

Noah the Therapy Dog

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My son had been asking for a dog since he was three years old. Seven years later I could barely wait to surprise him with his tenth birthday present: a white puff ball of a goldendoodle, our beloved Noah.

As a child my mother was an avid equestrian and ran a training and boarding facility. I knew quickly that Noah was a special animal with tremendous potential. We were graciously accepted into a rigorous service dog training program (the only future therapy dog present) and my son and I spent about a year working together with them. We then proceeded to obtain other service and therapy certifications as well as appropriate insurance, and my dream came true, Noah was ready to work along my side during the day and be with my son all other times.

The impact of Noah on my campus is not quantifiable. He brings immense joy and comfort to our tiniest three year olds in pre-kindergarten all the way to our twelfth graders in high school. I always practice the adage “connection before correction” and Noah is instrumental in my work. He allows students a conduit to connect with the counselor in a trauma-informed manner. He doesn’t demand eye contact, verbal communication, or even compliance. He is simply a soft, warm presence that knows instinctively when to approach, when to apply pressure, when to simply stand nearby, and when a crying student needs a tender head placed in their lap.

Students, teachers, staff, and parents of all ages come to see Noah, and I establish relationships solely off their desire to spend time with him. Approaching the counselor can feel intimidating at times and he opens this door to many, providing a path to receive needed assistance that may otherwise not be acted upon.

From the youngest Roadrunners missing their mommies and daddies at the beginning days of kindergarten to a teenager having a panic attack, Noah and I always work together to bring relief and neural regulation.

I truly cannot articulate the gift he has been not only to my family personally, but to my professional work. I knew when we acquired Noah that I wanted him, but I had no idea how much we needed him.