

MinPins as Service Dogs?

Submitted by Joan Krumm (as published in the Pinscher Patter, Mar 2001)

For several years I had a registered therapy dog that went with me to hospitals and nursing homes to cheer patients. I was unaware however of service dogs which are those used long term by handicapped or disabled people to lighten the burden of their days and how a Min Pin could be used as one. This is the story of Valdon's Make Mine Chocolate, aka "Choco" and his devoted owner, Deborah Curtis, whose adventures are sure to move readers to see another use of our precious Min Pins.

MY SERVICE DOG by Deborah Curtis

I am very proud to tell you about my best friend and service dog, Choco. I am 45 years old and with a broken back, four ruptured discs, diabetes, fibromyalgia and severe neuropathy, I spend most of the time wheel chair bound on heavy pain medication. Depression and pain are always there, But still I feel blessed for what I do have and the fact that I'm not completely paralyzed, Things can always be worse, And they were.. , Before Choco came into my life,

Before my health got bad, I had trained and shown dogs in my teens under the training of a darling pro handler, Ray St. John, who has since passed away from cancer. Ray taught me so much and my love for animals grew and blossomed. As it has been many years since I'd trained and shown, I felt like a novice but I really wanted a dog. . . A service dog. I felt that if I could get one I could train some behaviors myself. Because I live in an apartment and cannot always get up and dress to go out on my "bad days," I hoped I could train a small dog to use a litter box so my disability would not jeopardize my having a dog.

After much research I found long waiting lists and very high prices for the two breeds I had decided upon, Min Pins and Papillons. One day I called Joan Krumm and explained that I was looking for an adult black and rust female Min Pin and she replied she only had a lovely chocolate neutered male available who had suffered an injury during his show career. Would I like to meet him!?! Several hours later I met Choco for the first time. It was a match made in heaven.

Choco is 10 pounds of loving energy who seems to know how much I needed him. He makes me smile and gives me a reason to keep trying and not give up one day at a time. You can't be around him for long and stay in a bad mood. Although I purchased a bed for him to sleep in, he's never in it because he sleeps

with me, He is smart and without any formal training he instinctively wakes me and lets me know when my blood sugar is off. He will paw or lick my face or make little noises being very persistent in waking me and has thus prevented diabetic comas. He is a great help getting my mind off the pain and he sits with me for hours when I'm too hurt to move, Choco loves to ride on my lap in the electric wheel chair and goes out to eat with us, sitting quietly under a booth, If I do not pay enough attention to him, he rubs against my legs like a cat.

For those who think a service dog needs to be bigger, let me reply, Yes, there are some things Choco cannot do because of his size, but he's just right for me. Some days I can't get up and dress to walk a dog. Choco is trained to use a dog litter pan so he's never uncomfortable, He picked that up after only showing him what I needed him to do.

Choco and I have lots of things to learn and I'm hoping to do some obedience work with him to get his CD and CGC. In the mean time, if you see a woman in a wheel chair with a Min Pin on her lap, smiling, say hello. We don't mind at all. My 10 pound guardian angel is all I need to bring a smile through my days of pain. Choco's energy and enthusiasm for life is contagious. Don't laugh at this stick of dynamite. He and others of his breed make a wonderful addition to any family.