

## *Sue Armijo and Creede*



When Creede and I visit the facilities where we volunteer, most everyone we encounter knows his name, but not necessarily mine. This is understandable, since Creede's presence brings such joy, comfort and therapy to so many people in our community.

As my 30-year teaching career was winding down, I wondered what the next chapter would bring. My husband and I agreed we'd like to volunteer to raise service dogs. We knew nothing about raising puppies, but received plenty of training and support from the local service dog organization. Our first

dog, Brush (now Jack), passed with flying colors. He was teamed up with a beautiful woman who is a quadriplegic. This opportunity blessed us in so many ways that we signed up for another puppy.



And so it was that the wild, independent, stubborn puppy, Creede, came into our lives when he was 8 weeks old. We began to question our decision early on, but very soon fell in love with him. Creede was released from service dog work at 18 months of age. He had an unfortunate penchant for swallowing socks, scarves and gloves. This behavior would not prove helpful to a person with a disability. In our hearts, we knew Creede was just a star of a different kind and that, in fact, he was a blessing in his own right. He had become a wonderful, obedient, (albeit still stubborn) loving golden who loved to work. He simply needed a different career path!

I attended Diana's two-day workshop fully prepared to have Creede tested. He didn't pass his first testing, due to his sudden impulse to grab the fluffy chicken in the middle of the room. He also wanted to play with the neutral dog. Clearly, he needed more time and training in the area

of ignoring distractions. Upon being retested, Creede passed without any major issues. He was now a full-fledged, registered therapy dog!

Creede and I have been a volunteer team since 2009. In the 4 years that we have been involved with the local elementary school, Creede has become like a mascot. Teachers' and students' eyes brighten upon seeing him. Their voices reflect the good cheer they feel when Creede comes to visit! We were adopted to help with the 1st and 3rd grade reading program. Creede is quite nonjudgmental and listens attentively with open ears. On occasion, he's been known to catch a few zzzz's on the bench after listening to energetic readers.



It touched my heart when the school called this year to ask if Creede would help a child with autism in dealing with the challenging issues of the first day of school. Creede accomplished this beautifully as he cuddled up under the student's desk and offered much needed comfort. The teacher was quite pleased with Creede's 'magic soul' and his connection with this special boy.



Creede is a busy boy with visits to the hospital and the local nursing home. We have heard so many touching stories about family, health and animals. Creede entertains the patients with his many antics...retrieving, waving goodbye and begging for treats.

We didn't have a hospice dog in our rural community and many patients requested a dog. Our local hospice called and requested that Creede and I take the training. Initially, I was leery about volunteering for this. It was a different kind of challenge. All worked out well, as Creede guided me to visit many patients in his unruffled and loving way. He has helped me to remain calm, and I love our hospice visits. Our patients have shared with us

many insights and lessons. One patient told me that Creede had “hearts in his eyes”!

Creede is also a mentor for ‘service dogs in training’ as we receive many pups to socialize in our home.

There is something magical that occurs when a dog and human interact. Dogs have been called “man's best friend”; but perhaps they could also be called “man's best teacher”. Therapists with wet noses. A myriad of hidden lessons take place when a human and dog spend time educating each other. Creede is a soft, furry companion who, by his very presence, melts troubles away!



Creede and I are honored to be selected as Team of the Month!

