

Let Me Introduce You To Team "FAMILY" NCA Members/Certified Therapy Team

The Member Engagement and Retention committee wished to "SPOTLIGHT" some members who mirror image their beloved dogs with the following words. "Dedicated, Loyal, Hardworking, Loving", and the list could go on and on. These members and dogs devote much of their time to being Certified Therapy Teams. I personally have always admired and respected these teams, but now, after heightening my own awareness, my respect has grown two-fold.

I had the honor of interviewing a somewhat NEW set of members but newness has nothing to do with passion and dedication.



CUE THE MUSIC.... " WE ARE FAMILY"! Meet Liz, Ryan, Ben and Henry Pagel. This team started their journey in therapy work and became certified just over a year ago. They decided that therapy was just the "RIGHT FIT" for them, working hard in many areas of training to provide an easy segue from training to providing this service. They jumped "Head First" into this endeavor, and from the sounds of it also "Heart First".

After this family team began their labor of love they would provide their services to any and every place they were invited, you see THERAPY teams must be invited to places, the rules regarding allowing dogs to go anywhere



applies for SERVICE dogs only. Word of mouth played and still plays a large role of where they go.

Currently they team up with a local OSF hospital and work with two first response units, a day service program for individuals with intellectual disabilities, a college, and a preschool.

Future plans will include local police departments and 911 dispatch centers.

Liz mentions that one of Ben and Henry's favorite places to visit is GHAS, a first response unit. The relationship formed with them started out as a public service informational event and has grown ever since.

Obviously, there are really difficult times that Liz, Ryan, Ben and Henry are called upon to help with. One of those times is assisting with an end of life visit. The team provides comfort for the families and to the individual themselves. These are tough but necessary. When asked if there was a time that the boys didn't immediately enjoy, whether it was the environment or situation at hand, they shared with me that there isn't much the boys don't enjoy but once they needed to provide a different strategy for dealing with a highly charged, actively loud visit. Things were fast paced at a Day Service Facility and quickly the handlers picked up on the VIBE, and were able to make adaptations immediately, thus allowing things to remain successful, comfortable and positive. A WIN/WIN outcome for sure.



My last question for “TEAM FAMILY” was, “Could you share one situation that I could deem the “HALLMARK MOMENT” for this team what would it be?”. Without hesitation Liz told the following story. They had begun to make weekly wellness visits and as they began their rounds they approached a door with a woman sitting in a chair. She began to wave her arms indicating “NO VISIT”, with that sign they began to pass saying “NO PROBLEM, HAVE A NICE DAY”. Just as they reached her doorway, BEN planted himself and would not move. Liz and Ryan apologized and began to try to persuade him to move NO LUCK. Suddenly the lady scooted herself to Ben, wrapped her arms around him and sobbed. She alternated her actions from petting him, to softly talking to him, to hugging and crying. Time passed and she gave him once last hug to release him and she then said, “Just recently my dog crossed the bridge”, she at first did not think she could handle a visit, because she was struggling immensely. BEN KNEW, he gave her a much needed presence. They have now established a special relationship, and with each visit he goes to her first and she embraces him. He NEVER passes her by. Liz feels that this experience has reinforced how important it is to watch, listen and trust your dog.



This is a NEWFOUNDLAND THERAPY TEAM.... IT IS A FAMILY AFFAIR!
It was an honor and pleasure INTRODUCING them to you. Do yourself a favor, learn more, ask them questions, GET TO KNOW THEM!

Cissy Sullivan
Member Engagement and Retention Committee
Interview About Therapy Work
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