

Out & About with Lori Sunflower

How have your pets enriched your life?



Liz Paup

I've had pets my whole life. I've never not had a dog. They've always just been part of my soul, and I think I'm part animal sometimes, dog specifically! My dog, Piper, even though she's crazy when she barks, she's my therapy dog. I didn't train her to do any of that. I have nightmares all the time, and as soon as I have a nightmare, she's right up on my chest and pushes her face against mine and makes sure mom's OK and calmed down. She taught herself to do that, which I think is incredible. They're just so amazing and full of so much love, like my little soul mates. And Buddha, even though he's crazy, too, he's like my big baby. They become part of your soul and make everything better. They've gone through the hard times and the fun times, but they're always there no matter what. That's what I love about my dogs!



Jananne Settle

I grew up with pets. My dad would bring home all sorts of them. At one point, we had 3 male boxers, a rabbit, a prairie dog, and a raccoon we rescued, all at the same time. The house was always full of pets! My first pet as an adult was Tigger, an orange tabby. He was a source of support and comfort through a difficult time. Tigger was with me for 21 years. He will always have a special place in my heart.

Our current pet, Lacey Lou, a 9-year-old female boxer, came to us

at a special time. My dad had terminal lung cancer. We wanted the last bit of his life to be as comfortable and enriching as possible. Lacey came in as if she'd been there all along. She bonded with my dad right away and they spent a couple weeks together before he passed. Lacey Lou helped the whole family cope because the dog still needed to be fed and taken for walks. Plus she could tell when we were upset, was an ever present comfort to us and still is!

My pets have enriched my life with unconditional love and presence of mind. Lacey is not thinking about yesterday or tomorrow. There's a cartoon showing someone walking a dog. In the dog's mind bubble, the only thing is him getting walked by his person. In the person's bubble, it's a trillion things they're thinking about. Lacey's helped me be more aware of that. When I walk her, I try to just focus on us walking, ever since I saw that picture. She's really good at it and knows how to be in the moment. I think I could learn a thing or two from Lacey Lou!



Matthew Johnson

They make the worst roommates ever. They don't pay for anything! You have to feed them all the time. They're constantly in need. However, the other side of that is unconditional love. They don't care if you forget Valentine's Day, birthdays, etc. They're better than any family member as far as that goes, right?! They add calmness to your life. They're super friendly and there for you. They need homes and love just like we do, but they're better at expressing it than people. They've enriched my life by making my house feel like a home. When you move around a lot, you don't feel comfortable getting a dog. Some do, then have to get rid of them moving into a no-dogs-allowed situation. So, actually being in a place where you can give them a good life, they pay it back so much. Wish they'd pay for more! You know, one of them has to get a job at some point. Even like puppy modeling? I'm sure that's a

thing, somewhere, right? But they can't figure that out. The problem is they don't have the thumbs!

I have 45 pets, if you count the fish. It's 4 dogs, 2 cats, and 39 fish. I can't imagine my life without pets. My dad had to give up a dog because he was traveling more, and his life became emptier. It's amazing how clean his house is without pet hair everywhere, but there's also this emptiness about it I wouldn't trade. I'll take the dust, the dirt, the pet hair and my cat, Jack, getting a bladder infection and peeing all over my laundry, just cause the amount of cuddles Jack has given me, as a 20-pound cat (this big!) makes up for it. So, they give more than they take.



Todd Rezack

Layla, she keeps me on the go, and she always gives you unconditional love. Even on the darkest days, the animals, they always seem to be there to help you. It's definitely a good karmic exchange there when you provide for animals on that level. There's probably something that comes back to you on another level. She's been my world for about five years. You guys all know that.



Anoushka Perkert

Luna taught me a lot about patience. She's kind of unusual because she's very shy of people. Whenever she sees somebody on a trail, she hides. I have to be really careful and patient with that. One day I lost her on a trail with mountain bikes. She was so freaked out; she hid in the underbrush for hours. I went back at night and she finally came out. I know I can't push it with her. I give her time to feel comfortable when she's around people, letting her decide what she wants to do, when she wants to

come out, how she wants to show herself. She's a lot more social that way.

We got her as a pup when we still had my older dog, Sparks. They were fun and cute together. Sparks showed Luna everything. When we brought her home, he turned into Mr. Most-well-behaved, which he wasn't before! She constantly relied on him. When he died 4 months ago, she was really sad and mopey for long time. You can tell, dogs miss their companion. She's better now, but I'm also not ready to get another dog yet! Two dogs are a lot of work.

Oh, and she's a total princess! She likes to have food brought to her, be brushed, be on our bed all the time. We stopped saying no. We let her get away with a lot. Other than that, she's pretty well behaved.



Shawn Wilkinson

Dreama's been my service animal since 2010 because I had a traumatic brain injury and she stayed with me while I traveled all around. She's been on airplanes, boats, trains, buses, motorcycles—she's ridden everything! Every mode of transportation there is, she's been on it. The only thing she doesn't like is escalators. Her nails get caught in the tracks. She's been my confidant since my brain injury and been through everything with me, and she's helped me train other animals to service other people.

Pets always enrich lives. They're something to care for, and they're always there to care for you. One hour to them is seven hours to us. Like, if you're gone for 20 minutes, that's a long part of their day, since they live seven years to our one. So if you're gone just a short while, they really miss you.

Having that greeting every day is really good, too. They keep you grounded, and Dreama's service has been just that. I got seasick one time really bad on a ship in 12-foot swells with the boat coming out of the water. I couldn't move, sick laying on the floor, and Dreama sat with me the entire time with her paws on top of me. She's always been a really great service dog even before she got registered to be one. Then I had the injury, and she became exactly what she needed to be.

If you have feedback or suggestions for future topics, please email peacelori@love@gmail.com. In addition to being the Staff Photographer for The Crestone Eagle since 2012, Lori Nagel is a freelance photographer, graphic designer & web designer. www.sunflowerstudios.us.com.