

Script – Print - Dumped Dog Delivers Delight to Patients

Rescued pup featured in film about OSF Animal Assisted Therapy program

Life didn't start with much promise for Ivy and two of her siblings. The three were found abandoned inside a dumpster several years back. The two month old Chihuahua pups were taken in by Noah's Ark, a Rockford animal rescue facility and word went out seeking adoptive parents.

Jennifer Walker already had a Chihuahua and, when she saw the homeless whelps, immediately took action to adopt one. Jennifer registered Ivy in a dog training class and the teacher was impressed.

"Our instructor happens to be a handler here," says Jennifer Walker, an Animal Assisted Therapy program volunteer at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "So, he said, 'I think Ivy would be a good therapy dog.' So, I continued on and that was my goal originally with my first Chihuahua, but it's not a fit for him. So, we continued on with her training and she earned her CGC (canine good citizen) and CGCA (canine good citizen advanced). We brought her in for an audition and she became part of the program at about a year-and-a-half old."

Ivy and Jennifer make quite a team as part of the Animal Assisted Therapy program at Rockford's OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. They, along with dozens of other volunteers and their canines, visit hundreds of patient's monthly bringing joy and comfort at time of anxiety for those we serve.

Jennifer says the program is rewarding for her and her best friend.

"The idea of bringing in a dog to go visit people that may not have a visitor, but then get a furry, four-legged visitor - it's so rewarding to see the people's reactions," Jennifer Walker, an Animal Assisted Therapy program volunteer at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "We see people melt and just into puddles. And I'd have people cry, but in a good way. And the dogs love it too. They know when Mom's wearing this uniform we're going somewhere and we're excited." (laughter)

Ivy's story has compelled a local video producer to share her story with others. Pablo Korona's project called "Our City, Our Story", tells unique and interesting personal perspectives about the diversity of life in Rockford. He sees Ivy's story as a good, heartwarming tale that fits perfectly with his project's mission.

"When someone's in the hospital it's a serious life event - it's a life event," says Pablo Korona, producer of the "Our City, Our Story" film series. "And to have something like Ivy come along. It's unexpected. Brings joy and happiness from something that was discarded and thought completely, literally thrown away. To bring that much joy - it's a fascinating, fascinating story."

Ivy's tale will lead off the third season of "Our City, Our Story" early in 2019. Visit www.ourcityourstory.com to learn more.

For information about or become a volunteer in the OSF Saint Anthony Animal Assisted Therapy program, go to www.osfhealthcare.org/saint-anthony or call 815.395-5064.