

'Jessy' brings comfort, love to those in crisis

By Joe Parmon
News Editor

It's often been said that dogs are man's best friend.

In the case of what are known as "comfort dogs," you might also say they're man's best therapist, confidant, and shoulder to cry on.

Jessy — a 6-year-old Golden Retriever with the Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry — plays all of those roles when she visits those in crisis or going through a difficult time in their lives.

Jessy, who is based at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Concordia, visited the Lafayette County Courthouse last Thursday, where she will be making more visits to provide comfort to children going through the court system. Plans are also in the works for Jessy to visit children receiving services from the House of Hope. While at the courthouse, Jessy had an effusive greeting for Deputy Barker, Clara from the House of Hope, and others.

Since becoming a comfort dog, Jessy has visited victims of tornadoes and flooding, nursing home residents, children going through difficult times, veterans, and hospital patients.

"Any place where people are hurting, we do what we can to get her there," remarked Jessy's handler, Beth Kruse.



Photo by Joe Parmon
Comfort dog Jessy is pictured with her handler, Beth Kruse, on a visit to Lexington.

Kruse said Jessy has a "sixth sense" when it comes to searching out those who need comfort and compassion during a stressful or difficult time.

"She will go right up to someone who needs attention. At a nursing home she will push open the door of someone who needs her," said Beth. "She absorbs all the badness and raw emotion, and gives out comfort, love and mercy. She doesn't judge anyone, she just listens and loves unconditionally those are going through any type of situation."

Beth's husband, Judge Russell Kruse, said that in Hamilton County, Ohio, court officials have found that a comfort dog purchased by the county plays an even bigger role, by encouraging testimony in court cases involving youth.

"(The comfort dog) helps the kids open up and talk more, instead of shutting down," said Judge Kruse.

Robin McGinnity Connelly serves as Executive Director of the Court Appointed Special Advocates program with the 15th Judicial Circuit Court, whose goal is advocate for abused

or neglected children in Saline and Lafayette counties through highly trained volunteers.

Connelly remarked, "CASA is tickled pink to have Beth and Jessy present at supervised visitations at House of Hope. When children are removed from their parents they are traumatized no matter the best foster placement possible...The soothing comfort Jessy can bring to visitation will no doubt ease anxiety and bring joy to our foster children. CASA is so grateful for this wonderful ministry."

Beth said Jessy along with other comfort dogs with LCC undergo 2,000 hours of training over 18 months, which is more training than many service dogs receive. They are trained to handle all types of situations.

When she's not helping others, Jessy lives with a retired couple and also with a family with four children in the country. You can find out more about Jessy at her Facebook page Jessy Comfort Dog.

