

New Feature :
Buy Photos!
 Click to shop our photo library

11:00 am
 Currently: 34
 RealFeel® High: 37
 Humidity: 59
 Winds: NNE at 7 mph

[Click here for a 15-day forecast!](#)

SATURDAY MARCH 18, 2006

Site Search: Search

[Advanced Search](#) [Browse By Date](#)



Try our Sample On-line edition (click here!)

Family Pools & Spas
 Enhancing Family Fun

NEW LOCATION!
 1672 CLAREMONT AVE. ASHLAND, OH 44806 419-295-1948
 4182 Burbank Rd. Suite F in the 180 Plaza WOODSTER, OH 44891 337-354-5570

Sections

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Crime](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Living](#)
- [Farm](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Science & Tech](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Weather](#)

MarketPlace

- [Ohio AutoFinder](#)
- [HomeFinder](#)
- [ClassifiedFinder](#)
- [JobsFinder](#)
- [Public Notices](#)
- [Buy Photos](#)

Subscriptions (330) 264-1125

- [Subscriptions](#)
- [Question/Problem](#)
- [Info & FAQs](#)

Forums

- [Discussion Forums](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Classmates](#)
- [Guestbook](#)

Services

- [Advertising](#)
- [Contacts](#)
- [Website Feedback](#)

Community

- [City Hall](#)
- [College](#)
- [OSU/ATI](#)
- [OARDC](#)
- [Wooster Today](#)
- [Community Hospital](#)
- [Chamber](#)
- [City Schools](#)

Wayne County

- [Orrville Today](#)
- [Rittman Today](#)
- [Amish Heartland](#)

Holmes County

- [Amish Heartland](#)
- [Chamber](#)

When the past comes back to help Nancy Patterson learned service as a child, not realizing it would benefit her son

By PAUL LOCHER
Staff Writer

ORRVILLE - What goes around comes around. If you don't believe that, you haven't talked with Nancy Patterson, who recently experienced that old adage in the most personal and meaningful way possible.

As a young woman growing up in Ashland County, some of Patterson's most vivid memories are the example her parents set for her in terms of being involved in, as well as giving back to, their community and church.

"My dad and mom were real role models for me," Patterson said. "They took leadership roles in all kinds of clubs and organizations and boards, and participated in things at Ashland University."

To underscore the importance of this to their offspring, they insisted their children tithe to not only the church, but to other charitable groups. One such organization that caught Patterson's interest as a youngster was a pilot dog program, which she also supported by saving the labels off dog food cans and sending them to an organization that redeemed them for specially trained dogs that could help disabled people.

In 1980, Patterson started donating regularly to Canine Companions for Independence, a group that trains service, skilled companion, hearing and facility dogs.

Little did she know how years later the organization would play a significant role in her own life.

Then, 15 years ago, Patterson and her first husband had a son, Chad Seeholzer, who suffers from a rare chromosomal disease known as Coffin-Lowry Syndrome. The disease handicaps Chad cognitively, affecting his speech and balance, and enables him to function only at the level of a 3-year-old.

Patterson said Chad requires round-the-clock attention, including the services of a live-in caregiver. He attends Ida Sue School. Despite Chad's speech being affected by his handicap, Patterson said he is not backward either emotionally or socially, and is very loving toward those around him.

An 18-year teacher with Ashland City Schools, Patterson started thinking about a service dog for Chad when he was 7 years old. She contacted Canine Companions for Independence. After working her way through a mountain of paperwork that, she says, "I could have adopted five children with," and going through a four-hour interview in Delaware, Patterson and Chad made the first two cuts when Canine Companions determined he would be a good candidate for a service dog. After an eight-year wait, Patterson learned in November they would get a dog.

"When they called and told me that," Patterson said, "I couldn't even say anything to them. I just stood there in the middle of the room and cried."

Patterson and Chad packed their bags and moved to a hotel room in Delaware for two weeks of intensive work at CCI's training facility.

The first three days they spent working with service dogs to see which they best bonded with. In the end it turned out to be Parnell, a half-Labrador retriever half-golden retriever. Patterson said the two worked with Parnell from 9 a.m.-



Chad Seeholzer gives a hug to his service dog, Parnell. Chad and his mother, Nancy Patterson, spent two intensive weeks of training with the dog before Parnell was brought home.

Duane Martin photo

Forms
Announcements

- Anniversary
- Club
- Engagement
- Wedding

Our Forms are
PDF's.



4:30 p.m. daily before taking a dinner break. Then it was back to the facility for homework and testing.

While Patterson was learning to work with Parnell, her husband of two years, Jeff, superintendent of Orrville City Schools, and their respective family members traveled to Delaware to take turns helping with Chad's care.

After completing all the in-building training and testing, Patterson said, it was time for the class to take the dogs out in public - to shopping malls, restaurants and big box stores where they would be exposed to a lot of people - to see how the dogs performed with their owners.

After that there was a half-day long written test, a public test and a practical test in front of the dog trainers.

Patterson said Parnell can understand and act on 42 commands that range from turning on lights and picking up a telephone to opening the refrigerator door and "visiting" with Chad.

Jeff Patterson said California-born Parnell travels everywhere with the family - to restaurants, airports and shopping centers.

"Public access for service dogs is federal law," said Jeff, adding the family likes to be proactive by telling business owners they are going to be bringing a service dog onto the premises.

He said because of Parnell's strict training, "When we leave a restaurant, people are surprised because they didn't even know there was a dog there. Parnell stays under the table as far as possible."

Patterson said there are many positives in Chad having Parnell, not the least of which is how Chad can walk farther by holding onto Parnell, and with Parnell sleeping in his bed Chad sleeps through the night.

"Parnell is Chad's soul," Patterson said. "He is Chad's source of unconditional love."

Patterson and Chad have established "Chad's Web site" (www.chadsdog.com) where visitors can see Chad and Parnell in action, in the hope they will be educated about the value of service dogs. The site also seeks donations for the service dog program, because dogs cost about \$10,000 apiece to train. To date the site has raised more than \$1,900.

Patterson said Parnell's working life expectancy is six-eight years.

Reporter Paul Locher can be reached at (330) 682-2055, Ext. 218, or e-mail plocher@the-daily-record.com.

Article Feedback (No posts)
 Format for Print
Mail to Friend
Top of Page
Home

Author

Message

No Posts

Be the first to comment...