

WEAVER, SHANE



CÂLIN LA CHIEN

Callie embraces a petting from multiple SAIT students.

Story & Photos by Shane Weaver



Callie props her head on the leg of her owner, Pam Pastirik.

In times of stress, anxiety, or any hardship, sometimes a simple hug can make a world of difference.

It is fitting then that Callie, a four-and-a-half-year-old pure bred golden retriever, would be named as a play on the French word for hug, câlin, and volunteered as a therapy dog for the Pet Access League Society (PALS) program based in Calgary.

For the past three years, Callie and her owner, Pam Pastirik, have been a part of PALS; an organization of volunteer therapy dogs that visit a range of over 55 facilities and clients in order to spread the calming effect a dog can induce.

“When I got Callie, I knew quite quickly that her laid-back, subdued personality was something to share.”

Born in Foremost, Alta., Callie was just a puppy when Pastirik adopted her from a breeding kennel that was closing its doors and trying to get all their remaining dogs into homes.

After spending a year and a half together and becoming best friends, Callie was finally of age to be evaluated as a registered therapy dog for PALS.

“When I got Callie, I knew quite quickly that her laid-back, subdued personality was something to share.” – Pam Pastirik

At one time, Callie and herself would frequently visit an elderly couple from England who lived at a nearby nursing home.

“We would often drop by outside of our regular visits as their nursing home is close to my home.”

Callie loved her time with the two seniors, and developed a strong bond with them over time.

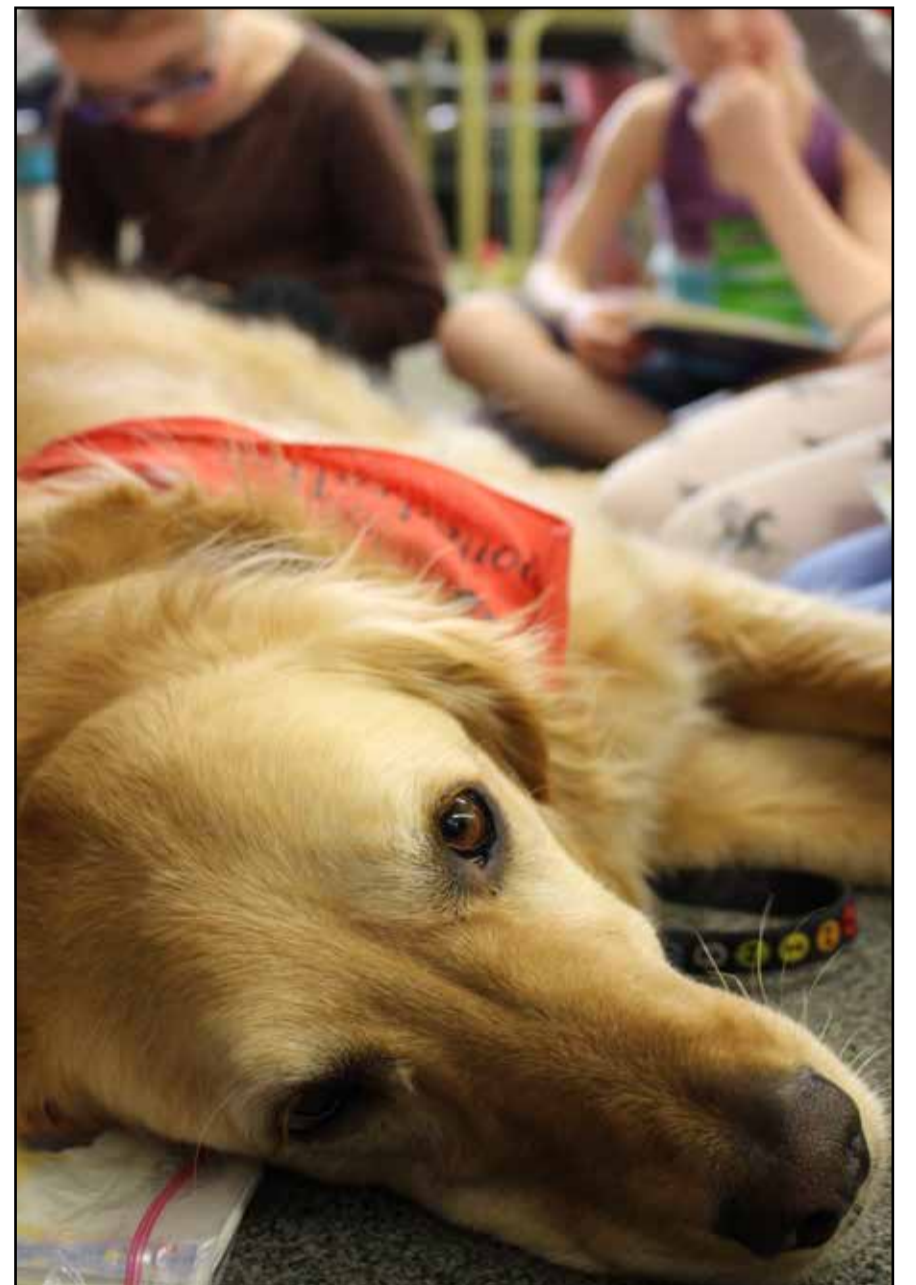
“I think that Callie being invited to his funeral by his widow was poignant.

“Bittersweet and sad too, but certainly reminded me of the impact we do have.”

Outside of the PALS organization, Callie partakes in literacy support for two classrooms at the Varsity Acres School where Pastirik used to work during her teaching career.

Once a week, Callie joins the Grade 1 French Immersion class to visit the students at their desks as they do their work, as well as having the children read to Callie in French, either in small groups or one-on-one.

“I am proud of Callie. She is not only obedient; she is empathetic.”



Callie sprawls out as Grade 1 students of Varsity Acres School circle around her to read.



Three SAIT students gather around Callie.



Callie walks around the Grade 1 class at Varsity Acres School.