

Therapy Dog of the Week

Bette Davis

“It certainly puts your own troubles into perspective!”



Name: Lesley Mitchell & Bette Davis

Type of dog: Cavalier King Charles Spaniel

Location: New South Wales

Visits: Westmead Children's Hospital

Volunteering: 8 years

Why: I had been thinking for a while of doing some volunteer work, as I had some extra time on my hands with my daughter now in Primary School. The fact that I now had his gorgeous dog, made Delta an obvious choice, as sharing Bette seemed to be such a great thing to do. She was just perfect for this kind of work, gentle, loving and totally good-natured. I later on acquired another Cavalier, Lili, who has the most marvellous temperament, and has so far been assessed, and teamed up with, a number of partners, filling in numerous gaps over the years.

I was also keen to do something involved with children as I was formerly a teacher, so it seemed a good idea to be able to utilize some of my skills as well.

Enjoys most: I never fail to be uplifted and inspired by the courage and resilience of the kids. It certainly puts your own troubles into perspective!

Dog enjoys: That the dogs do enjoy the experience is absolutely without question. Both Bette and Lili know when it is Wednesday – I am certain! They definitely recognize that when my red shirt is on, and their bandanas are likewise donned, it is time to go to work, and they are beside themselves with delight! Tails wag fit to start a small hurricane! And boy do they get peeved if I put on my shirt and don't take them because I am off on some other Delta business!

Experiences: We had one experience with a child who had Tourette's Syndrome. One minute she was quite calm, the next she was twitching violently and screaming in an ear-splitting manner. I didn't think Bette would be able to cope, but as usual I was proved wrong. She sat on the girl's lap (she was aged about 12) and each time there was a seizure, Bette didn't even blink – which was more than I can say for me! The mother was absolutely stunned that Bette was able to put up with the seizure. Their own dog was terrified.

Then there is a little boy who is so physically and intellectually disabled to the extent that he has virtually no independent movement. Bette (and the other small dogs) sit up on his bed, and we put little treats between his fingers, hold them there, and get the dogs to gently take them from him. We go to great lengths to tell him what a great job he is doing to "Feed" the dogs! The nurses feel that he is really responding to this, and a little while ago, was able to move a finger to "wave" goodbye to them.

I also now am part of the team that takes part in the training of new recruits, talking about the Volunteer Experience. I hope that I get across to them what it means to be a volunteer with Delta, whether it is in a Hospital or an Aged Care Facility – how it can be such a worthwhile and rewarding experience, and how much their dog also will enjoy it!

I also have a new puppy, Audrey Hepburn, on Delta L- Plates, and just raring to go. She's already unofficially visited my mother in her aged care facility and proved she has what it takes – but then she has two very good teachers!



Note from Delta: Bette Davis, like her namesake, is a media star (or could that be Lesley!). You can see them featured recently on [Guide to the Good Life](#) (15th Aug 2009) and also on [Talk to the animals](#).

Delta Society
AUSTRALIA is proud of all our Therapy Dogs. If you and your dog would like to become a Pet Partner visiting team, please visit http://www.deltasocietyaustralia.com.au/pet_partners.htm or to read more about the wonderful work we do visit <http://deltapetpartners.wordpress.com/>.