



# Love and a Gentle Paw

by Kathy Jetten



Love abounds at the Margaret Bahen Hospice. Among all the caring staff and volunteers, is a four-legged furry canine friend: Ben, a.k.a. “Gentle Ben” the Therapy Dog and his Therapy Dog Volunteer, Lynn Dionne.

Ben is a beautiful 1 ½ year old Golden Retriever. Lynn knew early on that this dog would make a great therapy dog. Why? Because of his calm, friendly, and easy-going nature. These qualities are important when visiting residents and their families. Ben doesn’t react to loud noises, other dogs, or new people - and the joy that he brings is immeasurable. He brightens up the whole room within minutes and soon there are feelings of happiness and the sounds of joy and laughter. Worries or fears disappear.

Lynn has been volunteering with Ben since September 2018. They also volunteer their time visiting various schools in the area,

as well as organizations such as Inn From The Cold. Lynn was drawn to volunteering at Margaret Bahen as a result of her own experiences. Having lost family members at other hospices, she sees the need, and importance of, therapy dogs. Lynn felt she needed to give back!

Ben came from a local breeder of Golden Retrievers who specializes in training therapy dogs. In fact, Ben’s father was a therapy dog himself! The breeder, Nancy Hatch, is founder of the organization Partner Dogs Canada Inc. Lynn knew that she would find that one special dog there, and she did. “Even as a puppy, I knew he would be a good therapy dog.”

Lynn suggests that anyone interested in learning more about therapy dogs, or what it takes to become a great Therapy Dog Volunteer, should contact her through MBH. For anyone wanting to learn more about Partner Dogs Canada Inc., where you can also learn more about certified service dogs, certified multi-client service dogs and certified advanced Therapy dogs, please contact Nancy Hatch at (905) 715-1628 Email: [info@partnerdogscanada.com](mailto:info@partnerdogscanada.com).

*From Hospice Happenings, a volunteer e-newsletter published by Doane House Hospice and the Margaret Bahen Hospice for York Region.*