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on the cover

REUBEN
PHOTOGRAPHY:
HEATHER SMITH-PHOTOGRAPHY

Me & Mine Staff

Jennifer Jaeger Traynham
PUBLISHER

Jessica Jaeger
EDITOR

Heather Smith Photography
Brooke Reading
PHOTOGRAPHERS

www.meandminemagazine.com
issuu.com/meandminemagazine

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Comfort Dog

BY ANNA (SHEFRIN) ROGERS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HEATHER SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

Supporting a friend in need is an honorable cause. Last month, I found myself sitting in the Yuba County courthouse trying to do just that. While there, a special soul named Reuben walked up to me and dropped his head in my lap. He was there supporting a friend too. We were destined to meet; were kindred spirits of sorts.

One would think I would find offense to a random stranger getting in my personal space, but his eyes won me over in a way only a dog can.

Reuben is referred to as a Comfort Dog and he was in the courthouse that day easing a child's mind and spirit during a custody dispute. I quickly asked for an interview and thankfully he obliged.

Reuben is a part of the Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry. He visits schools, nursing homes, group homes, senior centers, courthouses, and even sites of emergencies or disasters. Simply stated, Reuben goes wherever he is invited. He is accompanied by a trained handler and provides a calming influence, naturally

encouraging people to open their hearts and receive help in times of need.

Launched in August 2008, the Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry is a national human-care ministry embracing the unique, calming nature and skills of purebred Golden Retrievers. The Comfort Dogs are a bridge for compassionate ministry, opening doors for conversations about faith.

They are working animals, trained to interact with people of all ages and circumstances who are suffering and in need. They serve every day in the community in which they are placed and are dispatched in times of disaster and crisis to bring comfort to all those affected, including first responders and the volunteers who serve them. LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs were in New York and New Jersey visiting victims of Super Storm Sandy, and in Connecticut after the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Lutheran Church Charities currently has over 130 Dogs serving in more than 20 states.

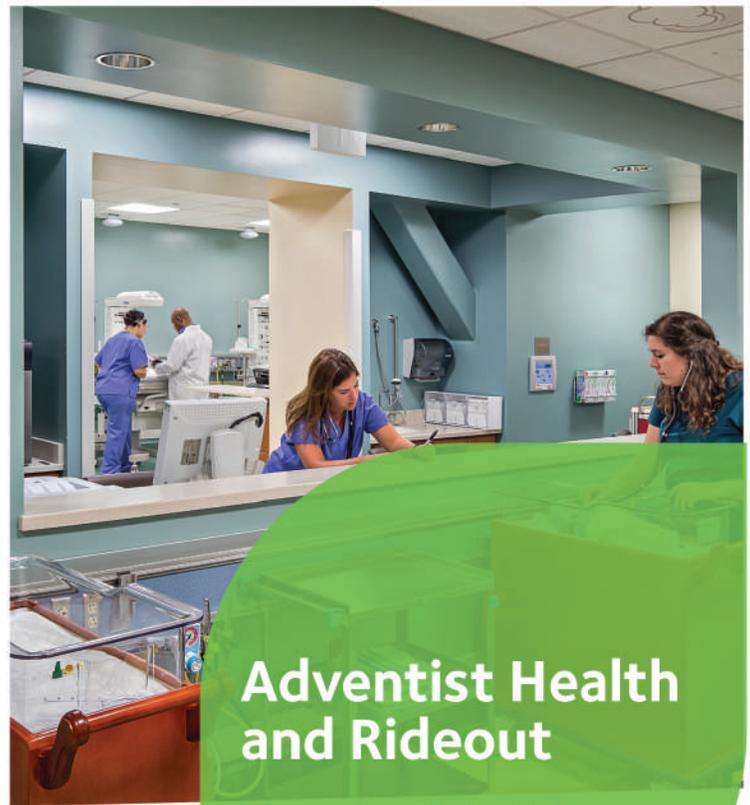
As for First Lutheran Church in Yuba City, the goal is to use Reuben as a conduit to reach out to those in the community. He is welcome in more places than most humans and is able to provide comfort, love, and compassion to those who need it most. While their goal is to share the word of God, they are mindful of different environments and beliefs and respect those who have invited him into their presence.

“We honestly let Reuben do most of the talking for us - as we can often falter in our words as humans. He is the true joy and light of this ministry and we would love to see it blossom even more in the Yuba-Sutter community.”

One of their long-term goals is to have more handlers available so that Reuben may help more people and attend all of the events to which he is called. If YOU are interested in becoming a comfort dog handler through the LCC, please contact Erica or Jason at 530.673.8894.

Those eyes though! 

Anna (Shefrin) Rogers is a Yuba City native who comes to us with a background in teaching, coaching, training development, and curriculum design. A wife and mother of two, she has a passion for people and brings a diverse, fresh perspective to the magazine. To learn more about Reuben, please contact James Casner at (530) 713-9755 or Nathan Linehan at First Lutheran Church, Yuba City (530) 673-8894.



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