

Suffield Veterinary Hospital March 2018 Patient of the Month

Meet Earle, a handsome black Labrador retriever owned by John Sloan of Suffield. This handsome fellow (photo credit our great Vet Tech Jen Haire) came from a needy background years ago, and now gives back to others in need.

Earle was found as stray by Shana's Last Chance Dog Rescue in Arkansas. The Sloans found him on the "Adopt-A-Pet" web site, North America's largest non-profit pet adoption web site. He is certified by Therapy Dogs International, a credential that allows him to visit hospital patients. Here's how John describes what they do:

"One day a week, Earle and I (hospital staff accompanied the first few times) first go to the satellite of Hospital For Special Care in Hartford. These patients are mostly on respirators and require skilled care 24/7. Some have been in a vegetative state since we have been visiting. It has been difficult to visit with these patients as the beds are very high and very narrow. Earle is not allowed to jump in bed with these patients and if he is petted, I have to put on gloves and foam the patients hand. We do spend a lot of time with the staff, who love to see Earle. We then go to Mt. Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital whose patients are much more interactive. We also interact with the physical therapy staff. (Usually at this point we take a break and go to the cafeteria.) Then we visit the Mandel Center for Multiple Sclerosis where patients receive infusions. All told we spend around 2 hours in the hospital before our drive back to Suffield. Earle sleeps the rest of the day!"



Therapy Dogs International (TDI®) is a volunteer organization established in 1976, dedicated to regulating, testing and registration of therapy dogs and their volunteer handlers for the purpose of visiting nursing homes, hospitals, other institutions and wherever else therapy dogs are needed. Their website can connect you to people who can test your dog for suitability for this work. In addition, many local canine training and obedience centers offer specific classes preparing you and your dog for hospital or nursing home visits. John Sloan feels that Earle was born suited to be a therapy dog, saying, "It is my opinion that a dog's temperament is right for therapy work or not. Training has less to do with it. (Outside of not picking up anything on a hospital floor!)"

Earle loves visiting patients and staff. His favorite task is to get petted by people who were previously afraid of dogs. With a nod to John Sloan and all the time he spends bringing Earle on his rounds, we are very proud to name Earle our March 2018 Suffield Veterinary Hospital Patient of the Month.

Suffield Veterinary Hospital

Dr. Ann Huntington ❖ Dr. Anita Sabellico

Dr. Dawn Burke ❖ Dr. Daniel Rothbart

577 East Street South (Route 159), Suffield, CT 06078 (860) 668-4041

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