

## Pawing to Comfort Those Who Mourn

By Diane Rima, KPETS volunteer

As a KPETS volunteer, it is a great joy to be able to share the love and comfort pets can give. Chester and I enjoy the time that we spend with the many people we visit. Chester is a Golden Retriever who takes his job seriously; he's a very attentive listener.

This morning we had so much fun speaking to a group of elementary school students about KPETS. The children, first and second graders, gathered in the gymnasium, and were seated in big circles in their classroom groups. They were cute as can be (oh my), and they listened attentively, as Chester and I shared about Pet Therapy.

The extra fun part was the meet-and-greet time, where Chester and I went to each circle of kiddos ~ the students were seated on their bottoms, eagerly waiting for Chester to pass by, swooshing his fluffy tail and tickling their noses ~ sometimes he would steal a kiss! Countless fingers and hands reached out to pet and touch the puppy dog. There were giggles and wags all around.

In one circle, the last one we visited, a little girl with long dark curls reached out toward Chester. He "pawed," . . . and kissed her sweet face. I continued to move on around the circle; however, Chester stayed in front of his new friend. Her teacher said, "It doesn't look like Chester wants to move."



This was more than obvious. So I waited with Chester for a bit while he stood still as can be in front of this sweet little girl, content and happy to be with her. Her teacher, eyes filled with tears, quietly said to me, so no one else could hear, "Her dog died yesterday. It's like Chester knows."

Sigh....my eyes leaked and my heart hurt.... I know he knows!

We made our way around the classroom circle one more time, and when Chester reached his little girl again, he pawed. Gently he gave kisses and snuggles. I asked her if she would like to give him a hug. She nodded "yes". Then wrapped both arms around his tummy and laid her head on his back. He stood still and quiet; pawing to comfort, those who mourn.



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