

## *Mike Coulter and Remington (Remi)*



I am a retired Air Traffic Controller who has been fortunate in life to have a beautiful wife of almost 38 years, two fine young sons, and now two even better grandsons. Since I retired, I have become an official in various sports from the young kids' level to high school and college. I have always been active in everything I have done both inside and outside of work. I had been involved in the Adaptive Adventures program where I took mentally and physically challenged individuals out sailing.

Several years back after we lost the second of our two beloved Irish Setters (both lived till age 16), Amy and I decided we would go without a dog for a while. Our boys, now grown, getting ready for families of their own, with both of them living out of town, left us as empty

nesters. After about three months of being every dog in the neighborhood's best friends, we decided it was time to put a little fur back into our family,

I am not sure how I found it, but after reading about Remington on the Southwest English Setter Rescue website ([swesr.org](http://swesr.org)), we saw a handsome two-year-old Setter who was soon to become our next family member. There were about 10-12 dogs awaiting rescue, but something about his picture laying on that floor all curled up in a ball and the write up about him said, "This is the One".

He, along with another English Setter, were on the streets for a few weeks. He now weighs 51 lbs., but when the shelter picked him up, he was down to 32 lbs. Thus, he knows what a little stress can do to you. Fortunately, we both won the "Dog Lotto."

After going through the long adoption process (great for the dogs to ensure they get a good second chance at life), I drove to Columbia, MO to pick up Remi and bring him to his new forever home. What a blessing that was!



While taking him through training, one of the instructors mentioned that he would be a great therapy dog, due to his temperament. I hadn't given it much thought for a while. Then, I had my knee replaced. When going into the surgery room I saw a sign that said sign up for a Therapy Dog visit. I immediately did. Unfortunately, no Therapy Dog visited me during my hospital stay.

## DPP Team of the Month (October 2021)

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Little did I know that when I got home my Therapy Dog would be there waiting for me with his usual wagging tail. He put his feet up on my walker and those eyes said, "I'm here to help." That's when I knew this is what he wanted to do, and what I now wanted to do. I did my research on the various organizations and decided on Denver Pet Partners because of their initial and more importantly, follow up training. It has been everything I could have asked for. The people involved are as wonderful as they come, and are dedicated to making sure the animals and handlers are educated and supported from the day you start and continuing on afterwards.

DPP helped set me up with Castle Rock Adventist Hospital's "Angel Paws" program and along with many other onsite visits for Remi and I. We participated in the Columbine 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary program where they had 13 dogs in Clement Park that day supporting all the families there. We have done other programs at some local schools and other de-stress events.

Somewhere along the line, the administrators from the new UC Health Highlands Ranch Hospital heard about us, and contacted me about doing therapy dog visits there. We went in for a visit and decided to add them to our list of places to visit. Visiting patients, staff and nurses at hospitals has been one of the most rewarding things both Remi and I have ever done. It always amazes me that in places of stress, you find the best that humans have to offer. The nurses and staff at the two hospitals we visit certainly demonstrate that!

Let me share two quick stories on how rewarding being a Therapy Team is. First; normally when you visit a patient, you are only in their room for a few short minutes. One day we visited a woman (my guess in her mid-80's) who used to train full-service dogs for a living. A few months before she entered the hospital, she lost her own beloved pet. Remi walked into that room and she lit up more than one can imagine. We must have been in that room for over thirty minutes. She did not want him to leave and he did not want to leave her either. A short while later as we were walking down the hall on the first floor a woman ran up to us and thanked us for that visit. She said she had not seen her mother smile that much in over 10 years. She even asked us if we could go back the next day to see her, which we joyfully did.

Just a few weeks ago, while getting into our car as we were leaving the hospital after one of our visits, a woman came over and asked us if Remi was a Therapy Dog. I said he was. She said we visited her autistic daughter while she was in the hospital a year and a half ago, and that her daughter talked about him ever since. Right on cue, Remi got out of the car and went over to say hello to her daughter.



*This is a photo Remi sent to the hospitals in April of 2020 in the midst of the COVID Crisis.*



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Imagine how big those smiles were, not only on the daughter, but on her mom and I as well. I could not have been more proud of Remi. He just knew what to do.

This is why we handlers and animals do what we do. It is extremely comforting to know we DO make a difference in people's lives. It is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. And I definitely have the best partner to do it with.

Everyone always comments on how mellow Remi is. I do refer to him as "Mr. Chill." He definitely is the mellowest dog I have ever met. That is, unless you are a bunny in his yard. That's a whole different story. He has learned over the years that if you go up to people, look them straight in the eye, they will come down to your level and pet and love on you. He can milk this with the best of them. You sit down on the floor; he will sit down on the floor with you. You should see how excited he gets when I get his vest out. He knows it's time to do what he does best.



Other than his Therapy Dog duties, Remi is an unbelievable joy to be around. I own some sailboats and you will almost always find him sailing with me. He goes just about everywhere I go. I just refer to my SUV as his rolling dog house. To the folks at the hospitals, they just know me as his Uber Driver. Once COVID hit and our visits had to be curtailed for a while, Remi decided he now had to go up and see everyone he could while on our walks. He did not do that before COVID. He just figured everyone needed a little stress relief, no matter where they were.

Both of us want to thank all of the people involved, for helping us share our good fortunes with others, in hopes we can bring a little joy in stressful times. Remi is now seven years old and we hope to be doing this for years to come.

