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Never forget why we do this

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There is so much more to being a volunteer animal-assisted therapy team than just bringing a dog into the mix. Our Love Dog teams are so thoroughly trained to understand their animal and themselves that the right matches can be made between handler, animal, facility and client.

Yesterday at our monthly Meet & Greet the Love Dogs / Story Time at our partner therapeutic center for children, we saw the magic unfold.

We had several dogs there but only two children came this month. That never matters to us. We have had six dogs and one child, six kids and one dog! It always works out because each dog has their own skills and talents and each child has his or own needs and desires.

But yesterday the two children were very different and we had just the three perfect dogs there for them.

We were told one child was very afraid of dogs but once he met fluffy Benny, he warmed up. He actually petted Benny after a few attempts and then brushed him. This empowered him to meet the larger dogs. He sat in his mother's lap while Yellow Lab Roxy "read to him." At first he did not want to touch Roxy but very soon we saw Roxy gently slide over (always under the control of her handler) and put her head *near* the little boy. Before you knew it *her head was in his lap* and the little boy was smiling.

Then he moved over to Meet & Greet Annabelle and again they began by reading with the dog just lying nearby. Before too long they were best buds and the child was learning how to safely greet dogs and to understand that he is control. He can always say No I don't want to touch the dog.

The second child has little mobility and was the perfect client for the larger dogs. He squealed with joy touching their soft fur and lying side by side with each dog. He was able to lift his head up and stretch his arms way over his head in the touchdown position while lying on the mat. The dogs were overjoyed but remained steady and calm, as we expect of Love Dogs. Both Roxy and Annabelle spent time with this child and each brought about different movements in the little boy. And both brought about a great big smile.

If either dog had barked or changed their position it would have been a break in this critical connection and perhaps even dangerous for the young boy.

But they were so happy to be able to bring about this moment with the child, they fully understood their role.

So yesterday was very special for the children, their parents, their therapists, our volunteer Love Dog handlers and especially for our amazing Love Dogs themselves.

For more information about the Love Dog therapy program in Las Vegas, go to www.lovedogadventures.org.

Recommended



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