiting different types of clients. E.j.'s absolute favorite audience is children. His eyes light up around kids, and you can see that he's in heaven. As we walk down the school hallway to meet a child who will be reading to him, he quickly becomes a social butterfly, making sure no child passes him without saying hello. He can have a dozen kids around him at a time, and still welcomes more kids to visit with him. His special aura makes each and every child feel special and welcome.



Being close to 120 lbs. (a little larger than a normal lab), E.j. helps those who have had a stroke make it a little easier

to work on their motor skills or maneuverability. Whether it's brushing E.j. or utilizing his Velcro vest, his large size has helped the Easter Seal clients succeed in achieving their therapy goals. One particular visit comes to mind. As a woman walked E.j. around the facility, she was able to

walk "for the first time" without the use of her cane! That was a huge breakthrough for her and an unforgettable moment for us!

As we visit the nursing home, E.j. makes sure we say hello to everyone in our path. He just loves to visit and it shows. Even at home, he has a calming effect on his little sister, Jetty, who just adores her big brother.

Our journey has involved me becoming a Delta-licensed evaluator as well as a Delta-licensed instructor. I thoroughly enjoy these and other DPP roles that I have acquired. As time goes on, I would like to expose E.j. to as many different environments and visit experiences as possible. He gives his all to each and every person he meets and he makes sure we leave no one out. E.j. turns five at the end of April and we are very thankful and blessed for the opportunities and visits we've had. Hopefully, by the grace of God, we will have many more years of bringing joy, comfort and healing, as we enhance the lives of others - one visit at a time.

