

What are Therapy Dogs Really Like?

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What are Therapy Dogs really like? Well, for starters, a therapy dog is a “FREE Dog”¹ Why?

One reason is because these same canines are well behaved animals who have been given the time and the educational tools through basic obedience training to learn his or her canine good manners in social environments.

Another reason is because these same canines have undergone and passed a temperament test in an American Kennel Club² Canine Good Citizen Test, an American Kennel Club Community Canine Test, and a Therapy Dog Incorporate³ Test and is now ready for a job in social work. And with time and maturity, each canine is becoming an expert in gentleness, acceptance, and unconditional love of the person who is petting and hugging him or asking him to perform an obedience command or two.

Therapy Dogs come in all sizes and breeds. Mastiffs, Newfoundland, Labradors, Chihuahuas, Yorkshire Terrier, Jack Russell’s and American Dogs (*politically correct term for “Mut”*) are a few of the breeds that entertain while giving comfort in mind, heart and soul to the person he or she visits.

While visiting hospitals and nursing homes are the most favorite of people who are involved in canine therapy, many special education schools are now developing a Canine Therapy Programs where several canines come with his or her owner and work one-on-one with a student(s) for one hour learning the art of canine training.⁴

And to add flavor to canine therapy programs, 4-H in Berrien County, Michigan has Best Friends 4-H Club⁵ which pairs a 4-H'er with a Team Instructor and a volunteer team therapy canine and practices one a week for eight weeks in canine obedience, agility, rally, good sportsmanship and figure eight and canine anatomy, in preparation for dog competition at the Berrien County Youth Fair.

Now what better canine therapy can you have then teaching a child who has a life disability how to be independent with a canine... whether the dog is his or hers or not?



¹ What All Good Dogs Should Know; The Sensible Way to Train; Second Edition by Jack Volhard & Melissa Bartlett page 1; ISBN 978-0-470-14679-8.

² akc.org

³ <http://www.therapydogs.com/>

⁴ Blossomland Learning Center; Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103

⁵ www.bf4hclub.com