

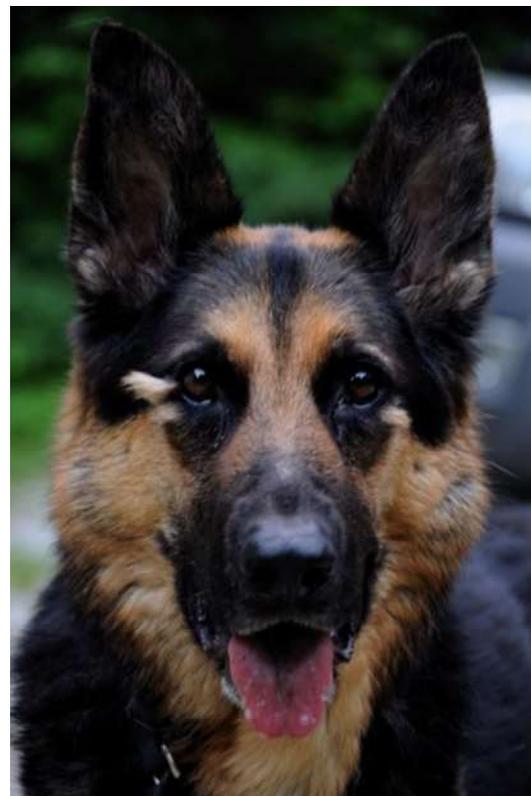


Remembering Isa

It all started with a slimy tennis ball and Jordan, the dog who happened to be attached to it.

Well over a decade ago (back then, I was dog-less and not much of a dog person), I attended a lecture by Steve Reiman, president and founder of TDV; one of his German Shepherds picked me out of the large crowd and gently placed a well-mouthed tennis ball in my lap. The playful, peaceful, trusting look in Jordan's deep eyes sparked in me a passion for both the German Shepherd dog and therapy dog work. Jordan was to become my first therapy dog partner; years later, Steve gave me a most precious gift, and Jordan came to live with me. About the same time, Khese, an adopted 5-year-old shepherd who also became my TDV partner, also moved in. Together, they were my pride, my daily joy, and my steadfast working companions. Over the years, Jordan and Khese passed away in my arms. Their graceful temperaments and beautiful souls were close to my thoughts as we sought a new Shepherd and my next therapy dog partner— that next friend and partner would be Isa.

So, we came home with a squirming, vocal, gregarious, chubby little 12-week old puppy who had been born with a “defect”—extra-long hair around her eyes that looked like misplaced angel wings. It didn't take long for Isa to step into the therapy work for which she was chosen. When she was 16 weeks old, we honored the last request of a young boy in a local hospital. Khese and I had visited him many times during the long year of his hospital stay and often talked about the new puppy; I promised that he would meet Isa when she was certified and it became something we could both look forward to. However, it became clear that his body wouldn't hold out that long. So, we got special permission from the hospital and brought 16-week-old Isa to his bedside. Even though he was in and out of consciousness, he patted the bedside in invitation, and Isa snuggled into him. He died a few hours later. That first visit began what would be nearly a decade of therapy dog service for Isa. A little over a year later, Isa was officially certified; for nine years, she served proudly as a TDV therapy dog, visiting elders at Starr Farm, and acting as my wingman at many therapy dog lectures and events.



When Isa wasn't my calm, bomb-proof, gentle therapy dog partner, she loved Frisbee—or anything you could throw—and eating, especially ice cream and steak. Isa did everything BIG. She talked and barked big. She flew through the air and jumped high. Everywhere she went was in a dead run. She was bold, independent, funny, and fun. Even though she suffered from life-long pancreatic and muscular disorders (kept in check by her dedicated vets, who joked about needing a whole shelf for her medical file), nothing stopped her from working and playing hard. Even this past year, when her legs could no longer support her, she took to her wheelchair within a matter of minutes and was off romping, running — and running OVER us—in her new wheels.



GOLD STAR

Dog Training

Unexpectedly, we lost Isa after a sudden, acute illness one morning in early April. Though we feel adrift without her, we know she's in a place where her body is whole and healthy, she's visiting with friends, eating all the steak and ice cream she can, and making crazy dives for those Frisbees.

