



Diane Anderson and Ruby



I picked up Ruby, a buff colored, beautiful ball of fluff, a year to the day (November 14, 2015) after my husband passed away from stage 4 stomach cancer. So first and foremost, she has been MY therapy dog. I had known that I wanted to do therapy work with Denver Pet Partners ever since I met and fell in love with Blu Jeans, Jim Harper's golden retriever and therapy dog. Jim is a DPP member - Blu unfortunately passed away a few years ago from an aggressive cancer. I found Ruby at Gabriel's Goldens, where Patty Lorence is the breeder. When the litter was six weeks old, I and other prospective owners were invited to come over and meet the pups, and select a first and second choice. When I picked up Ruby (she was identified as "Ruby" because of her red yarn collar), she rolled over to her back on my lap and immediately fell asleep. I said to myself, "She will make a great therapy dog!" Thus, my love affair with Ruby began - she was my first choice. Remarkably, in a litter of seven pups, every owner "won" his or her first choice.

When Ruby was about 4 months old, we were walking in our West Washington Park neighborhood, when we met a young gentleman coming the opposite way. Ruby immediately sat down, tail wagging, waiting patiently for this man to come near. The man walked slowly, and when he got to Ruby, he very tentatively knelt down and Ruby sidled up to him and snuggled. This young man exclaimed, "It's like she knows I need her!" and then proceeded to tell me that he had recently had back surgery and had been feeling depressed and in pain. He stroked Ruby and whispered sweet nothings to her. I explained to this young man that my plan was to train Ruby to be a therapy dog, and he said, "She already is - she knew I needed her today."



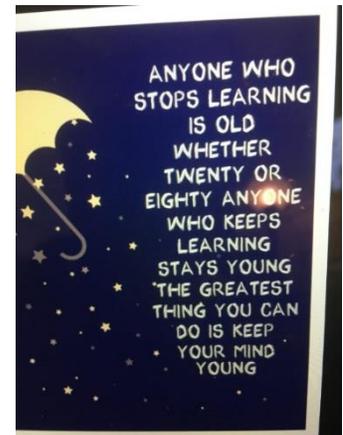
DPP Team of the Month (July 2020)

DENVER PET PARTNERS



When Ruby was seven months old, we started basic training, then at one year of age, completed Canine Good Citizen and Urban Canine Good Citizen Certification. The command to "Leave It" when food is near is Ruby's Achille's Heel! But we worked and worked on it and we were able to get it (somewhat) under control - at least to get through the DPP therapy team evaluation, which was accomplished in October 2017 when she had recently turned two years old.

We began to volunteer in January of 2018, at Brookdale Pinehurst Center for Alzheimer's patients in Lakewood. I knew a resident there, an ex sister-in-law from a prior marriage who had early onset Alzheimer's. My friend did not necessarily connect with Ruby, but many of the other residents did. After a few weeks of visits, some of the residents began to say "Ruby!" when we entered their neighborhood community room. We have many friends there, and with the COVID-19 restrictions, I worry about them and we miss seeing them. One gentleman in particular would start crying when he saw Ruby. He would say, "I just love this dog!" We were able to draw him out from isolation to the main community room for various classes and events.



Very soon afterward, I posted on Facebook that Ruby and I were doing therapy work and an employee from Porter Care, Downing and Yale in Denver, reached out to me and asked if we could visit their Memory Care center, which of course we could. In order to get to the Memory Care center, we go through the main lobby and visit with some of the independent living residents. Again, many of them remember Ruby's name. We have many friends at Porter Care that we have not seen in a while and miss them very much.

I have a close friend who is a social worker at Valverde Elementary School, within Denver Public Schools, and two years ago we started to brainstorm how we could incorporate Ruby as a therapy dog within the school community. What a joy to see Ruby walking the halls of the school and children's voices chanting, "Ruby! Ruby!" The students are able to earn individual time with Ruby



though practicing core values such as: kindness, responsibility and perseverance. The classes can also earn classroom visits with perfect attendance for the week, and for displaying the core values at lunch and recess. There have been instances where a class has earned a reward and are given a choice of reward: pizza lunch, movie or a list with Ruby. Hands down, the classes want visits from Ruby! A few weeks ago, during the lockdown, Valverde Elementary School did a car caravan to celebrate the students living in the neighborhood. Ruby was right there cheering them on. It was a Win- Win Event!



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As an advocate for Ruby, I observe how she responds to certain events. Perhaps her favorite experiences are at the Shandy Clinic in Aurora. This clinic specializes in working with children who have autism, sensory-processing disorders and behavioral challenges. Every time we visit is a novel experience. We are working directly with specialists who are providing therapies and we are often asked to "work on the fly," I believe that Ruby loves this challenge! She has pulled children on mobile devices that are used to improve their body cores. She has been a participant in social skills groups who have to cooperatively devise an obstacle course and lead Ruby successfully through it. She has been a patient comrade to children who are navigating life's challenges with one on one therapy.



The COVID-19 situation has definitely affected our ability to provide comfort to the residents of our community. Occasionally I will put Ruby's vest on so that she does not forget her responsibility which is also her love. She loves her job! She wants to get back to work. We look forward to the "new normal" that everyone is talking about, and which we hope will allow Ruby and me to do what we believe we do best - love and provide comfort to our fellow citizens.



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