



## Kristin Doherty and Bruno



Bruno came to us Memorial Day weekend seven years ago, and it was love at first sight! The family who delivered him is from Kansas, and as they slowly drove up our street in what looked like a horse trailer, they called out to us, “Don’t worry! He’s not that big!” Bruno was 10 pounds that first day and would soon grow about ten pounds each month for about a year. He’s a healthy 100 pounds today, and this is actually on the smaller size for a Newfoundland which can get as big as 200 pounds.

If Bruno had a personal ad, it would probably sound something like this:

*“I’m a gentle giant, so don’t be intimidated by my size. I enjoy long walks in the rain and especially love snowy days. My favorite ritual is walking up to the coffee shop on Sunday mornings with my pack where I get my favorite biscuit, but if you ever want to get me a special treat, I’m a big fan of the bully stick. I enjoy meeting new people young and old, and I love other dogs, especially when they want to play but not too much. In the summertime, you can find me on a cool tile floor in front of the air conditioner.”*



Working at a behavioral health hospital, I learned firsthand the power that Animal Assisted Activities can have on people. Where I work, patients come for crisis stabilization and usually stay between 3-7 days where they are treated for depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

I was hoping that Bruno would be able to visit the hospital with me long before he arrived, and it’s been such a gift to do this work by his side. Animals bring such solace and healing and unconditional love, and it’s such a simple coping skill that is accessible for so many people. Even if patients don’t own their own dog, they are sometimes inspired to volunteer at a shelter or help out with dogs around their

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neighborhood. At the very least, the time spent with an animal reminds them that they can find happiness again even at the most challenging times.

It has been such a privilege to do this work and be with this population. Bruno has been visiting once a week since he was around two years old, and it's funny that just as Bruno knows when it's Sunday and time to go to the coffee shop, he also knows when it's his day to visit the hospital. He'll pop up out of bed when he hears me get his backpack and will practically jump into his vest. It's no mistake that his enthusiasm translates to the people Bruno comforts. The therapist will always ask the patients, "On a scale of 1-10, how did you feel before you came down to see Bruno and how do you feel now?" The answer is always a 10 or higher! Here's to making a beautiful difference in the world, Denver Pet Partners!

