



Member Spotlight April 2024

Connie Schmidt



How long have you been a member of the Fox Valley Therapy Dog Club?

Since 2017. I went to my 1st practice and I was talking to Lyn. She asked me what kind of dog I had. I showed her a picture of Coda in the basket of my cousin's motorized scooter. She showed me the same picture and said she worked with my cousin.

How many dogs do you have? What are their names?

Two and they are Coda and Jovie.

Who is your therapy dog and what breed are they?

My dogs are both Biewer Terriers. Most everyone thinks they are Yorkies, but they're not! I have the papers to prove it!! Both of them came from a breeder

in Omaha, NE. Coda will be 8 in May. Jovie will be 2 in October.

What is your favorite or most memorable therapy dog experience?

I like that every visit is different. Coda has had several memorable visits, but a few that come to mind.... always the van ride there and back, when we are with others!! I learn something new every time we are together.

She owns YHS. It's her favorite. It was one of our supervised visits and we have been going back ever since. Before Covid, there was a young lady in a wheelchair that was scared to death of dogs. She wouldn't even hold the leash. I somehow coaxed her into holding Coda's leash and taking her for a walk. We walked the hallways several times, with teachers and students taking all kinds of pictures of this little dog, walking next to her wheelchair, and she's holding the leash, to send to her family. The teacher's were very impressed.

We had a little boy at a school that had a horrible stuttering problem. He loved to talk and wanted to tell us about his day, but it was very difficult. Once he was able to pet Coda, the words just flowed. It was neat to see.

Most recently we were at Prairie Point, where we visit hearing impaired students. There was a sub there and she asked if I knew what CODA meant. I told her yes, it's a musical term. Coda was supposed to be the end, but she's not. She asked me again if I knew what CODA meant, but in the hearing impaired community. I told her no. She said Children Of Deaf Adults and said she thought it was neat that I have a dog named Coda working with hearing impaired kids.

I'm a breast cancer survivor (11 years now!!) and our MCAI visits, before Covid, were always special. I had some of my treatments and mammo's there. The staff is great and it gave me a chance to share my story with them and some of their patients.

Do you have any advice for new therapy dog teams?

Have fun with your dog. Don't be afraid to try something new, whether it's a new visit/facility or teaching your dog a new trick. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

What facilities do you frequently visit with your Therapy Dog?

A lot of schools, libraries, nursing/assisted living homes, girl scout troops and many of the extra visits that we are asked to do. Hased House (2x) is probably my scariest visit and the one that touches me the most. I give the kids a picture, and they try to give it back. They don't understand that it's theirs to keep.

What are some of your hobbies or what do you like to do for fun?

I play my clarinet in the Indian Valley Community Band. The overachiever in me has me sitting 1st chair ~ just like in high school! We meet on Monday nights in the Sandwich Middle School band room and always welcome new members. If any of you have ever played an instrument, even if you are a little 'rusty,' come play with us! During the summer, I play in the Yorkville Community Band and the Oswego Prairiefest band. I was playing in the Fox Valley Community Band (they meet in St. Charles), too, but it got to be too much with work and all of my dog 'stuff.'

I always have a jigsaw puzzle on the table in the living room. Please come help me do it!

What do you and your therapy dog do for fun?

We take walks around our subdivision ~ they like their stroller ~ and they like to go to my grandsons baseball games. I'm also trying to teach Jovie new tricks. She hasn't figured out yet, that what we work on at home, she can do on visits in front of others, and get a treat for it.

Tell us your favorite food, T.V. show, and song or music artist.

I have lots of favorite foods (can't you tell!!), but I do have to say that my tastes changed a lot, and for the better, during my breast cancer journey. One of the things that tasted best to me was a frozen coke. My granddaughter calls them 'freezing coke,' and I still like a good freezing coke every once in a while. I don't have much time to watch TV, but occasionally I will watch Happy Days or Who's the Boss reruns. I always have music on in the background in my house. I love classic rock, OLD country, classical, blue grass, oldies, musicals, Christian- almost any kind of music except head banging rap.

What is a random fun fact about your or your dog? OR Is there anything you want to share with our community?

I have 3 kids and 10 grandkids! One of my sons moved to Katy, TX about a year and a half ago and took 4 of my grandkids with him. Everyone else is here, and local. I have a personal trainer that I have worked with 2x/week for 9 years. She is the best thing that I have ever done for myself. My life changed dramatically on May 30, 2020 when my husband passed away very unexpectedly in our backyard. We were married for almost 38 years. Now I am part owner in our family business, B & B Machining, Inc. We make refrigeration valves. My brother in law is the other owner and my son and daughter are very involved in the business. I love the flexibility of my job and I am very thankful that I have been able to cut my hours way back, as long as I get the bills and my employee's paid on time, to be able to be more involved in the FVTDC.