

Erika Simon and Puck



When I was a graduate student at the University of Denver, Daniels School of Business, the best thing I was taught was to give back. We had to volunteer each semester and I fell in love with giving back. Giving back, as defined by Daniels, could mean serving on a Board or spending time with those less fortunate than I. I have been on the DPP Board for over a year now, and I can proudly say I am fulfilling that charter of Daniels.

In 2011, my neighbor and I decided to purchase puppies from the same litter. Since my friend was very detail oriented, I let her find the breeder. She had always loved Golden Retrievers and volunteered her time with what was then, Delta Society (now Pet Partners). She found us a wonderful breeder in Mississauga, Canada. We flew Puck and Oliver into the Vancouver airport. I still remember holding him in my arms for the first time. Soon after, I took Puck to the vet as something had to be wrong with my puppy. He wasn't acting like a puppy. Looking back, I know he was just acting like a mellow therapy dog puppy. He showed so much to love to everyone in his path. He still does now.



*Me and Puck at Vancouver airport
the day I met him!*



Once I began to know and love Puck, I realized his gift for gentleness and kindness. I had to give back like my neighbor did before me. We started volunteering at a hospital in Issaquah, Washington, Swedish. It was at Swedish that I fell in love for therapy dog work. We would go almost every Friday, and every time there was an event that brought me to tears. Tears of thankfulness that Puck and I could give back in such a meaningful way. I remember one time, we walked into a chemo room in the Oncology suite. There was a patient there that we sat with almost every visit. She was getting visibly different with each subsequent visit. Puck and I walked into her village expressionless. Her village was comprised of her friends and family that were supporting her with every treatment, so they knew us. They were waiting for us. "Puck is here" they yelled. Puck would spend time with each of them in a circle. From one person to the next making sure he filled them with love even for just the moment. When it was time to visit with the patient, Puck put his paws on the chair and just laid down on her lap for what seemed to be for hours.



Puck visiting with his friend, Bonnie

Another time at Swedish, Puck and I had a normal visit with not much excitement. We had checked out with the volunteer office and we were waiting in line at the Starbucks. Yes, they had a Starbucks in the hospital ☺ As we were waiting someone in line behind me, said "Can I pet your dog?", I quickly responded "Of course, you can, but let me get him situated". I got out of my precious spot in line as a caffeine addict and turned Puck to face this hospital employee. I told her I had to get Puck just right for a good hug. As she hugged Puck for what seemed an eternity, tears rolled down her face. Puck stayed still. Then tears rolled down my face. We humans hugged each other. I never saw her again, but I know Puck touched her life and mine forever.

I am proud to be his partner, and his mom!

DPP Team of the Month (February 2018)

