

“The love of an tears into smiles!”



LuLu the dog visits hospitals and nursing homes, spreading love, joy and hope to all she meets

When Rosa Ramos adopted a golden retriever puppy, she had a feeling sweet LuLu was destined to make people smile. But she had no idea just how many lives LuLu would brighten—starting with her own!

Holding the wiggling bundle of golden fur, Rosa Ramos gazed intently into the pup’s half-opened brown eyes. “You’re the one,” she whispered. “I feel it in my heart.”

Years earlier, Rosa had visited a nursing home and had been saddened to see how lonely so many of the seniors were. When she adopted a rescue dog named Kim, Rosa had hoped to train her to be a therapy dog and take her to visit nursing home residents in her California area. But Kim’s personality was too skittish.

I think this new puppy will be the one that I’ve been waiting for, Rosa’s eager spirit rejoiced.

As if the tiny pup felt the same “meant to be” sensation, she licked the tip of Rosa’s nose. That sealed it. She’d found her forever home.

A dynamic duo

Rosa brought “LuLu” home in April of 2017 and she was everything Rosa was hoping for and more. The pup got along famously with her new furry sister, Kim, and Rosa’s husband. LuLu was smart and spirited, often stealing a carrot from a grocery bag or an article of clothing that would later turn up in her doggie bed.

When LuLu was 4 months old, Rosa started bringing her to a nursing home to get her used to people with wheelchairs and walkers. From there, she hired a dog trainer to work one-on-one with LuLu, then enrolled her in a four-week class of obedience training with other dogs. Soon after, LuLu took her certification exam, and as Rosa had expected, she passed with flying colors.

Rosa immediately began taking LuLu to nursing homes and hospitals. Elderly residents who were vulnerable and depressed lit up looking into LuLu’s loving eyes. Rosa often heard residents’ excited cries echoing down the halls, “LuLu is here!”

One woman at a hospital was bedridden, on IVs and barely able to move. When LuLu laid her head on her bed, the woman stroked the dog’s soft fur and tears



“It was love at first sight for both of us,” says Rosa, with LuLu as a young pup

animal can transform



Just petting LuLu lifts lonely seniors' spirits



LuLu often wears cute outfits to add to the cheer



Kids become fast friends with LuLu

spilled down her cheeks as Rosa shared some of LuLu's antics. By the time they left her room, the woman was sitting up and glowing with newfound joy.

Spreading happiness

Rosa and LuLu loved brightening people's lives. Then in March of 2020, all visits came to a halt when COVID hit. Determined to continue bringing smiles, Rosa came up with the idea of taking comical photos of herself and LuLu doing everyday things, like mowing the lawn or making a lunch, and began emailing them to nursing home facilities where they volunteered, as well as hospitals across the country.

Some hospitals hung the photos in hallways, others shared them via their newsletters. One assisted living facility made a photo album for the residents to enjoy, while a children's hospital displayed the photos in the sick children's rooms.

When word of the joy they were spreading reached the local fire and police departments, they began allowing Rosa and LuLu the use of their vehicles and uniforms,

including robots and helicopters, for their photo shoots. By November of that year, her website, RosaAndLuLu.com, was launched and a hardcover book of the photos was published in volume 1 of *The Adventures of Rosa & LuLu*. The

books were donated to schools, hospitals and nursing homes with the help of sponsors.

Today, Rosa and LuLu are back to making in-person visits, volunteering two days a week at four facilities. LuLu has made such an impact that recently she was "Guest of Honor" at a special event DCH

Subaru of Riverside hosted at the Ronald McDonald House in Loma Linda,

California, where they were able to personally hand out *The Adventures of Rosa & LuLu* volumes 1 and 2 to some 60 sick children. At another event, they donated copies to more than 100 nurses at a local hospital.

Now, Rosa is more inspired than ever to reach new heights with LuLu. They already have more photo books in the works. Rosa's ultimate dream is to have LuLu's pictures taken at NASA since Rosa loved watching the space shuttles when she was a teen.

"Working with LuLu has shown me that the loving presence of an animal can mend hearts when words have no effect," Rosa shares. "Being part of a therapy dog team has changed my life. I thank LuLu every day for being my loyal friend and for all of our adventures."

—Diane Nichols

"I've learned that the presence of an animal can mend hearts when words have no effect"

3 easy steps to train a therapy pet

1 Look for traits!
The American Kennel Club recommends that dogs pass the Canine Good Citizen test that focuses on the top 10 key traits your pup should exude before registering for a therapy training program. Visit AKC.org, click "Products & Service," then click "Canine Good Citizen (CGC)" to take the test.

2 Apply for courses!
After your dog has passed the test, go to PetPartners.org, click "Volunteer," "Courses & Education" and create an account. Finish the handler's course and your pet's skills evaluation. Once your pet has passed the test, there is a one-time \$95 fee to get the official letter that certifies your pet.

3 Volunteer!
"Once certified, approach facilities in your community where you want to volunteer," advises animal behavioral expert Dr. Annie Valuska. Go to PetPartners.org and click "Volunteer" to locate schools, hospitals or virtual places in your area where your pet can visit!



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