

Tara's Story

A Short Version



Tara has an Assistance Dog named HUNTER. She has had HUNTER for just over three years. Tara wants to HELP other children to receive an Assistance Dog.

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Announcement



My daughter, Tara, is a special young woman in so many ways. She is as sweet and caring as any mother could wish their daughter to be. Tara is also a special citizen in that she is a mentally challenged young lady. But perhaps the most exceptional thing about Tara is her love of animals. From the time she was a toddler, she was drawn to any kind of animal; be it a dog, a cat, a horse, or even an exotic reptile.

For me, animals have never been a priority, although I have always liked them. In fact, I have always been very conservative in my interaction with animals. Tara, on the other hand, spent her childhood reading to and having conversations with pets of family friends. Eventually, Tara and her sister, Kathryn, became mothers of two gerbils and a cat. Tara took to and raised these pets just as a grown woman would her own children; it was simply amazing to me. Where this extreme connection with the animal kingdom came from, I do not know, however as Tara grew older there was no more denying her need for a companion of her own—one that could give back just as much love and teach Tara the responsibility of a young adult.

When I heard about paws4people, I realized this provided just the opportunity that Tara needed. I explained to her that the puppies grew up to be therapy dogs for challenged people like herself, as well as other people who needed such love and friendship. I meant by this to explain to Tara that she would be receiving a Therapy Dog of her very own. However, to my surprise, Tara did not look at it this way at all. On the other hand, she was awed by the fact that if she got a puppy she would have a dog with

which she could “provide” Therapy to others. I could hardly disagree with this innocent and selfless perspective; nor could the paws4people staff, who accepted our application for a therapy dog.

Even though Tara had graduated high school, (she was 20--as special education students can stay in school until they are 22) she looked like a little girl again when she giggled and played with the puppies. Although she loved the whole litter, Tara took a special fondness for the darkest of the Golden pups--she called him the “little brown boy.” Luckily enough, or perhaps not by chance at all, this was the puppy Tara received—HUNTER.

Tara and HUNTER took to each other instantly. He has also become a vital part of our entire family. HUNTER has proved therapeutic to all of us, both as a family and individually. He has certainly taught me just why people love animals so much, for when a person loves all of God's creatures, then we have true love. I have even found myself kissing and cuddling him since we were blessed with his addition to our family. Tara talks to HUNTER just like a friend and loves him as such. She was maturing with delayed reaction in her own life compared to the regular population of her age group, but with HUNTER, she took on a more responsible adult voice and sense of being. She talked and acted like a mother and an adult.

He has been to Puppy Kindergarten and to the Doggie Do Right School for day care and interaction. Hunter has had his basic training but we hope to get him into advanced training so that Tara can take him to schools, retirement homes, hospitals and long term care and rehab facilities.

In my eyes, HUNTER embodies the paws4people mission of enhancing lives through his canine love each day of his life. Just as the paws4people logo shows the dog extending its paw towards the person, HUNTER has extended himself to open our hearts and minds each day. The love between HUNTER and Tara is as Golden as his fur; and it is priceless to this mother.

If you are able to make a donation through any of the mechanisms on this website, it would be very much appreciated. There are so many people like Tara who can gain so much from paws4people's services; and your donation will help extend their efforts to as many people as possible.

Thank you. Trish Salgado

For more information on Tara, you may go to: <http://www.tara.story.paws4people.org>

To help Tara, help others to get their Assistance Dogs, please go to: <http://www.tara.paws4people.org>