



### *Nancy Driver and Freedom*



We had lost two of our Australian Shepherds at younger ages due to cancer, and we (my husband, Doug) and I decided to get a mixed breed. I was looking on the internet for a rescue dog and stumbled across a listing for Aussie mixed puppies. I called the rescue organization and they asked numerous questions before they would tell me much about the puppies. As we talked, I knew our future dog companion would be one of these puppies.

We drove many miles to the ranch to meet them. Three adorable Australian Shepherd mix puppies greeted us, and Freedom just plopped in my lap and refused to budge. My husband was eyeing a more active puppy, but my heart was made up and so was Freedom's. We picked each other.



Then I started on the quest for a name. When a friend mentioned Freedom, I knew that was perfect. My greatest motivation in life is freedom, and I desired a dog that was so well trained and had such a sweet temperament that he could experience freedom throughout his life.

I had the opportunity to do pet therapy work in the late 1990's with one of my Australian Shepherds and knew how satisfying and rewarding it was. So I started training Freedom immediately for pet therapy work, and he loved the attention. His gentle, sweet demeanor provided the foundation for our work.

## Denver Pet Partners – Team of the Month (May 2012)

DENVER PET PARTNERS



I explored the various options for pet therapy registration and was strongly attracted to Denver Pet Partners because of its strong orientation to education, excellence, and support of the teams. Once I attended my first class, I knew we were home – we were treated like family, we loved the community support, and Diana's passion and compassion for pet therapy saturated the program.



Freedom was 1.5 years old when we passed our evaluations and were registered with Denver Pet Partners. We have volunteered at Hospice of Saint John for 4 years, and the hospice loves all the teams from Denver Pet Partners. Everyone loves Freedom at hospice, and he knows exactly what to do. I let him determine what is best for each resident. Sometimes he tosses stuffed animals in the air to make people laugh. Other times he cuddles in their bed and lets them pet him and share thoughts. Occasionally he just sits by their beds and lets them feel his

dog energy. He senses what they need, and he is never wrong. His playfulness and love for human attention enrich our therapy experience.



One special day at Hospice of Saint John, a man was releasing doves with residents. He invited Freedom and I to come join the celebration of releasing and letting go. He was shocked and amazed at how Freedom, with no previous interactions with birds, put his nose gently to the dove's beak and they stared at each other with curiosity. The man who raised and trained these doves had never witnessed such a remarkable exchange with a dog not raised with birds.



Our pet therapy companions are healers of the heart and soul. We are blessed to have them in our lives and I am eternally grateful to have Freedom in my life. He keeps teaching me how to be a better person.

Freedom and I are so honored to be selected as Team of the Month and to serve at hospice and Denver Pet Partners.

Gratefully,  
Nancy and Freedom