



Newfoundland Club of America



Adam, The Resident Dog

by *Lawren Coulam Kinney*

If you were a Newfoundland dog and you could choose your career, what would you choose? If you ask Adam, (Proud Magi Adam at Adrian, OFA) he would say that his job is one of the best jobs a Newfoundland could wish for. He is the resident dog at Portage Manor, a county residential care center in South Bend, Indiana.

Adam, 126 pounds of Newfoundland charm, looks after the staff, 144 residents with ages ranging from 19 to the high 80's, all visitors, nine indoor and 18 outdoors cars, parakeets and a guinea pig. He shares his office-which is right at the front door of the center with administrator Louann Becker. From this vantage point, he is accessible to all residents. Like a typical Newfoundland, he favors an open door policy with the staff. If there are meetings going on behind closed doors, Adam has been known to gently nudge the door open and walk in. He has tried to expand this to an open drawer policy, since he can and will-open desk drawers that contain dog treats.

Dick Walsh is his primary caretaker. Dick makes sure that Adam is walked, fed, watered and brushed. Adam has bonded with Dick and listens to his whistles and commands. Adam also has 144 more people who love him, play with him and take him out.

When Adam comes in after he has been outside, he announces his return with little barks-just in case someone has missed him. He also likes to lie on the cool tile floor. Sometimes, residents can be found lying on the floor next to him, with their arm over Adam.



Adam waits at the door to greet residents as they arrive home at the residential care center.

Unfortunately, Adam does not like to walk on this shiny floor (laying, yes, but not walking) and the center has tile covering its first floor. Floor mats have been put down so that he can move throughout the first floor. When he gets up, he backs up until his feet are on the mats. He will hop from mat to mat if they are too far apart.

Portage Manor had two previous resident dogs before Adam. The first was a German Shepard named Wolfie. When Wolfie passed away, they acquired a Newfoundland named Megan. With Megan's advancing age, Portage Manor wanted to acquire another Newfoundland. The center was really sold on the temperament and character of the Newfoundland dog but needed an older dog for their situation. Their requirements for a resident dog were that the dog was large enough in size to be seen by all the residents and a dog that was not fragile with a strong enough disposition not to be bothered by lots of attention.

Local veterinarian Carol Ecker contacted Ann Burlingame, a local Newfoundland breeder, about possible replacements. In the meantime, Judy Wirtz had contacted Ann Burlingame because she knew Ann was involved with Newfoundland rescue. Judy needed to find homes for her dogs due to a personal illness. She had turned down other people because she wanted to be sure that her dogs were going to be loved and part of a family. Ann put Judy and Portage Manor in contact with each other and arrangements were made for an interview.

Portage Manor sent a group of people including Louann Becker and Dick Walsh to Indianapolis for the interview with Judy. The meeting was so successful that Adam came to South Bend that same day in August 1998.

Adam's day starts at 5 a.m. with a walk with Dick, and then another walk at 7:30. Dick brushes him and cleans his eyes. As the staff starts filing into the center for their workday, Adam greets them all. As residents leave in the morning, he says goodbye with a "hurry back" look in his eyes.

He goes on various walks throughout the day. Portage Manor has about 240 acres around it, plenty of room for him to get a lot of exercise. When Adam first got to the center, he wanted to blaze new walking trails on the property, but after a few sessions of combing out lots of burrs, he has been convinced to stay on the walking trails instead of the burr-infested deer paths.

Adam's food and water dishes are always full so he can help himself at anytime. However, Adam likes to eat his kibble off the floor so he takes it out of the bowl to eat it. He likes his water ice cold and a few times a day ice is added to his water dish. On a monthly basis, he goes to Dr. Carol Ecker's vet clinic for nail clipping and an occasional bath. Dr. Ecker makes sure that he is in tiptop shape.

At the end of the day, as residents return home, Adam is there to greet them with a wag of his tail, as if to say that he missed them. His presence helps make the center feel like home to the residents. His last walk of the day is at 8:30 p.m. and then he goes to bed.

"We had a guardian angel floating above this place to give us another Newfie," Administrator Becker commented. "Adam has fit into the center very well. He had a very small adjustment period. The residents love him but so do visitors. Many times the first thing the staff will hear is 'Where is Adam?' from any number of visitors."

"It takes a special dog to be here," Becker added. "We have 144 personalities here. This isn't an institution. It's a home and Adam is an important part of our home."

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