



## *Joan Myers and Cloud*



My name was called and an 8-week old puppy named Cloud was placed in my arms. The "Guide Dogs for The Blind" Puppy Truck had come from the San Rafael, California Campus to pass out new puppies to the awaiting Puppy Raisers in Colorado. This little butterball of yellow fur melted my heart at first sight. Cloud proved to be a joyful little sweetheart and learned quickly and willingly all the important things a Guide Dog Puppy needs to know. It is important for Guide Dog puppies to be socialized, which means they

get to go everywhere you go in their little green coats. When Cloud was four months old my father had a severe brain injury from a fall and was in St. Anthony's ICU for a month after brain surgery. He was paralyzed on one side and in a semi coma. Cloud and I would visit every day and he gradually started waking up. One day I placed Cloud next to him in his bed. She gave him a lick on his face and all of a sudden he raised his arm that had been so still to pet her. They became fast friends from that day on. Cloud was there encouraging grandpa in rehab and would walk by his side next to his walker. All she had to do was walk in his room and his face would light up.

The Puppy Truck came back to pick Cloud up and take her back for her professional training to learn how to be a Guide Dog. I felt that Cloud took a piece of my heart with her but in return left a piece of her heart with me. Cloud passed through all 8 steps but due to allergies was "career



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changed". I was happy and honored to be asked if I would like to have Cloud. The reunion was tears of joy and a lot of tail wagging.



I knew that Cloud had a special connection with people and needed a job. Through a friend I found out about Denver Pet Partners and Cloud and I became a Team. We also became registered with the READ program. We volunteer at Any Think Library in Thornton where Cloud loves interacting with the children. One young boy plopped himself face down next to Cloud and put his arm around her and started reading to her. All of a sudden he turned the page that had monsters on it looked at Cloud and said "don't worry Cloud they aren't real". Cloud and I volunteered at Swedish Hospital where she made many friends with not only patients but with staff members.

We are now volunteering at the 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court House in Brighton in the female victim's waiting room. It is very stressful for women waiting to testify and Cloud enjoys interacting with them, making them feel comfortable and helping them get through the long wait.

The program at the Court House also allows victims including children to ask for a Team to be with them when they are going to testify or it is sentencing day for the guilty person.

We recently had a special experience at the Court House. Cloud and I assisted a 10-year-old victim who asked for a dog to be with her on the day she was going to testify. We first met with her on the day she came in to see what the court room looked like and go through her prep work. I attached a shorter leash to my leash so the young girl could lead Cloud. We toured the empty court room with her and Cloud even got to sit next to her when she practiced sitting in the witness seat. She was extremely nervous and it helped having Cloud at her side. We met at 8:30 in the morning on the day she was to testify. She was very happy to have Cloud by her side while we colored, played games, watched movies, and even took a short walk with her



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Advocate. She said her most favorite thing was interacting with Cloud doing command, tricks and rewards with her. When it finally was her time to testify she asked if Cloud could come with her to the Conference Room inside the Court Room to be with her until she was called in. Therapy Dogs are not allowed in the Court Room unless a special request is made and put through months ahead of time. If the request goes through the judge makes the final decision. In this case Cloud was not allowed in the Court Room. She asked if Cloud would wait for her until she finished testifying which we were happy to do. We stayed in the Conference Room with her parents who enjoyed Cloud and were happy to have the companionship. At 6pm she finished testifying. The young girl gave Cloud and me a hug and said she would always remember Cloud and thanked us for coming. Her mother said it made such a big difference in how her daughter was able to relax and through tears thanked us for being there. It made me realize how a Therapy Dog can influence a child and help give them confidence.

Cloud and I also enjoy volunteering at special events. We have participated in an Elementary School READ Event, The Conference for Attorneys and Child Law, Whole Foods DPP Event, and De-Stress Event at Aurora Community College.

Cloud and I plan on continuing our Journey with DPP and explore new opportunities and make new friends along the way.

