



Cris Cook with Scarlet and Maddy



Luckily for us, Chatfield Dog Park has stayed open all through this pandemic. So Scarlet, Maddy and I get out every day and we can visit with other dogs. The humans all stay at least 6 feet away from each other, but we at least get to love on each other's dogs! I started our story with this because I wanted to tell you about a "visit" to the park the other day. Maddy (almost 8 years old) picks out a "best friend of the day" and runs up to them, wiggling her butt like a puppy, curling her shoulder down submissively and grinning like a crazy girl. Of course,

everyone loves on her and then Scarlet (just turned 10 this summer) saunters over to get her share of butt scratches. Now – Maddy has never met these people, just something about them tells her they are her new best friends. "Ooooh, these dogs should be THERAPY DOGS!!" says the new best friend. Yes, they should!

Scarlet, Maddy and I became teams in 2017. Hard to believe it has only been 3 years, but we've done lots of visits in that time. It was kind of a rocky start for Scarlet and me – we had to do the evaluation twice to pass. Scarlet had such terrible test anxiety that she (an 80-pound yellow lab) kept trying to jump into my arms. Of course, it was blamed on me – my nervousness translated down the leash. Yeah, yeah, yeah - I wasn't THAT nervous!! Anyway, we got through on the second try and we were off on the therapy dog adventures.

What I have found out – even though this should probably be obvious – is that the trick to successful visits is to find environments that your partner likes and enjoys. Not every dog likes to do every type of visit. Scarlet and I went to an elementary school – twice. The second time, Scarlet very subtly told me this was not her thing – and did not want to get out of the car! I had to promise her that we wouldn't come again. She was great with the kids – she just didn't like all the activity. Maddy on the other hand, LOVES the school and loves the activity. In fact, Maddy does not do well in situations where she's just loved on in a quiet environment. She needs to move (or be given treats nonstop – warning to new teams, if you have a food dog, DON'T start with treats!)

DPP Team of the Month (September 2020)

DENVER PET PARTNERS

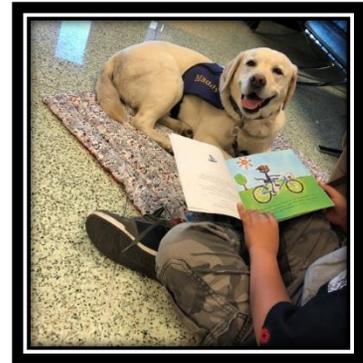


Scarlet has found her niche at the library. She just lays on her blanket and sleeps while the kids pet her and read to her. I explain to the kids that Scarlet thinks every story is a **bed**time story and that is why she sleeps – it's not that she isn't interested!

Both girls like to go to the Life Care Long-term care facility. But we made that mistake with treats. Most of the residents love to give treats and my girls love to eat them! You want to pet me? Where is the treat? Two of the residents who are across the hall from each other actually have a competition as to who will give them the most treats. The girls get half rations for dinner on the days they visit.

We've done Stress Buster Events (Scarlet likes them better than Maddy) because even though there may be a lot of activity, DPP always has us set up a little separated from the main thoroughfares, so the activity doesn't bother Scarlet.

It is also important for the human to enjoy the activity! I love the quiet of the library visits, but I enjoy our visits to the school too where Maddy and I have the kids "train" her. Last year we were going to go through our 2-year evaluation and the kids put her through all the steps of the evaluation – they were the evaluator. It was great practice! We also play a game called "find it" (a tennis ball that has a slit in it and a treat – of course – the kid holds it out to Maddy to smell, then I cover her eyes while they find a place to hide the ball. Then they tell her to "find it!" and she sniffs it out). It's a lot of fun!



So, I just wanted to share that there are all sorts of ways for you and your team to share the love!!



Cris and Scarlet



Cris and Maddy