

Patron: Oliver

“Patron” is a column in *Athenaeum* that focuses on someone connected to FCPL. This month I interviewed Oliver the Therapy Dog. He is an Australian Labradoodle, from Sydney, who even speaks with an Australian accent! He finished his degree in therapy work in 2012 from the Delta Society in Bloomington, IN. He’s since finished a Master’s in Divinity: his thesis “What is a Friend?” He will be visiting FCPL this summer as part of our reading program. Oliver is pictured to the right.

Hello, Oliver. Pleasure to meet you. How long have you been attending the FCPL?

Good question. Time questions are always difficult for me to answer. I remember it was sometime, or maybe it was someone. There was a guy who was having a tough day, I remember that. I was called in to do some therapy work. I do also remember a little girl who was having trouble reading. I was able to help her get over her nerves and even read aloud to some of our other friends.

Do you have any favorite movies or books that you would like to recommend to our readers?

I was hoping I would get this question. I read your newsletter every month. It is so funny. I love reading and watching movies. First, I am a big fan of the *Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew Series*. I also like early *Sherlock Holmes*. There are so many movies, but I will just tell you my three faves. *Hachi: A Dog’s Tale* has paws down been the greatest influence on career. *My Dog Skip* I have a lot of respect for. I contemplated this movie when I working on my Master’s of Divinity. I am also nearly obsessed with Robert Downey Jr. in *Sherlock Holmes* movies.

What is it that drew you to work in the field of therapy, as opposed to search and rescue, or police detective work?

You always ask such poignant questions. I do like *Sherlock Holmes*, but I just never felt a predestination there. I have always been a feeler and I just know when someone needs me to comfort them. You can only have so much magic. I think we all have our magical powers and its best to stay within the confines of who you are. In the end, I am a friend.



Project Friend



I have seen so much written on therapy dog work recently. There seems to be so many different projects.

I guess you’re right. I don’t pay much attention to anything other than where I am, but I do have other friends who are spearheading projects across the country. Samantha the Newfoundland spent this past year working in hospitals. I also have many friends who work closely with elementary schools all the way up to visiting colleges during finals week to help everyone de-stress. I chose library work specifically because it seemed the most eclectic. Each person is unique and has a story. I guess I found the analogy intriguing.

What exactly is Project Friend?

Project Friend is simply a therapy dog project that I have called “friend.” Last year, during the summer reading program, I worked closely with two other friends: Samantha the Newfoundland, and Nakita the Siberian Husky. There isn’t really a strict schedule during our visits. Its more about presence really. Listening to the needs of the patrons. We often visit each department, starting at the Children’s Dept. for a story or two. I personally like IT, specifically Zak the IT guy. Though there is a guy in literacy who is a bit odd.

So what is your schedule for the summer reading program?

I will be at the Rochester Branch on Fridays: June 16th, June 30th, and July 7th at 12:30 pm. I will be at the Fulton Branch on Wednesday, June 12th, July 10th, and Tuesday, August 8th at 10:00 am. I will be at the Aubbee Branch Wednesday: June 14th and July 12th at noon. I am looking forward to making some new friends.