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ANIMAL CAREERS



Lauren Pipkorn

Pet Therapy Handler

What can you do when you're feeling blue? Hugging your dog or patting a cat is definitely where it's at. But not everybody has a friendly furball nearby, and that's where Lauren Pipkorn and her golden retriever, "Yo," come in. As a certified pet therapy handler, Lauren brings Yo to meet and greet people in nursing homes, hospitals and schools. Their visits are a surefire way to get people smiling and tails wagging (Yo's tail, that is!).

Skills and training required for the job:

Certification in pet therapy handling, plus recertification every two years. "I had to attend workshops to learn how to deal with difficult situations that may come up in the different environments that my dog and I visit," says Lauren. Yo took obedience and disposition classes, too, to learn how to always be calm and gentle around all kinds of new people.

Best part of the job:

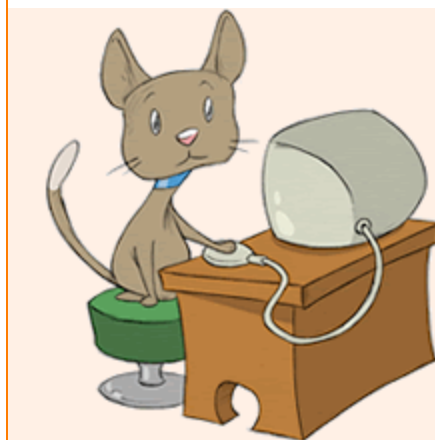
"Seeing all the happy faces and feeling the joy people get from petting, kissing and hugging a lovable dog."

Hardest part of the job:

Lauren volunteers as a pet therapy handler, so it can be tough juggling visits into her work schedule. "Sometimes we visit people who are going through very difficult times and situations, and that can be hard to experience."

The funniest thing that ever happened on the job:

Lauren and Yo were visiting at a party in a nursing home, and one of the residents decided to throw Yo a mini-bagel. "He gobbled it up, and everyone started laughing and decided to throw their bagels, too. He went crazy at his good fortune and I had to stop him from

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dragging me to all the bagels!"

Tell us a good dog story:

Lauren and Yo are involved in the "Paws-n-Books" program to help kids learn to read. "We meet with four students who read to Yo. They sit on a chair next to their tutor and Yo sits at their feet. And they always make sure he's listening to them read!"