

Suffield Veterinary Hospital May 2021 Patient of the Month

Meet "Charlie", a five-year-old Labrador retriever owned and adored by Suzie Pedersen and family from Westfield, MA. This sweet boy always knows when someone needs cheering up and is right there to cuddle. He has learned to play tricks on the Pedersen's new puppy, Reggie, by pretending he wants to go outside and as soon as Reggie runs out Charlie turns around and goes over to lie on his bed.

But unlike most dogs, Charlie has an actual job. Charlie has been "employed" by Paws of Nature Dog & Cat Behavior & Training Services for the past 3 years where he has helped hundreds of dogs who struggle with reactivity learn how to be less anxious when near another dog. This in turn allows them to learn how to walk better on a leash when seeing other dogs without barking, lunging, growling, or pulling.

Charlie's job is to remain calm and attentive to his handler while sitting or lying down and a client dog is moving around them or while walking past or near a client dog. It takes a very special dog to be able to ignore another dog that may be barking or lunging at them and not want to reciprocate the behavior. Charlie's calm, easygoing temperament displayed by his body language allows the reactive dogs to feel safe when they are near him. This in turn relieves anxiety and allows learning to take root for the reactive dogs.

Charlie has helped dogs that once would explode at the sight of another dog at 500 feet, now be able to walk calmly past at 6 to 8 feet or even lie down nearby together with 6 to 8 feet of distance. In some cases, Charlie has been the first dog they have ever sniffed without worry and reactive behaviors. Some of these dogs are now able to graduate to a regular group dog training class.

Charlie's paycheck consists of a variety of treats from "Charlee Bears" to "Happy Howie treats," though Charlie isn't picky. He enjoys being outside, working with his handler going through his paces, and playing the role of a therapy dog for his fellow canines. For helping so many dogs try to overcome their behavior issues, we are thrilled to name Charlie our Suffield Veterinary Hospital May 2021 Patient of the Month.



Suffield Veterinary Hospital

Dr. Ann Huntington ❖ Dr. Anita Sabellico ❖ Dr. Dawn Burke

Dr. Daniel Rothbart ❖ Dr. Emilie Laston ❖ Dr. Emma LaVigne

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