“Attending with Dr. Johnson was a colleague, Dr. Turel Ozkul, who is working with her this summer. Dr. Ozkul is a Veterinarian and University Professor from Turkey. He is in the process of starting a Pet Partners’ group and would like our assistance and guidance in establishing a program such as ours. We were invited to assist Dr. Ozkul in his effort and become a ‘sister’ affiliate. Funny how many offers I have had from members to travel to Turkey to assist him! It was an amazing evening with an amazing speaker!”

Maureen Kidd

SHREVEPORT

Maureen Kidd is a therapy dog handler for The Glen Retirement System in Shreveport. A therapy dog handler for 11 years, Maureen has been a Pet Partner since 2007. She wrote to tell us of the most touching experience she has ever had.

“Zipper, a six-year-old Labrador, and I regularly visit Christus Schumpert Sutton Children’s Medical Center as part of The Glen’s community outreach efforts. Usually a small group of children interact with therapy animals in a quiet visiting area, but this day was different. Amy, one of the Child Life Specialists, asked Zipper and I to make a special visit to a patient’s room.

“As we approached the ward, we were greeted by several doctors and nurses. We entered the room and saw Madeline, a blond seven-year-old, lying still in her bed. Her father requested that Zipper lay on her bed. We have practiced good manners in visiting people in the community for six years and climbing into a hospital bed is a ‘NO-NO.’ However, we have been providing animal-assisted therapy for two years at The Glen and approached this situation in that manner.

“I moved a chair to Madeline’s bedside and gave Zipper the commands of chair and bed. This field-trial bred retriever immediately morphed into ‘Lassie.’ He carefully climbed next to the child and placed his head upon her chest. By this time, there was an audience of hospital staff and family documenting this ground-breaking experience. Zipper remained still and I quietly praised him. As he snuggled close, I heard someone say, ‘Who is enjoying this more, the dog or the child?’ A tiny voice replied, ‘I am.’

“I hugged Madeline’s father and expressed my thanks to him. Once in the hallway, I started shaking. The Child Life Specialists’ faces were full of smiles and tears. When I asked how this wonderful experience happened, Amy said, ‘We did our job, and did it well.’ THIS is what it’s all about!”

“‘The Dog Show’ is a community access television program that educates about responsible dog ownership and provides information and resources about dogs. Jazz, a Portuguese Water Dog, and Donna Chicone co-host the show, which has just ended its fourth year. For the past three years, Jazz and Donna have also been visiting Children’s Hospital in St. Paul as Pet Partners. They visit children in rooms on the medical floors and work with Occupational Therapists in one-on-one sessions referred to as “paw visits.”

Children’s Hospital has circuit TV for the patients with its own in-house TV studio. The children can watch a program in their hospital rooms and interact by calling in questions. Jazz and Donna were invited to be on the show as a therapy team who visit the hospital and also to talk about their community access show.

Donna tells about the experience: “When we got there, the set had a chair for me and a chair for Jazz. Jazz sat in the chair for over 30 minutes. I was impressed because even though Jazz is very comfortable on TV sets—cameras and lights and noises are familiar to him—sitting upright in a chair that long for any dog is notable. The kids called in a lot of really great questions about Jazz! He did his tricks on camera and the kids loved it! At one point for a short while we were off set and sat with the spontaneous live audience that had gathered.

“In the audience was a little girl, Malia, with a cap covering her bald head (an all too familiar site in the hospital). Jazz and the girl became fast friends. At the end of the show the host asked Malia to join us on the set for the good-bye and pictures. They