

A Tribute to the German Shepherd Dog

Editor's note: This is the third article in our year-long series featuring the versatility of the German Shepherd dog. Special thanks are extended to the author, Anita Rabidou-Milligan, who conceived and executed these articles. Next month: Rin Tin Tin. [Click here for January.](#) [Click here for February.](#)

by Anita Rabidou-Milligan

Although the German Shepherd Dog was bred to be a sheepdog, Max von Stephanitz correctly predicted that the ways of agricultural living and herding would be replaced by industrialization. To protect the breed he loved, he embarked on a mission to promote the versatility of the German Shepherd Dog. Today, no other breed can compare. From herding to police work, from guide work to family companion, the German Shepherd Dog is the TOTAL dog.

MARCH

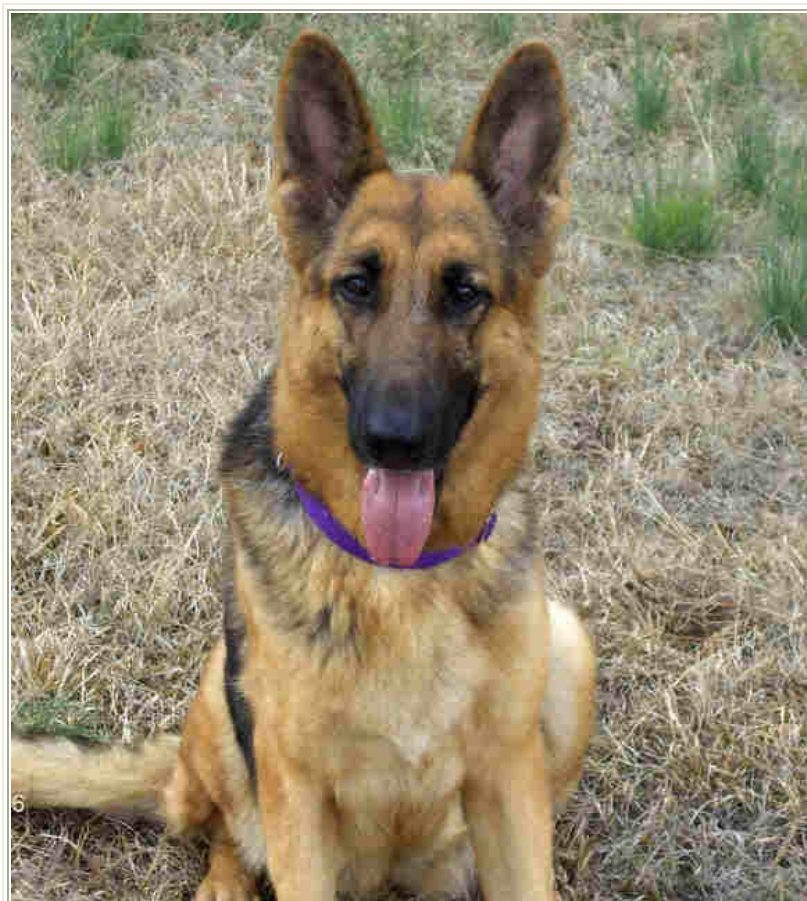


Photo courtesy Anita Rabidou-Milligan

Certified Therapy Dog

Owner: Anita and Michael Milligan

Breeder: Elois Pickett

Sire: 2000 GV FV Sel CH Hickory Hill's Bull Durham TC HIC ROM OFA

Dam: GEM-N-I's Macon

DOB: 02/08/01

Our third story illustrates how the German Shepherd gives back in yet another way. March is dedicated to Therapy Dogs.

Flo is a Therapy dog certified under [Delta Society](#) and volunteers for [PAWS Columbus](#). In today's society, with breed specific legislation cropping up nationwide, the German Shepherd acting as a Therapy Dog can only help its image.

Initially, when people meet Flo, they show concern because of her size. Often, just the sight of a Shepherd can make them think of police dogs. Flo has such a gentle disposition when she puts her working vest on that she quickly shows people how caring a Shepherd can be. That opens a line of communication for all involved. It is an opportunity to talk about the breed and its inherent quality of protecting and nurturing the innocent.

Flo visits a variety of institutions located in Columbus, Georgia. She visits with Alzheimer patients who suddenly remember childhood memories of their dogs, where moments before they could not remember their name.

She visits several Assisted Living Homes, such as Cobis Personal Care Home, River Place Assisted Living, and Veranda. She also has visited Muskogee Manor Nursing Home. Flo is a big hit with the children when she visits their ward at the Medical Center. She even visits a Homeless Shelter.

The homeless shelter, in particular, is a test of her ability to judge friend from foe. The residents often have mental and psychiatric issues. Some may grab her, not out of malice but out of excitement. Flo seems to know the difference in each place she visits and adjusts her demeanor accordingly. She often senses which people need her most, and gravitates toward them. Sometimes she will sit quietly by a wheelchair; sometimes it will be a head in the lap of a resident; sometimes she just produces a patient gaze as someone begins to tell her of all their problems.

In order to be certified as a Therapy Dog under Delta Society, a dog must pass both a skills test and an aptitude test, as well as a medical exam. The skills test is based on the AKC Canine Good Citizen Test. The aptitude portion is designed to simulate various situations encountered in a visiting situation, such as loud noises, unusual sights and movements. The dogs must be re-tested every two years. Not every dog is cut out to be a Therapy Dog because of the unusual situations they can encounter.



We continue the year of celebrating our wonderful, versatile breed by acknowledging Flo and all the other Therapy Dogs actively working to promote our breed's versatility.