

One Whopper

Beloved therapy dog spreads joy and sunshine everywhere he goes

Written by Jennifer Heath

Whopper makes fast friends with Arianna and Isabella

Photo by Suzi Issa



of a Tale

Each week, Whopper, a Chesapeake Bay retriever, visits the Fort Bend County Women's Center. With every visit, children's program coordinator Vina Gray watches as clients' eyes sparkle upon seeing the therapy dog arrive at the center. Gray remembers one heartfelt moment in particular. "This little boy hardly spoke to anyone. I was surprised to hear him talking to Whopper," she recalls. "I didn't understand everything he was saying, but just to hear him speak and to see how happy he was, made my jaw drop."

The Perfect Puppy

Debbie Glasser always loved animals and helping others. A former high school math teacher, Glasser tinkered with the idea of working with a therapy dog years ago. She waited for the right circumstances, though, to make the perfect equation.

Then one day, a friend invited Glasser to help out at a dog show. The newest dog of the bunch was still too young to be shown, so Glasser's job was to keep watch of the pup. She instantly fell in love with the 10-week-old puppy, and their bond became stronger when she learned Whopper's grandmother had been a therapy dog. Here was the chance she had been waiting for.

"He was so oversized, and he was going to be sent back to the breeder in New Jersey since he couldn't be a show dog," Glasser shares about Whopper. "He always had the sweetest, sweetest personality. When I found out about his grandmother, I thought, 'Here's my chance to get a therapy dog, because I know he has the temperament! You can't teach that. You can teach him how to obey, but you can't teach temperament.'"

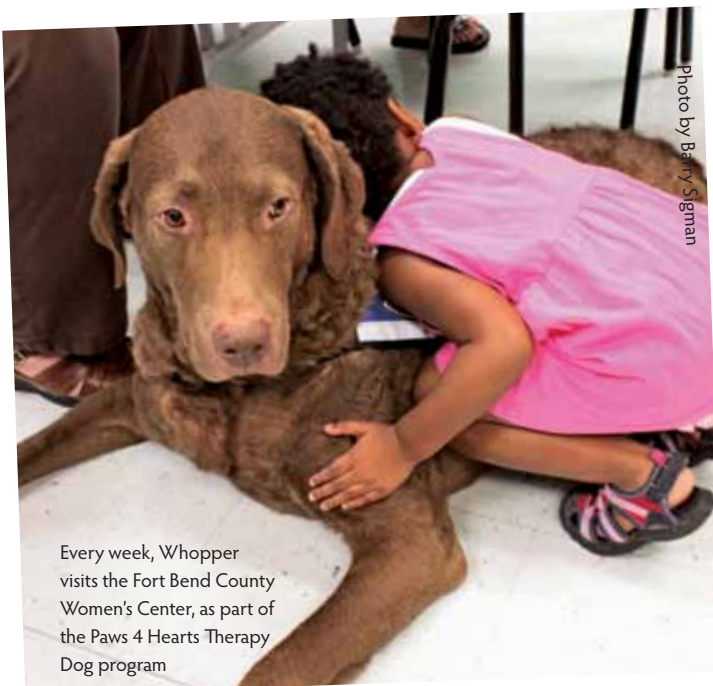


Photo by Barry Sigman

Every week, Whopper visits the Fort Bend County Women's Center, as part of the Paws 4 Hearts Therapy Dog program



Photo by Suzi Issa

Whopper's sweet and gentle personality makes him the perfect therapy dog

Training to Help Others

For the next year and a half, Glasser and Whopper became inseparable. They began therapy training, and Glasser would take Whopper wherever she could, always encouraging people to pet him and interact with him. She taught Whopper basic commands, as well as how to deal with different situations. As a therapy dog in training, Glasser knew Whopper would have to know when to stay calm, out of the way, and peaceful.

"He had to learn how to tolerate being in a hospital with people running back and forth and not freak out," says Glasser. "He



As part of his training, Whopper learned how to stay calm and peaceful while interacting with many different types of people



When Debbie Glasser first met Whopper at a dog show, he was only 10 weeks old and she knew she had found a friend for life

learned about people coming up to him in a wheelchair or walking up to a person in a wheelchair and not being afraid. It's hard to describe; you have to have a certain reaction to people like, 'Let me come up to you, and you can love on me.'

A Paw Above the Rest

To qualify as an official therapy dog, Whopper had to ace a few tests. First, he earned the Canine Good Citizenship certification. Whopper then obtained therapy dog status through Therapy Dogs, Inc. He also worked to become a reading education assistance dog, where he works with children to improve reading scores.

Some of the tests Whopper took involved him having to understand signs and be able to correctly follow their meanings. He also had to have a third-party observer come watch and score him. "Almost any dog can be a therapy dog; it doesn't have to be a purebred," Glasser says. "If you have the time, this is a really good way to help others." Glasser and Whopper began traveling around the state participating in different National Guard Yellow Ribbon events. The program helps soldiers of all stages of deployment, along with their families.

Spreading Cheer and Smiles

Recently, Whopper and Glasser have spent most of their free time volunteering at the Fort Bend County Women's Center. As part of the Paws 4 Hearts Therapy Dog program, Whopper visits with clients on a regular basis. "The children know when Whopper is coming and they get very excited," shares Gray. "You can hear them call his name down the halls. If a dog can have patience, Whopper has it."

Glasser usually reads a book with the children and Whopper, and then lets the kids pet the dog or color while they watch. The

*"From Pre-K to graduation,
this is MY school!"*

Cayla, Class of 2011

Celebrating
25
Years
of Excellence
in Education

Fort Bend Baptist Academy is now

FORT BEND

CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Grades Pre-K – 12

281-263-9142 • www.fortbendchristian.org

1250 Seventh Street, Sugar Land, TX 77478

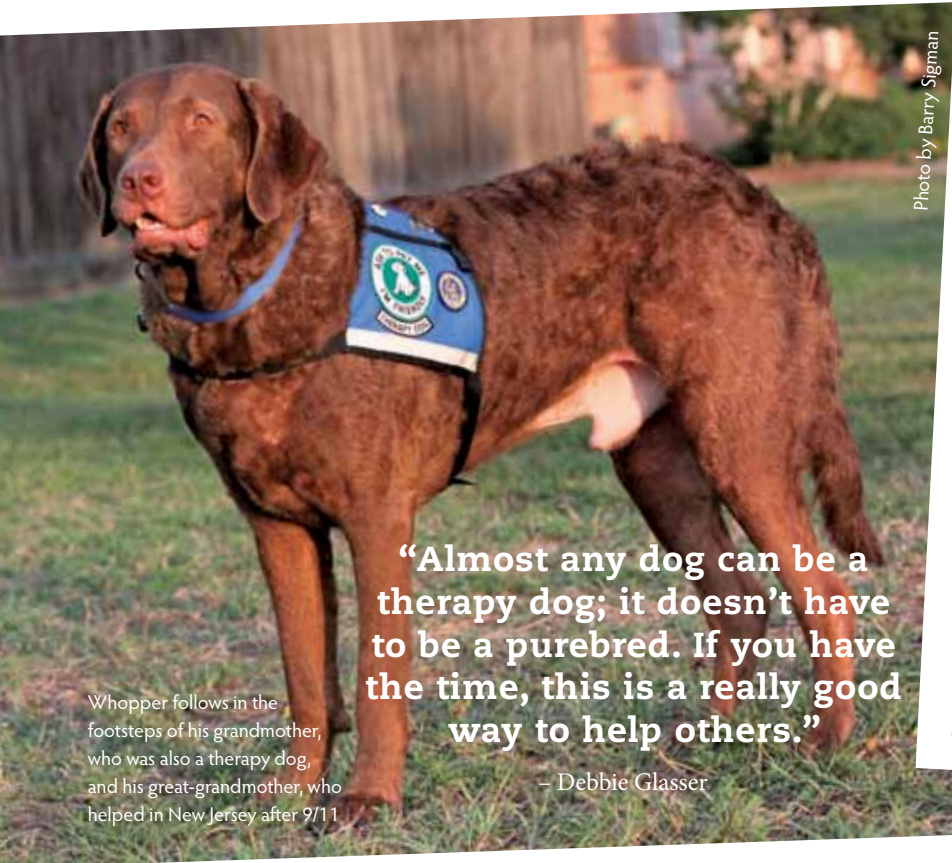


Photo by Barry Sigman

“Almost any dog can be a therapy dog; it doesn’t have to be a purebred. If you have the time, this is a really good way to help others.”

– Debbie Glasser

Whopper follows in the footsteps of his grandmother, who was also a therapy dog, and his great-grandmother, who helped in New Jersey after 9/11



During each visit to the women’s center, Glasser reads a book to the children before letting them pet Whopper

Photo by Barry Sigman



Medinet Family Care Clinic



©2010 Sugar Land Magazine

One Healthy Decision!

- Family Practice
- Internal Medicine
- Industrial Medicine
- On Site X-Ray/Lab
- Worker’s Compensations & Auto Injuries
- Immigration Physicals

Bharat Gandhi, MD, MRO • Nirmala Kethineni, MD
Board Certified in Internal Medicine

Karen Scott, PA-C
Board Certified Physician Assistant

9130 Hwy 6 South, just north of Bissonnet

6860 Hwy 6 North @ FM 529

281 564-3300 medinetclinic.com



David W. Powell, M.D.
BOARD CERTIFIED DERMATOLOGIST

Specializing in skin cancer detection and prevention, as well as medical, surgical and cosmetic treatments for the skin, hair and nails.

If your skin is not becoming to you, then you should be coming to us.

- Acne
- Rosacea
- Skin Cancer
- Eczema
- Rashes
- Botox
- Laser Hair Removal
- Chemical Peels
- Photo Rejuvenation
- Radiesse® and Juvéderm™

Visit our website for monthly specials

1327 Lake Pointe Parkway, Suite 400
Sugar Land, TX 77478

(281) 494.0050

www.PowellDermatology.com



© 2010 Sugar Land Magazine

facebook. Become a Fan of Sugar Land Magazine's Facebook Page

FORT BEND PEOPLE ARE TALKING
And they're talking on Sugar Land Magazine's Facebook Page

Join 2000+ other Fort Bend residents and stay in the know about what's going on in the Fort Bend area. No other Fort Bend specific page has so many fans and so many Fort Bend residents connecting.



SUGAR LAND
MAGAZINE™



“The children know when Whopper is coming and they get very excited. You can hear them call his name down the halls. If a dog can have patience, Whopper has it.”

–Vina Gray, children's program coordinator at the Fort Bend County Women's Center

children love playing, hugging, and just spending time around Whopper, says Glasser. They feel an instant connection and an immediate sense of love.

In 2010, the Fort Bend County Women's Center gave Whopper the President's Award of Programs, along with a certificate and a big box of dog bones. “He's done awesome,” Glasser says about Whopper's work at the center. “I always thought he'd do awesome. What surprised me was how much I have received out of this; the good feelings I've gotten. It's so rewarding.”

A Special Pal

Glasser says she and Whopper will continue to volunteer at the center as long as they can. In the future, she would love to branch out and help more people in different situations. In the meantime, they also spend time helping at the Special Pals animal shelter in Katy. As the shelter's spokesdog, Whopper and Glasser attend events and spread cheer.

For Glasser, watching the way Whopper interacts with others is truly unbelievable and wonderful. She shares, “I've often said that if Whopper could talk, he'd have a lot of stories to tell.” SLM

JENNIFER HEATH is a play-at-home mom with her two boys Landry and Ryan.



Whopper celebrates his birthday in style



Photo by Barry Sigman




Before obtaining therapy dog status, Whopper had to take many obedience and good citizenship tests

To schedule a visit from Whopper through the Paws 4 Hearts working therapy dog program, visit paws4hearts.net or email **Debbie Glasser** at dkglass@earthlink.net



Photo by Barry Sigman

The Scoop on Whopper

-  His real name is Silvercreek's Super Size Me.
-  His great-grandmother helped in New Jersey after the Sept. 11 attacks.
-  He has earned the Canine Good Citizenship certification, the Rally Novice Obedience title, Therapy Dog status, certification as a reading education assistance dog, Paws 4 Hearts working therapy dog status, and the American Kennel Club's therapy dog title.

Imagine... LIFE WITHOUT PAIN

Relief for Arthritis, Back Pain, Leg Pain and Shoulder Injuries

- Cold Laser Therapy
- Spinal Decompression
- Weight Management
- Orthopedic & Strength Conditioning

Eliminate Pain, Improve Mobility, and Avoid Surgery



Sterling L. Carter,
PT, MS, CSCS



WE GUARANTEE
A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION
IN YOUR PAIN.

Call 281-240-3140 now
to schedule your FREE
consultation and receive
1 FREE laser treatment!

© 2010 Sugar Land Magazine

1449 HWY 6 • SUITE 260 • SUGAR LAND • STERLINGTHERAPY.COM