

DOG

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at the school, with a wide-range of duties.

Jasmine spends the entire school day at Greely, a school with more than 700 students. Students who want to de-stress come see Jasmine at lunch or during study. They pet her, play with her, or just sit next to her and study or read. Though well-trained as a therapy dog, Jasmine still has the traits that make people love pet dogs. She wags her tail, she gets excited to see you, she gives you kisses and snuggles for no reason at all.

"She doesn't judge you," Copp said.

FOUR-LEGGED VOLUNTEER

Jasmine belongs to Denise Allen, a health sciences teacher at the school who pays all the costs associated with Jasmine. So Jasmine's work at the school is really done on a volunteer basis.

Ursula Kempe, CEO of Therapy Dogs International, said that she doesn't have hard data on how many therapy dogs work full-time in schools like Jasmine does. But she said that therapy dog trainers volunteer their dogs in schools all around the country. More and more educators and parents are seeing the value therapy dogs can have in a school setting, she said.

"Dogs can have a calming effect on children, which makes them better able to concentrate," said Kempe, whose office is in New Jersey but who has a house in Corea, southeast of Ellsworth.

Jasmine has a "crate" or enclosure in Allen's class, where she can retreat if she feels overwhelmed. She's got food and water there, too. And there's a small string of bells on the door, which Jasmine jingles with her nose if she needs to go out.

When she's working, she wears her blue therapy dog vest, so everyone knows she's working. The vest lets Jasmine know she's working, too.

For much of the day, Jasmine is with special needs students. Teachers say she's a tremendous motivator - the kids want to spend time with her, so they focus on what they need to accomplish in order to get the reward of being with Jasmine. They walk her, or pet her, or just sit with her. Jasmine knows sign language, so she can work with deaf students at the school.

One of Jasmine's main jobs is to work with Brittney Ireland, 19, a student with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, a severe and incurable form of epilepsy. The neurological disorder can affect a wide range of mental



Jasmine waits for her walk as Katie Lapoint, an educational tech at Greely High School, works with Brittney Ireland. Brittney communicates using a special electronic keypad. There is a key for Jasmine on the computer.



Former student Eli Witt gives Jasmine a heartfelt hug.

and physical functions. Brittney can't speak and can't walk without help, a walker or wheelchair. She has a special education staff member with her all day, and Jasmine beside her much of the day as well.

When she sees Jasmine, her eyes light up and her smile spreads wide.

She and Jasmine walk the halls. When Brittney is in a life skills class, learning to crack eggs or cook something, Jasmine is sitting next to her. Knowing that Jasmine will be with her, and that she'll be able to spend time with Jasmine,

has been a great motivator for Brittney, say her teachers and her mother. Brittney and Jasmine have been working together now for about five years.

"Jasmine has motivated (Brittney) to communicate, to ask for things," said her mother, Shari Cochran. "She knows if she does different things, she'll be able to see Jasmine, to ask for Jasmine. And she follows through with the same communication at home. Before (Jasmine) she was very complacent, she either had something or she didn't."

Brittney asks for Jasmine ei-



Ben Luksha, 16, a mainstreamed deaf student at Greely High, enjoys working with Jasmine during lunchtime. Jasmine knows some sign language.

ther by patting her thigh or with a special computer she has, where keypads activate various verbal phrases. There is a key for Jasmine on the computer. Cochran thinks having Jas-

mine at Greely has helped her daughter not only by motivating her, but by providing her with a friend and with a connection to the other students.

"People like Brittney don't

have the same with peers as do, so it's like peer," said Co

SUCCESS

On a recent Brittney walk and down the other special asked to walk all this was ha Jasmine's lun ions were wa in Allen's clas

Allen, Jasmi 13-year teach ated from Gre teaches health also is employ gency medica said she first l with the powe when she wou patients to an homes and as ties. So she di on therapy do abilities, and dog could fit n health science have benefits students as w

She got Jasn old puppy fro her as a thera her licensed b International. to bring Jasn from school of

"We agreed t since having a unusual and s afraid of dogs, Fordham, the cipal. "Over th gram has grov see (Jasmine's population as the special ne also on kids ju day."

Allen said it's Jasmine has f doing. If she's by her duties, then she can't Allen wrote on Jasmine, "Job loved....uncon

The fun part loved, include lots of walks a things kids dro them in their l

Since Jasmir people every d school, Allen h and brush her She said she d ing care of Jas

Especially w joy Jasmine br otherwise mig joy in their sch "I just love b her this way w Allen said.

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