

Therapy Dog of the Week

Bailey, Wilson and Isabella

“Dorothy didn’t have any biscuits in her walker – just imaginary ones and my beautiful big boy was happy to go along with Dorothy’s kind thoughts and generosity.”



Name: Louise MacLeod, Bailey, Wilson and Isabella

Type of dog: Golden Retriever

Location: NSW

Visits: Aged care; Children’s hospital; Mental health

Volunteering: 8 years

Why: I love to share my dogs with those we visit as well as to see the joy and happiness that we bring to others.

Enjoys most: The contact with those that we visit and the joy that my dogs bring to them.

Dog enjoys: The pats, cuddles and games... and of course the biscuits.

Reaction: They all know that we are coming and wait eagerly for us to arrive. Some of the residents don’t know their names or what they had for breakfast but they know that Thursdays Bailey comes. The staff,

families and visitors also look forward to our visits. Staff often ask us to be with children when they are having their traction adjusted.



Experiences:

Bailey & Bree

Bailey and I had been visiting *Bree in the Children's Ward for two years. Bree had a chronic illness and spent long periods of time in hospital. She looked forward to Bailey's visits as she said it made her feel special and almost made her forget that she was in hospital. Bailey loved his special Bree cuddles, his kisses and being a model for her art and craft creations.

Early in our visiting of Bree Bailey witnessed her regular physiotherapy sessions. Bree was chuffed that he was worried about her and he promptly became her guardian angel – as she loved to call him. Bree loved to have Bailey there during her physio sessions as she would pat Bailey and tell him about her day.

Every week that we visited we could see Bree becoming weaker and frailer. This Wednesday when we visited Bree was very unwell and was on oxygen. As we entered the room she slowly sat up and removed her oxygen mask and whispered 'Bailey it's me ... its Bree' as she motioned him to come closer. As she kissed and cuddled him she said 'Bailey has come to say goodbye'. They cuddled together for a long time and Bree went to sleep with him in her arms.

We both said goodbye to Bree and as we turned to leave the room I knew that we would not see Bree again.

Bree died just a few hours after we had visited.

What a brave, funny, bubbly, smart, articulate and special young lady she was! She faced her illness with such strength and determination.

We felt so privileged to have known her and to have spent such precious time with her.

*Names changed to protect privacy

Bailey & Dorothy

Dorothy loved her weekly visits with Bailey and enjoyed our walks outside in the courtyard. Her walker was her prized possession and it held many of her life's loves as well as her special treats for Bailey.

Each week Dorothy would ask Bailey what kind of biscuits did he feel like today and she would open up the seat of her walker and call out scotch finger, tim tams, iced vovos or a plain arrowroot. She would look Bailey in the eye and ask me if he had been a good boy. Of course he had. Dorothy would then hand Bailey a biscuit of her choice and he would gently take it and eagerly wait for another.

What is so very special about his story is that Dorothy didn't have any biscuits in her walker – just imaginary ones and my beautiful big boy was happy to go along with Dorothy's kind thoughts and generosity.



Bailey & Jed

Having completed our visit at the Children's Hospital Bailey and I were leaving the ward when we heard a small voice call out 'look mummy a puppy' followed by the sounds of tears.

We stopped and a small boy caught up to us and threw his arms around Bailey. We were to learn that his name was *Jed and it was

his mother who had been crying. Jed, his mother told us, had not spoken for three months since being diagnosed with a brain tumour. Over the coming months we were to spend time with Jed and his family. As Jed grew weaker Bailey would sit with him and we would read stories. Jed loved to stroke Bailey and even throughout all his treatments he would always have a smile for him. On a good day we would go outside and both he and Bailey would eat an ice-cream in the sun.

Jed loved to give Bailey treats and when he was gravely ill in intensive care I placed a treat in his hand and as Bailey gently took it Jed's little body shook from top to toe.

A small boy and a big dog that touched each others' lives in such a simply special way.

Bailey's burps

Lily, Maude and Dot had had their afternoon tea and were sitting at the table.

Bailey and I sat down to talk to them when suddenly Bailey burped loudly.

I apologised for his bad manners and Lily reached over, patted me on the arm and said 'It's alright dear I heard him say pardon me'.

Lucky boy. Can't set a foot wrong with the residents.

Wilson and Paul

Wilson and I visit an adolescent psychiatric unit. This particular Tuesday we were met by a staff member to ask could we come and sit with Paul who had been very down and sad. Wilson went over in his usual relaxed and happy manner and Paul reached out his hand to pat him. A flicker of a smile crossed his face as he hugged Wilson to his chest and began to weep openly. Paul's body began to shake uncontrollably as he held Wilson close.

Over the coming weeks the bond between Paul and Wilson grew stronger. They loved to walk together in the courtyard, play basketball and Wilson's favourite of all time fetching a tennis ball. Paul began to talk to Wilson about his troubled past and tell him his deepest darkest secrets. This in turn helped Paul to talk openly to his psychiatrist and councillors.

Over time we saw Paul become a more outgoing and confident young man and were visiting the day he was going home. Paul shed tears as he hugged Wilson goodbye and thanked him for being his best mate ever. He thanked him for listening to him when he couldn't talk to anyone and for being there for him when he needed it most.

As he turned to leave he reached into his pocket and took out a tennis ball. He threw it into the air for Wilson to catch and as he walked away said 'mates forever'.

I was so proud of my boy! A non threatening gentle soul who was able to touch that of another. A non judgemental friend who could be trusted with some deep dark secrets, a friend who didn't judge, a friend who was happy to see you in good times or bad.



Bailey & Thomas

At a visit with Bailey at the John Hunter Children's Hospital, he was sitting being patted by a group of children when a small boy crawled by. Suddenly Bailey moved quickly, pulling me with him to sit behind "Thomas" who was sitting reading a book. Bailey would sit happily for hours being patted and it did surprise me at the time that he moved away. My big gentle giant it was soon to be revealed also has another amazing ability. Shortly afterwards Thomas had an epileptic seizure and fell backwards onto Bailey who had positioned himself so perfectly to cushion his fall. Upon researching the phenomenon I discovered that 1 in 9 dogs can sense an impending seizure. Not only can my beautiful big boy give unconditional love, accept you for who you are, listen to your secrets and not be judgemental but he can also sense the chemical changes in someone before a seizure occurs. Bailey has since alerted parents and staff to another two seizures. I am so proud of my special boy!

Delta Pet Partners is a thoroughly enjoyable and important part of all our lives.



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/>.