



Member Spotlight May 2024

Mary Czipri



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

13 years

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

Two, Spaetzle (German Shepherd) and Holly (rescue mix)

Who is your therapy dog and what breed are they?

Holly. She is a rescue mix, possibly Spaniel/papillon?

What is your favorite or most memorable therapy dog experience?

So many, but I have two favorites with my first dog, Miss Riley. On a Mercy Hospital Memory Care visit a newly admitted patient with her husband were visiting with Miss Riley. The husband was relaying how much they did together in their life and how hard it was that they could not share their memories so much anymore. In the middle of the conversation his wife started speaking about a memory with their kids and a dog. It was out of the blue and lasted just a moment but it was priceless. He said she had not done any conversation like that for months. It brought tears to the husband's eyes as well as mine. The other was a special needs school visit, I can't remember the school. There was a child in the visit that would get very agitated when seeing the dogs and would not go near them in the beginning. By the end of the year he would approach Miss Riley and actually pet her, it was a short interaction but he would smile ever so slightly before he moved away.

Do you have any advice for new therapy dog teams?

I think some dogs like Miss Riley are naturals and made to be therapy dogs. Others, like Holly have questionable potential but with a little love can surprise us. I think we just need to listen to our dogs and understand they are all unique. Different approaches work with behavior and trust training depending on the nature of the dog and we need to be aware of what is appropriate for each dog. Also, some dogs are more comfortable with library visits and others with more chaotic elementary school visits. We need to be aware of their body language to see what works for that specific dog. I also think some dogs just don't want to be therapy dogs and that should be okay.

What facilities do you frequently visit with your Therapy Dog?

Holly and I do regular visits to Rush Copley and the Cancer Infusion Center in Aurora, as well as other visits where needed. We are trying to get Holly experience with many different types of other visits to see where her comfort level is.

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

I love Lake Michigan beaches, gardening and reading. Visiting my grandchildren is the best fun for me.

What do you and your therapy dog do for fun?

Holly loves to play fetch with balls or stuffies. She also likes to wrestle on the bed which eventually leads to zoomies.

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

Favorite food is definitely sweets and not fussy about whether its candy, cake or ice cream. I love movies that have meaning to them like true stories or history movies that have more background than just blood and guts. Love animal stories, Hallmark, and shows that are a mix of comedy, romance, and mystery. I like all music except rap but favoring Ed Sheeran type of genre right now.

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

Holly likes to surf tables for things she can steal and especially loves socks. She used to run away with them but now she gets a lot of praise for bringing them back to me. So she has made it her job to bring me slippers, socks, and anything else I might leave behind. She has really become quite a cuddler now too and I am so proud of how far she has come in her journey as a rescue.