

## Smitty's Story



Three years ago we were saddened by the loss of our beloved Sheltie, Teddy II. We called our former breeder and she too had experienced a loss. Her prize Sheltie, Smitty, who had taken third place in his class in Chicago and Best of Winners in the Colorado Kennel Club Show, had started to "toe-in" and she would not be able to continue to show him. Smitty was so special to her that she was going to keep him. After talking with us (and she knew how much we loved our Teddy) she said she would let us have Smitty. We were thrilled. She said you could never give him "too much loving" and that is very true. We felt so blessed to have him that when Les retired last year

from Regis University we wanted to share Smitty with others.

Smitty was well known at Regis (and still is as Les continues to teach courses) because Les always has his photo brag book with him. When students were sitting in his office waiting to meet with their Professor (Les), they frequently looked through it. It is a great way of opening up communications and is a tension reliever as Smitty loves "hamming it up" in front of the camera. It seems like almost everyone loves dogs and have stories to tell about their pet.

It was providential that just prior to Les' "supposed" retirement we heard about the Delta Society. That would be something we could do as a family of three. We took the training and were so impressed with the wonderful work the Society is doing and making a real difference in people's lives. Smitty loves to be loved and is a great little listener. We felt he would be effective in a



hospice setting. Namaste Hospice was an approved organization and we were fortunate to be able to do our 20 hours of hospice training there and to continue working with them. Prior to starting our visits, our Pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Aurora did a commissioning service for the three of us for this Pet Therapy Ministry. It was special to have Diana and Ken McQuarrie there.

Our hospice visits have been very rewarding and Smitty is so happy when he puts on his little vest and trots down the halls of the various facilities. One gentleman that we visit has not verbally communicated with anyone and on our first visit as he was petting Smitty he said "pretty". He now smiles when we enter his room, says "Hi, Smitty" and is telling us about things he has done in the past. The Staff is amazed at his response. Another little lady gets so excited when she sees Smitty. If she is in activities playing bingo, etc. and she sees Smitty in the doorway, she calls out "That's my dog!" and comes wheeling out in her wheelchair to see him. She loves to pet and cuddle him. He thinks that is really great. She likes to talk with him and laughs when she says "Do you want to go to lunch with me?" or "Smitty, do you want a cookie?" (Do you think this is an indication that he is a chow hound?)

Smitty enjoys being around children. They call him "Little Lassie". He especially likes to have them read to him. We have been doing pet visits for only about 4 months but feel so fortunate to be a part of the Delta Society and Namaste. To have the dedicated and supportive direction of Diana and all of the Namaste Staff is very gratifying.



We agree with Roger Caras when he says "**Dogs** are not our **whole** life, but they make our **lives whole**".

