



Seniors get a little puppy love

By Cate Lecuyer
staff writer

February 02, 2010 12:08 am

BEVERLY — Barbara Moser remembers walking her black Labrador retriever, Shadow, in North Beverly.

"I can't have him anymore," Moser, 92, said. But for about an hour last Thursday, she was able to play with the next best thing: a puppy named Skipper.

"He's marked so beautiful," she said about the 8-month-old Cavalier King Charles spaniel as he made the rounds visiting about a dozen residents at the Essex Park Rehabilitation Center.

For Christmas, they made dog biscuits out of oatmeal, shredded carrots, coconut and applesauce and donated them to the Northeast Animal Shelter. In return, volunteer services coordinator Shaina Doberman mentioned their program where they take dogs to visit seniors.

"This particular dog, he knows who wants to see him the most," Doberman said.

Skipper is not a shelter dog, but rather the pet of volunteer Eileen Leccese, who brought him around on a leash. To be in a strange environment with wheelchairs and canes would be too stressful for a dog in the shelter.

"They can be very unpredictable," Doberman said. Skipper, on the other hand, eagerly greeted the residents, climbing into their laps and eating up the treats they made. From now on, he'll be back to visit about once a month.

"It gives them something to look forward to," activities assistant Meridith Grover said. Dogs are great therapy emotionally, she said, and they help get people moving.

"Some people can't do much physically," Grover said. "But they can hold a dog."

Evelyn Conant, 87, remembers always having a dog in her home. She adopted a mutt, Roger, from the Northeast Animal Shelter, and he lived to be 17.

"If I was in my own house I'd have another one," she said, calling Skipper over. She smiled as he licked her hand.

"We ought to have a mascot here," she said.

Staff writer Cate Lecuyer can be reached at clecuyer@salemnews.com.

Copyright © 1999-2010 cnhi, inc.

Photos



Myrtle Smith gets kisses from Skippy. Staff Photographer



Terry Gagnon gets a kiss from Skippy during his visit to Essex Park Rehabilitation Center. Next to Gagnon is Bernice Scanlon. Staff Photographer