



September 16, 2011

ADDIE is gone. My pain and sense of loss is profound. However, I am extremely thankful and grateful to GOD that she did not have to suffer or that her passing was not a protracted event. I also thank GOD for allowing me the honor and privilege of having been a part of ADDIE's incredible life.

I remember it like it was yesterday; we had attended a dog show way back in late 1999 in Frederick, MD. There was this little puppy outside of a motor home in a small fenced-in enclosure. She sat there in the corner of the enclosure, and of course, I went over to her to pet her. It was the strangest encounter; it was as if I knew her and she knew me. I felt an immediate bond like I had never felt before. I learned that her name was ADDIE. I inquired about whether she was available for purchase and was told that she absolutely was not -- She was the Pick of the Litter for this particular breeder, and her future was to be in the Show Ring and then to breed her -- I was crushed.

For the next several days, she was all I could think about. I had dreams about her, which was a welcome change to the less pleasant dreams I had been experiencing. And, our family already had three dogs, RILEY, BRIELLE and OATLIE; I thought to myself, *There is no way we can get a fourth dog.* However, I was haunted by my desire to have ADDIE and contacted the Breeder in May of 2000 to see if she had any puppies for sale (I figured if I could not have ADDIE, then maybe another pup from the same Breeder would suffice.)

During our meeting with the Breeder we learned that ADDIE had not grown to standard height and therefore, the Breeder could not show her, explaining that ADDIE had missed the all important six-month show trials. She then told us that ADDIE was "out back in a run" where she would remain until she grew tall enough to meet AKC standards. We were able to visit ADDIE in her run that day -- She was covered with mud, her coat was matted, and she smelled terrible! However, she came right over to us and, once again, it was like she and I had known each other forever. We talked to the Breeder once again about purchasing ADDIE, figuring it was a long-shot but was at least worth asking about again. The Breeder said that she was currently in the middle of a divorce and was in need of money and said that when contemplating things, she had already waited three months for ADDIE to grow to AKC standard height, but no luck, she would consider selling but for a price, of course. So within a week the negotiations culminated into us being able to pick up ADDIE -- and now finally she was mine!

ADDIE quickly integrated into our now four-dog pack. She learned fast, and the bond deepened quickly. She and I began to visit nursing homes and geriatric hospitals along with RILEY and Kyria. Kyria and I learned more training techniques as we tried several different trainers working toward increasing the training level of RILEY, OATLIE and BRIELLE.

Then in early 2002, everybody's life changed. Kyria was asked to bring her dogs (which included ADDIE) to school to help two Occupational Therapists who were trying to motivate their students to engage in physical activities. So OATLIE, BRINKLEY (yes, our fifth dog), and ADDIE became the "school" dogs. With their success the second paws4people program was created; paws4education.

Over the next two years, under the pilot program that was established within the Loudoun County Public Schools, ADDIE and I formed a team that would work in the special educations classes of two different schools; Round Hill and Mountain View Elementary Schools. Kyria, along with OATLIE and/or BRINKLEY, worked in special education classrooms at Loudoun Valley High School.

During the next two years I witnessed ADDIE accomplish incredible things; she helped children learn how to walk, how to read, how to count. She helped them learn how to take turns, sit patiently, and how to be gentle. She helped children when they suffered the loss of their grandparents, and when their parents went through a divorce. She helped children who had been afraid of dogs to overcome that fear. She gave children the confidence to try something new or scary – because if ADDIE could do it, so could they. She helped one child in particular, who had Autism and who was non-verbal. This child went from being nonverbal to self-directed speech within one school year – however, he only talked if ADDIE was there. ADDIE helped children to learn Sign Language, and she helped them to learn to speak and read English. She helped Guidance Counselors with behavior modification plans, and boy-oh-boy did she love to play “ball/fetch” on those slippery school floors! She helped students learn about static electricity and balloons and so many other things.

During those two years ADDIE taught me that working with her to help these kids was much more important than my job and its money -- I knew then that my life had changed forever -- and it was all because of ADDIE.

Over the next three years, ADDIE and I worked in the schools, and during one semester alone, we worked in nine different schools and over 45 different classrooms every two weeks -- She loved it! She would prance into those schools like she owned them. Every student, every teacher and even the administrative staff demanded their “ADDIE” time. She just simply could not get, or give, enough. ADDIE then also began to train my second working dog; CHAENEY. ADDIE was his mentor and his soul mate as he learned the ins-and-outs of school life. They formed a working relationship, even though it was hard for ADDIE to give up the solo spotlight, especially with me.

In late 2006, the paws4prisons program came into existence. ADDIE was the “credibility factor” which closed the deal with the Bureau of Prison officials who had asked Kyria to begin a dog training program within their soon-to-be-opened female prison in Bruceton Mills, WV. ADDIE’s and CHAENEY’s demeanor and behavior during those preliminary planning meetings illustrated that paws4people could train dogs, even if we had never done it before inside a prison.

With the ever-increasing time requirements of the paws4prisons program, our (Mine, ADDIE and CHAENEY) time in the schools began to decrease, and then finally, in the fall of 2008, it ended.

Thus began the next evolution of ADDIE and her sidekick, CHAENEY. Inmates quickly replaced students. The skill sets that ADDIE and CHAENEY possessed became the standard to which the inmates sought to achieve. ADDIE’s ability to connect with people resulted in many inmates experiencing the true Human-Animal Bond for the first time.

With the expansion of the paws4prisons program during 2008-2010, ADDIE and I logged over 150,000 miles of travel, hotels, motels, prisons, and more prisons. SHE was the consummate ambassador. She never met a Prison Warden she didn’t impress and she never met a prison staff member she didn’t like. She even changed the demeanor and interpersonal skill sets of two prison staff members. She bridged the gap between inmate and staff, enabling each to see the other as an individual rather than an “Inmate” or a “staff” person.”

Then, with the advent of our paws4vets program in early 2009, ADDIE’s focus/life was going to change yet again. She was about to join my “Old World,” that being the military. She would significantly impact the lives of our first two paws4vets’ clients, as she opened their minds to what a Service Dog could do for someone with PTSD. She went into a psychiatric ward in a military hospital like she had done it her whole life. Within moments she reduced the anxiety and stress levels of our first client, give us as an organization the opportunity to discuss the client’s proposed treatment plan. Before the visit was over, ADDIE had engaged several other Marines on the ward, resulting in smiles and words of praise from the nurses and the orderlies for her ability to calm and engage the patients. ADDIE and CHAENEY worked with these first two clients before their Psychiatric Service Dogs were ready for placement, allowing us to provide assistance to them during their psychiatric crises.

During January 2010, ADDIE and CHAENEY once again rose to the occasion as they demonstrated their abilities for the Command Staff at Ft. Stewart, as we planned and executed the initiation of the Wounded Warrior Assistance Dog Training Program. ADDIE and CHAENEY served as the first two “training” dogs for the soldiers in this program. They also demonstrated the power of the Psychiatric Service Dog as the soldiers observed their interactions and affect on me.

ADDIE was working as recently as last week as we traveled to both the Lakin and Hazelton prisons.

Yesterday, at about 1500 hours, ADDIE collapsed just outside of my basement office. I rushed her to the emergency vet practice where I was informed that she was bleeding internally and that her initial sonogram showed a mass in her abdomen. Subsequent tests and x-rays revealed that she also had a mass in her lung. The moment I most feared had arrived. After crying gallons of tears and many, many prayers for both guidance and strength, I made the decision to put ADDIE to sleep.

As we stared into each others eyes, the vet administered the medicine. As she died with her head in my hands and me talking into her ear thanking her for loving me the way she had for so long, I closed her eyes and kissed her goodbye.

ADDIE's passing closes the beginning phase of paws4people. Her passing completes the original pack in Heaven, as she joins RILEY, BRIELLE, OATLIE, and BRINKLEY and where they are now in the annals of paws4people's history.

ADDIE

10.6.99 to 9.15.11

Certifications:

Psychiatric Service Dog

Educational Assistance Dog, 32,846 contacts / 2,801 classroom visits

Rehabilitative Assistance Dog



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