

Some of you may already know I have a new project which I have been working on since January. 2009. In December I went to our local SPCA to find another dog. Never took me long to find Pippa. She was only a pup, but she already had a litter of pups with her and they were at least 7 weeks old at the time. Pippa was herself just a bag of bones and really did not even have a name.

After bringing Pippa home, I had to teach her everything a young pup ought to know and how to interact with both people and other animals. We have been at regular puppy training classes since February and now she is almost ready to start work.

When I decided to get a dog, I knew I would somehow use it to help other people; just never knew how, at the time. I started looking on the internet and was thrilled to discover that there are organizations that do this kind of work. That's how it all got started with Pets as Therapy (PAT).

In just a few months Pippa has vastly improved and been given back her life and puppyhood. In July we put her through her paces to become a "Canine Good Citizen". Thereafter she will be assessed for her work as a registered Pets as Therapy visiting dog.

I recently became area coordinator of "Pets as Therapy" here in East London. Until I start taking my dog to visit places, I am arranging visits by pet owners and their carefully screened pets to visit various facilities such as special needs schools, hospitals, old age facilities, frail care centres, Alzheimer's units, autism centres, etc.

And the good news is that the Berea Gardens Retirement Foundation was the first to sign up! Claire Neidercut, who is the manager of the residents service centre, and her perfect pooch, "Teddy", are delighting the residents by bringing a sense of homeliness to all who enjoy the company of dogs!

I have already met with many of these centres and the outlook is very positive. Pat East London looks forward to developing many opportunities to enrich lives through animal companionship wherever possible!

GILL DU PREEZ