



Martha Cearley and Mowgli



Mowgli almost did not come into my life. I was sitting at home one Saturday while my husband, Steve, was out running errands. Steve cannot pass up any chance to visit with a dog and he called me from a pet adoption event, saying, “You have to come meet this puppy!” I said, “No, I don’t,” but eventually he talked me into coming to the event to meet this adorable, calm ten-week-old ‘yellow lab mix, will be about 40 pounds full-grown.’ It was love at first sight! We were able to adopt him Easter Sunday, 2008.

Mowgli quickly grew past the predicted 40 pounds to become a beautiful 95-pound, Golden Retriever-Great Pyrenees mix. He loves to hold hands. He is still calm and has been an amazing therapy dog for over eight years. I did not know much about therapy dogs before Mowgli. When we took him for walks, people would tell us that he should be a

therapy dog because he is so calm.

I finally took the hint and looked for an organization that could help us be a therapy team. It didn’t take a lot of research to realize what a great organization Denver Pet Partners is! Steve and I went through the training. Steve registered with Mowgli first and then with our other dogs, Shanti and Scar. I went through the evaluation with Mowgli and we passed! At the end of the evaluation, one of the evaluators said, “You know, he carried you” and I replied, “Yes, I was counting on that!” That is how Mowgli works – he knows what needs to be done and he does it.



Shortly after registering, we began volunteering at Swedish Medical Center. We thought it was so funny that the hospital asked for a picture of Mowgli so that he could have his own volunteer badge. During our visits, I discovered Mowgli’s intuitiveness. We would walk into a room and he would put his head right by the railing and stay with a patient for as long as they wanted him there. He knew who needed the extra love. He loved all the patients, visitors, and staff. One time we were walking down the hall and he stopped by woman who was sitting on a windowsill. She looked up, patted his head, and burst into tears. She

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had just gotten some very bad news and, in her words, Mowgli was just what she needed. Mowgli also had a special affinity for the elderly patients. He would walk right up to them and sit completely still as they rubbed his ears, his head, his chin, whatever part of his body they could reach. And he waited while they talked about so many things.

We volunteered at Swedish for over six years before we decided to try other opportunities. One of the funniest volunteer activities was being the pet



“patient” at the Children’s Museum for their Future Vet program. On a Saturday morning, a veterinarian would come to visit to talk about taking care of pets and what it was like to be a pet doctor. The highlight of the program was when Mowgli would come forward to be the patient. The vet would look in his ears, check his teeth – do a routine check-up – and explain what she was doing. Then she would take out her stethoscope and listen to his heart. At the end of the program, every child received a stethoscope and, of course, they would come running over, asking to listen to Mowgli’s heartbeat. He would be surrounded by children trying to find his heartbeat.



Mowgli has been a neutral dog for evaluations. We have attended many special events including reading events, the United Paws event at Denver International Airport, the Children’s Mass, and stress relief events. The stress relief events are so much fun. So many of the students are missing their dogs back home and Mowgli is a wonderful substitute.

One of the hardest and most meaningful college visits was one we did with other teams in response to a special request after a student committed suicide and left many grieving and confused friends and family. The dogs who came to lend support all showed great understanding and provided a lot of support in a very difficult time.

Currently, we volunteer for Night Owls, a program through the University of Denver for families with children with special needs. Parents who have children with special needs drop off their child and siblings and are able to enjoy some time to themselves. The program offers a variety of activities for the kids and visiting with a dog is a favorite for us, the kids, and the staff. My most memorable moment of being part of Night Owls was with a very special one-year-old. She loved Mowgli and climbed on him, stood with him, rubbed her face on him and



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patted and held him for over an hour. She simply did not want to leave him and he was patient and loving back to her.

The experiences I have shared with Mowgli are memorable and priceless and I am so glad we met!

