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Local Therapy Dog Makes a Difference for Newtown Residents

Cooper the certified therapy dog from Haddam visits Newtown Sunday.

Posted by [Karena Garrity](#) , January 28, 2013 at 03:55 AM

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The residents of Newtown Connecticut have been dealt quite a blow with the December school shooting that killed 26 at Sandy Hook Elementary School. In an effort to ease some of that pain and suffering, local Haddam resident, Cooper, a five year-old, trained therapy dog will be making an appearance in Newtown Sunday, through Newtown Youth Services.

Cooper has been putting a smile on the faces of those he visits for the past three years and according to his owner, Lauren Crowley, Cooper is "great" at what he does.

Cooper and Lauren (as well as Lauren's husband Tim) got certified to help others through a National Organization called Pet Partners, with local instructor Sally Sizer, who teaches classes in Old Saybrook through Middletown Adult Education classes.

The six week course teaches basic obedience skills, as well as advanced commands such as touch and back up. To be certified, both Lauren and Cooper had to take a stringent test; they both passed with flying colors and now they spread cheer throughout the community making regular visits to Riverview Children's Psychiatric Hospital in Middletown and The Saybrook at Haddam (an assisted living facility).

"We visit the dementia unit and the residents absolutely love Cooper," said Lauren.

"He is very intuitive and really responds to people's moods and needs. If someone just wants to hang out he will be very calm and to others who really want to pet and rub him he is very up and happy."

She adds, "With the kids at Riverview, we do an agility obstacle course and the kids have a great time working with Cooper. It's so nice to see the kids up running around with Cooper, getting to be kids for a little while. It really is a win, win situation for everyone. Cooper gets a lot of attention and he gives a lot of attention and happiness to others."

Lauren is no stranger to helping others as well. A social worker by trade, she knew when she was looking to get a dog that she wanted one that she could train to be used for therapy. Specially chosen by the breeder for his temperament, Cooper was the perfect fit for Lauren, who had never had a dog before.

"This has really been a wonderful experience. It is great to bring joy to others with Cooper and he loves what he does," says Lauren who immediately wanted to know what she and Cooper could do to help in Newtown after the tragedy.

"I have seen firsthand, with Cooper, the power that dogs have working with people and the positive impact Cooper has had on everyone he comes in contact with. We want to do the same for the people of Newtown. I hope we can bring them a little joy and a little break from all the hard things they are going through. I know it's not going to be easy, but this is something I think we should be part of and help in any way we can."

Lauren encourages everyone who has an interest in training their pets to be therapy animals to look into a local organization in their area.

"Share your dogs with others, there is a great value in therapy pets and it is a wonderful experience to watch a smile come across someone's face because of you and your pet."

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