



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Children's of Alabama Hosts Retirement Party for Beloved Hand in Paw Therapy Dog

Birmingham, AL: After seven wonderful years of service, Hand in Paw therapy dog Duke Ritter has retired. To celebrate, the Child Life Specialists at Children's of Alabama hosted a retirement party for Duke and his handler Carol!

Duke and Carol Ritter became a Hand in Paw Therapy Team in 2015. During their tenure, they made hundreds of therapeutic visits with local program partners including visiting clients at The Exceptional Foundation, participating in the Pawsitive Living program with Glenwood Inc, and visiting patients in UAB's Emergency Room. Duke's favorite place to visit, however, was at Children's of Alabama. In his prime, Duke and Carol would visit the patients and staff every single week, providing moments of comfort and joy during extremely difficult times.

Duke and Carol made a huge "pawprint" at Children's of Alabama over the years, and the Child Life Specialists knew they wanted to do something special to honor and thank them for their volunteer service. Courtney Wells, a Child Life Specialist who had worked closely with Duke and Carol in the ER, orchestrated the retirement party.

Courtney notes, "It was such a pleasure to celebrate the legacy Duke and Carol established at Children's of Alabama throughout the years. We will never be able to thank them enough for all of the joy they brought to patients, families, and staff members during their time with us. Duke and Carol will be dearly missed, but the impact they left on our hospital will never be forgotten. We know that Duke will continue to be loved and appreciated by everyone he knows as he transitions into retirement."

During the party, several Children's staff members stopped by and thanked Carol and gave Duke farewell pets, treats, and gifts including a custom collar which had "Dr. Duke" engraved on the tag. There was a special photo wall for pictures, and lots of food for humans as well!

Hand in Paw volunteers make it possible to carry out the nonprofit's mission to improve human health and well-being through Animal-Assisted Therapy. The organization is thankful for all of their volunteers, past and present, and plans to host a retired therapy dog get-together on Founder's Day, July 16 to honor their service.

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ABOUT HAND IN PAW

With a mission to improve human health & well-being, Hand in Paw is Alabama's premier Animal-Assisted Therapy provider and a national leader in this growing field. Hand in Paw's professionally-trained volunteer handler and animal Therapy Teams help improve people's day to day lives in several medical centers, schools, and human service organizations throughout North Central Alabama and Tuscaloosa. Our volunteer teams make thousands of beneficial visits through community events and participating facilities each year, helping countless children with special needs, at-risk youth, struggling students, and people with chronic and terminal illnesses. At no time has Hand in Paw charged for its services. For more information, visit www.handinpaw.org.