

Medicine Hat Cowboy Life



March 2023

Official Newsletter for Medicine Hat Cowboy Poetry Foundation

Fall Show Headliners Announced!



Eli Barsi

Medicine Hat Cowboy Poetry Foundation is pleased to announce that we have secured the entertainment of Eli Barsi and Ol' Ugly (John Clawson) for our annual fall Medicine Hat Cowboy and Western Music Show. Mark your calendars for the afternoon and evening of Saturday, October 7.

Eli, (pronounced EE-lye) Barsi (BAR-see) a Saskatchewan country girl has an impressive musical resume and has been a popular draw at various venues including a recent show in Maple Creek. See her web site at www.elibarsi.com.

Ol' Ugly is a country comedian, storyteller and author of three popular books of humorous short stories about the people, real and imagined at the "local" diner, the Grub Box Café. On stage he has a way about him that'll make you "yodel" with laughter. You can find some of his work on YouTube by searching Ol' Ugly.

As usual, we will include local talent and young poets and musicians. We plan to host a stew and biscuit cowboy supper. Our board is finalizing details so watch for more information in our newsletter, on our website, and on our Facebook page.

But whatever you do, save the date now!



Ol' Ugly

In this issue: Gone to the Dogs

www.MHCowboyLife.com



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From My Perch on the Corral

I'm hoping this newsletter hasn't 'gone to the dogs', but it's certainly about dogs, about the wellness that dogs can bring. (Not forgetting that horses and cats and other animals can also have a similar role.)

While interviewing folks in the Meliora Service Dog group I heard first-hand how dogs have saved their lives. Dogs alert folks with diabetes when their blood sugar is low, saving them from certain death.

Those with PTSD, anxiety, depression, etc. told me they are now able to function in society because of their service dogs; they now have purpose in life. Time and time again I hear how they're able to reduce or even stop using their medications since they have their dogs. That explains why an illness or the loss of their service dogs is traumatic and is as serious as not having the medication they need to survive. Sadly the lifespan of a dog is much shorter than that of a human.

This past year's 'Paws and Poems' project has been a learning curve for me. I didn't know the difference between emotional support dogs or dogs that provide therapy. Nor did I know that a dog goes through specific levels of training to be certified as a service dog. Once he is certified he can legally go to any public place a human can go (with his owner): buses, airplanes, stores, restaurants, etc. I didn't realize what a wide range of services dogs provide.

Did you know it takes hundreds upon hundreds of hours to train a service dog? And practice continues forever after that? Was I shocked to know how much service dogs are worth in dollars? Yep! Up to \$50,000!

Most important was learning from service dog owners what to do and what not to do when encountering a person with a service dog. When you see a dog with a vest, it is a service dog in training or already certified. The dog is working and there is etiquette that must be observed.

We are fortunate to have service dog training for federal certification in our community through Meliora Service Dogs. This service dog group serves veterans, first responders and their families. The trainers/leaders are themselves, in need of service dogs for their disabilities. They, in turn, volunteer endless hours and provide ongoing



Jen Zollner, President,
Medicine Hat Cowboy Poetry Foundation

support to help others in any way they can: finding suitable dogs, testing dogs to determine if they qualify to be service dogs, teaching at weekly training sessions and making themselves available to students to talk anytime. They are passionate about being able to offer this service to anyone that needs it.

We have been conducting interviews, writing poems and songs, video recording interviews and performances for our online videos, and gathering stories for our book, Paws and Poems, which includes stories of many pawed creatures, not just dogs. We plan to release the book and the videos in early April.

To reserve your copy, send me an email, and we'll add you to our list!

MHCPPresident@gmail.com



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Meliora Service Dogs

In Latin Meliora means 'Ever Better'. Meliora is a non-profit/charity organization that operates throughout Canada, supporting veterans, first responders and their families. Meliora is 100% volunteer, managed and directed by veterans and first responders.

Meliora Service Dogs' mandate is to make specially trained service dogs a reality for people suffering from mental or physical disabilities. Their service relieves conditions associated with disabilities by giving members ongoing support to improve their independence as well as their physical & emotional wellbeing.

Redcliff Chapter, Meliora Service Dogs

Jamie Billings, a professional Medical Service Dog Trainer and veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, started the Meliora service in Redcliff. The group is mostly veterans helping other veterans regain livelihood through service dog training and support. Volunteers help individuals with their service dog needs in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Jamie currently has two helpers/apprentices that he has trained, Cindy and BJ. Members of the class provide support (and more) to each other. Presently they have 27 students that they teach on a weekly basis. They provide 24-hour support, help and advice.

In March, 2021, Redcliff Legion entered an agreement with Meliora to support them by offering their facility for weekly training sessions as well as supporting Meliora financially. In March, 2022 the Government of Alberta approved Meliora Redcliff to certify service dogs. In Alberta, Jamie Billings is the only person with the provincial ministerial order enabling him to certify service dogs within the province. Having Meliora in the Medicine Hat area means folks no longer have the stress of traveling long distances to get their dogs tested. For individuals with PTSD, travelling can cause undue stress.

There is a dire need for service dogs for those who are not veterans, first responders and their families and Jaime and his associates are working to offer the same services to these folks. Feel free to contact them if you need service dog training & support or if you wish to contribute to this worthy organization.





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Service Dog Etiquette

Don't Distract if a Dog is in Vest or Harness

To perform their jobs, service dogs must focus on their handlers and the tasks they are doing. Service dogs are trained to very high standards and typically ignore distractions, but they are not perfect. A distracted service dog could make a mistake that puts it and its handler in danger. Some things you should not do when encountering a service dog:

- don't call to the dog
 - don't make kissing, barking, baby talk or other noises to the dog
 - don't pet the dog without permission
 - don't allow pets to interact with the dog
- Just ignore the dog!

Don't offer Food

- service dogs are trained to ignore food on the ground and not to beg for food
- feeding a service dog could make it sick
- a sick dog could take away its handler's independence

Don't be Offended

- don't be offended if the handler doesn't want to stop and chat about their dog or yours
- they may be in a hurry
- they may have other reasons they're not able to stop and talk
- don't be offended if a service dog handler won't let you pet his or her dog
- the dog may be working, not to be interrupted in the performance of its duties

Treat Service Dog Handlers with Dignity

- allow a service dog handler to go about his/her business just as you would anyone else
- speak to the handler not the dog
- don't ask personal questions about the handler's disabilities
- don't ask for the dog to do a demonstration of its skills
- don't photograph or record a service dog team without permission



Medicine Hat Cowboy Life is the official newsletter of the Medicine Hat Cowboy Poetry Foundation, (a registered Society in the Province of Alberta), published four times per year by Shelley Goldbeck, DTM, Vice President and Webmaster of MHCP. Our mandate is to preserve, promote and celebrate cowboy traditions and country living in the Medicine Hat area. If you wish to submit articles or information of interest to our readers, please email MHCPPresident@gmail.com subject: Newsletter.



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WELLNESS FROM ANIMALS

Equines, canines, felines (and other animals) bring increased wellness to humans, especially to those affected by trauma or other disabilities. There are facilitators that are trained to use animals to help clients improve coping skills, improve self esteem, decrease depression, decrease stress, decrease tension and increase the possibility of finding purpose in life, to be able to work again.

Animals, and dogs especially, are prey animals with a remarkable ability to sense emotion and tension. They are also able to let that tension go when the perceived danger has passed, and that's something they can teach human companions. Animals need to be alert to flee from danger, but they quickly go back into a calm state. When you have anger or agitation, the horse or dog will detect that. By having a close connection with the animal, they can influence us, remind us to practice grounding ourselves in order to stay calm.

Facilitators are often trained to guide clients to wellness after traumas, and can work with depression, anxiety, ADHD, ADD, autism spectrum, addiction, aggression, low self-confidence, indigenous healing and life transitions. More ways animals can help are continually being discovered. In order to achieve wellness, it's the client who needs to be determined and it requires a willingness to do 'the work'. It means exploring their inner struggles, rediscovering their emotions and in the process releasing energy that has been stuck inside. It means reconnecting to their core values.

Recognized Animal Qualifications:

Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

- provide comfort and companionship to the dog owner
- have to be registered
- require a prescription by a mental health or healthcare professional
- are not trained to do specific tasks to assist with a disability
- do not have public access rights
- are not considered a service dog in Alberta

Therapy Animals

- are brought by the owner on visits to people in institutions or homes
- provide others with an opportunity to interact with a dog
- have special training
- must pass obedience tests to be certified
- do not have public access rights

Service Animals

- are highly trained
- provide assistance for owners physically or visually (or mentally) impaired
- have public access rights
- have an Identification Card needed to access public places (See Frank's ID)



SERVICE DOGS

These canines are invaluable to those that need them. There is a deep connection between a working team that allows them to read each other at an emotional level.

Service Dog Act and Blind Persons Right Act

Note: a guide dog is a service dog trained specifically to help a person who is blind.

- gives Albertans with disabilities the right to bring their qualified service dog with them into any public place where people are normally allowed to be:
- examples: restaurants, taxis, buses, cafes, hospitals, hotels, schools, bars, planes, theatres, recreational centres, etc.
- if a person requires a dog, to live in Medicine Hat Housing, the dog needs to be trained and certified (certified as a service dog)

Disabilities a Service Dog can Mitigate

Hearing: A service dog can help someone with a hearing impairment by:

- alerting handler that his/her name being called
- alerting handler that the phone is ringing
- alerting handler there are oncoming cars
- alerting handler of any potential dangers
- alerting handler to the presence of others

Mobility: A service dog can help someone with a physical or mobility challenges by:

- retrieving dropped items
- carrying items in a store or to another room
- placing items on a counter
- opening/closing doors
- retrieving common items
- turning lights on and off
- assisting with the transfer from wheelchair to chair
- alerting others in the event of an emergency

Developmental: A service dog can help someone with autism spectrum disorder or similar conditions by:

- calming the individual when agitated
- preventing the individual from bolting
- facilitating social interactions

Medical: A service dog can help someone with a medical disability such as seizure disorders, diabetes, cardiac rhythm disturbances, etc. by:

- alerting the individual to changes in medical condition such as low blood sugar, impending seizures or cardiac rhythm disturbances
- retrieving medication or a phone if needed
- alerting others to the need for assistance
- watching over the individual and providing comfort until help arrives

Psychological: A service dog can help someone with a psychological condition such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder by:

- providing tactile stimulation to focus the individual
- retrieving medication if needed
- providing a brace for the handler
- assisting handler to leave a social situation, as with panic attacks
- facilitating social interactions
- assisting handler in creating a safe personal space
- alerting handler to changes in his or her mood or mental status



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The story in this poem by Jen Zollner is universal for veterans who come back with PTSD after experiencing the horrors of war in places like Bosnia and Uganda.

The Missing Piece of My Heart

I'm nothing but a sad and troubled soul,
Could this puppy make me happy, make me whole,
I was desperate as could be,
I chose you and you chose me,
Could it be that you will help restore my soul?

Somewhere along the way my heart was broke,
I lost peace, I lost my will, a heavy yoke,
Was it really meant to be,
Can you heal this injury?
Fill the emptiness within this wretched bloke?

Chorus:
When I found you, I hoped you are the one,
In my darkest hour I hoped that light would come,
That the past be done and gone,
And now we're going home
To make a brand new start and mend my heart.

You're more beautiful than ever I have seen,
I am close to you as anyone I've been,
Oh, your life might be sublime
But it's you that saved mine,
We are partners no one else can come between

Since I found you, we have proof you are the one,
In my darkest hour you got the light to come,
Now the past is dead and gone
I'm thankful I moved on,
A brand new start, a peace within my heart.

Since I found you, my life's the best I've ever seen,
You've made me more than I ever could have been,
Bless the day I promised to
Always take good care of you,
And never be apart, when I found you, when I found you
I found the missing piece of my heart.

Stories from Seniors

A collection of stories and poetry by and for seniors who've lived and worked in rural areas around Medicine Hat



Cover Art: Preacher and Parson
by Gena LaCoste



Medicine Hat Cowboy Poetry Foundation

Stories from Seniors and Country Stories books available for only \$15 each. To purchase contact Jen at MHCPPresident@gmail.com
Watch the accompanying videos on our web site. Search stories.
www.MHCowboyLife.com

Country Stories

A collection of stories and poetry by and for seniors who have lived and worked in rural areas around Medicine Hat



Three Heads are Better Than One
by Gena LaCoste



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Doggie Treats

Tried and true recipe compliments of Josie Fitterer*. She's made these for years so she could afford to give treats to the German Shepherds she raised. Just the other day she made a batch for her little Maggie. This is the basic recipe. Use your imagination as to what else you could add.

3-4 cups whole wheat flour

3 cups oatmeal

1/2 cup oil

about 2 cups hot water

Mix well. Roll thin onto the back side of a cookie sheet. Cut in little strips. It's quite a stiff dough so you need to roll it hard. Bake 250-300 degrees for 1/2 or 3/4 hour or until well done, quite dry. Dry on newspaper for a couple of days before storing in the freezer.

** Josie is one of the subjects of our Paws and Poems videos, soon to be posted on our web site.*



Medicine Hat Cowboy Poetry Foundation
2023 Souvenir Coaster. Get yours free
with a 2023 foundation membership!

Annual General Meeting

The Medicine Hat Cowboy Poetry Foundation held their annual general meeting on February 10, 2023 at the Medicine Hat Library. The year's business was discussed and afterwards contemplated over home-made steer-head and cowboy-boot-shaped spud nuts, compliments of MHCP President, Jen Zollner.

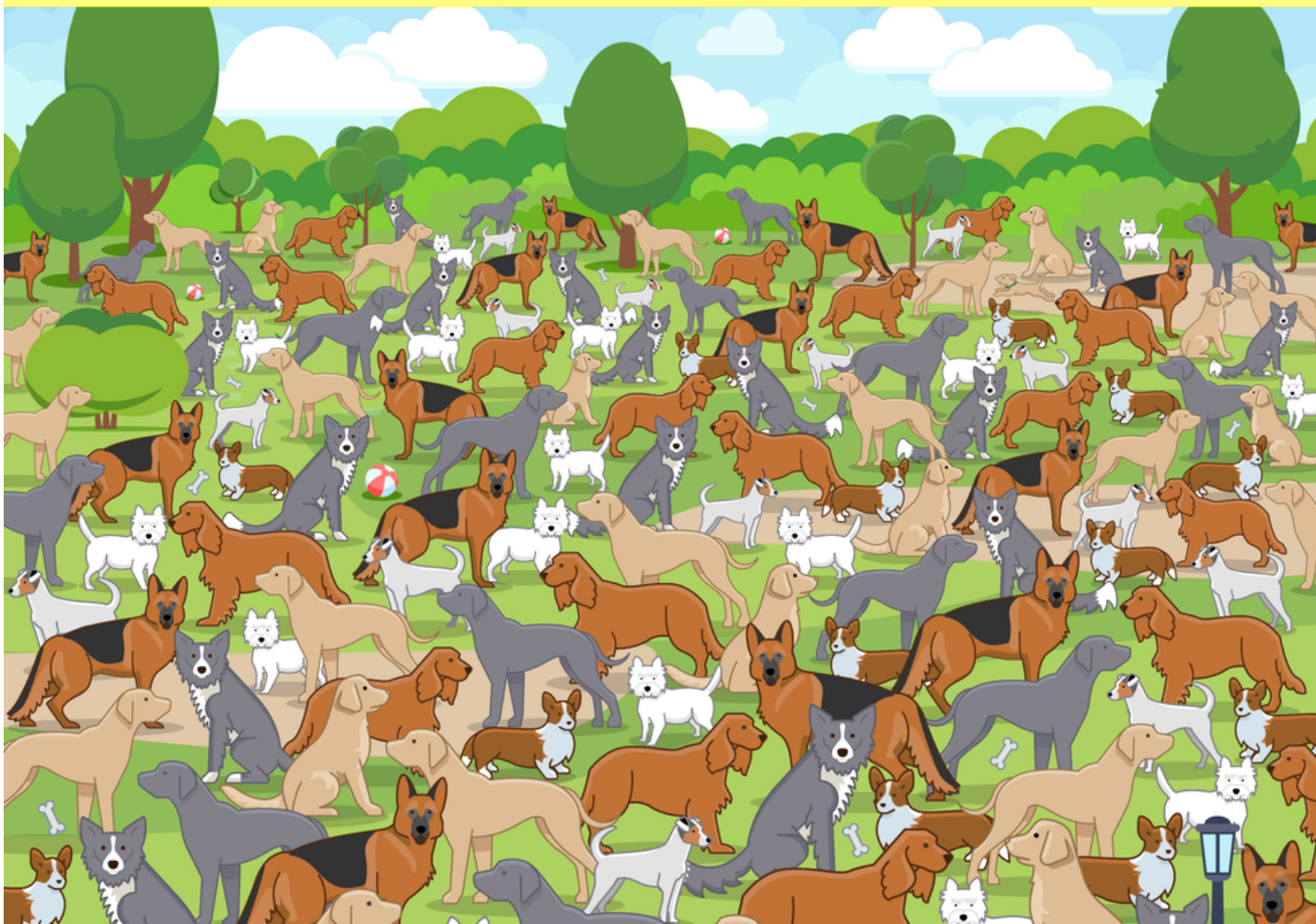
Top right: Two Donna Maes, (Moore and Goldade). Bottom Right: President Jen, Treasurer Carol, Member Harold, Below: Board Member Jacquie and Harold





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Spot the Brown Puppy



Dog Talk

Country Comparisons

- happy as a tick on a fat dog
- faster than a dog's tail in a meat market
- crooked as a dog's hind leg
- meaner than a junkyard dog
- smells bad enough to stink a dog off a gut wagon
- she could talk a dog off a meat wagon
- grinning like a butcher's dog

Western Wisdom

- Don't let the tail wag the dog
- Money can buy a dog but only love can make him wag his tail
- The size of a dog has nothing to do with the size of his/her heart
- A nod is as good as a wink to a blind dog
- It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog.
- If you git to thinkin' yer a person of some influence, try orderin' somebody else's dog around.

Dog Idioms

- to be top dog
- dog eat dog
- a dog's breakfast
- every dog has his day
- to go to the dogs
- to be in the doghouse
- lead a dog's life
- let sleeping dogs lie



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The Loss of a Dog

The 'work' that a dog does is never more obvious than when a Master is grieving the canine partner who is no longer. Loss is inevitable, being canines have a shorter life span than humans. In fact, large service dogs are required to retire at age ten. The loss is compounded for those suffering from disabilities. To PTSD sufferers, the dog is the medical tool to help them cope. Others may need their dog to aid them physically. For those needing a Diabetic Awareness Dog, their immediate survival depends on the dog.

The Master has an irreplaceable relationship with his or her service dog (and other dogs as well). They provide a "secure base" as psychologists term it: dogs love unconditionally, sense our emotions intuitively and provide constant companionship. They're also motivators, a reason to get up in the morning, and going on daily walks puts dog owners in touch with nature (we all need outdoor time).

There is a scientific explanation how a dog decreases anxiety. Oxytocin, the love hormone, is increased by bonding with dogs. Simply gazing into each other's eyes (and kissing) increases the positive hormone in dogs and their owners. Prolonged interaction between humans and dogs also lowers harmful cortisol levels in both species.

As a society, we show less support when the death of a pet occurs. It's less common to have the usual funeral ritual like there is for a human. Worse is how all too often our culture treats the death of a pet like a piece of property; just buy a replacement. Public awareness can help us be more appropriately empathetic.

Click on the line for Annette McGivney's article, "How to Grieve for a Very Good Dog"
<https://www.outsideonline.com/culture/essays-culture/pet-loss-dog-grief/>



*This is an excerpt from the poem KIM and VESTA, (written by Jen Zollner) about how Vesta, her service dog helps her. This poem will appear in **Paws and Poems**.*

Kim looked it up, the Vesta name means home and health and fire,
It'd also mean that family is how this dog is wired.
If intervention was divine to fill a desperate need?
Let's get to know this Vesta dog, perhaps you'll be agreed.

Kim is Vesta's mom now, caring for Kim's every need,
She tells Kim when a sugar crash is what she has to heed,
When Kim is sleeping, tries to wake her up, then goes for help,
She saved Kim's life by waking Dad with a warning doggie yelp.

She's learning how to pick things up for Kim after they drop,
She helps to calm and centre Kim; the trigger, helps it stop,
She sleeps beside their bed, so at night she's working too,
She's a lifeline, friend, protector and she's loving through and through.



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SO YOU THINK HE IS JUST A DOG

Service dogs are not pets, they are medical aids. It's disappointing to hear how shoppers, business owners and public transport drivers sometimes treat service dogs and their owners. These are the words of one service dog owner.

You say he should not be able to come into shops, restaurants, hospitals, doctor offices, on public transportation or other places you can freely go. You yell at me, "Get him out of here! No dogs allowed! He is just a dog.

Let me tell you about my dog. He started out life just like other dogs. At eight weeks old his journey began with 300 hours of training and lots of testing. I have D.A.D. He is a Diabetic Alert Dog and a P.T.S.D. Dog. He is trained to let me know when my sugars go too low or too high. Without being told, he gets me the things I need: my test kit, honey, insulin, pills, my cell phone, juice out of the fridge (opens and closes the fridge door). He gets me a blanket when I get cold and so much more. He keeps me from yelling at you, "Back up! @\$%&! Get out of my space! Leave me alone! Stop staring at me.

This dog does not judge me. He never tells me to get over it, that is not how it happened, we were just kids or just to let it go. He is always happy just to be with me, happy to go to work, he never lies to me, I never hear about his girlfriends, about how drunk he and his friends got last night, or "I'm too sick to help you; can someone else do it."

You tell me you love dogs, how much they do for people. So if you truly love dogs, could you help me make him the best service dog he can be?

When you see service dogs in the shops, please just walk by. No pictures. Do not ask if you can pet him, the answer will be no. No, please do not talk to him.

This dog has saved my life four times. He is my Guardian Angel sent from above.

This is my Service Dog Montego.

No, you are wrong.

He is not just a dog.

By Annette Hewitt

Library Corner

The Medicine Hat Public Library serves as a community hub, providing convenient access to books, media, information and programs that help to educate, enrich, entertain, and inform. Anyone can use the library and its resources. As a library member, your library card allows you to take home books, e-books, magazines, DVDs, CDs, and audio books.

Doctor Dogs, How our Best Friends are Becoming our Best Medicine by Maria Goodavage NF 615.85158 GOO

This book is an interesting and enlightening read, with stories of how dogs have helped various persons with physical and emotional challenges. It covers scientific studies with the results, even when they've been disappointing. It tells us about training challenges and dishonest organizations taking advantage of desperate families. It gives a sense of hope for the roles dogs can play in helping humans.

Dog, a Diabetic's Best Friend Training Guide by Veronica Zimmerman NF 636.70886 ZIM

Located at Redcliff Public Library, but you can request through MH Public Library. This is a thorough 200+ page book that tells how-to, step by step. It starts with how to choose a DAD dog and how to protect his/her health. The most useful is the training guide with specific exercises using the clicker method and including lots of practical do's and don'ts.

Training Your Diabetic Alert Dog by Rita Martinez and Susan M. Barns NF636.70886 MAR

Located at Redcliff Public Library, but you can request through MH Public Library.

By Jen Zollner



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So God made a Dog



And on the 9th Day
God looked down on his children and said they need a companion, somebody
willing to lick the tears off a child's face, then with unwavering courage
defend their family from strangers and herd a family together
So God made a Dog



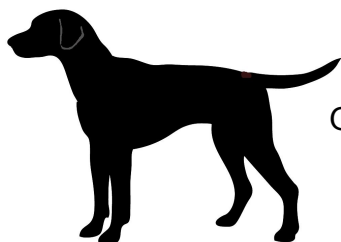
God said I need somebody willing to give kisses, sleep all day, chase cats,
roll in something dead, give more kisses, eat the trash, snore and
slobber then take up more than their fair share of the bed
So God made a Dog



God said I need somebody willing to sit, heel, fetch and stay with no ego or
complaint, dress in hats and costumes they don't need or understand.
I need somebody who can break wind without a second thought
So God made a Dog



God said I need somebody who can take frozen chicken off the countertop, but
love you with their whole heart despite your impatience, somebody to
forgive mistreatment and fully give their heart to a new family
So God made a Dog



God said I need somebody with supportive eyes to lift the spirits of a broken
heart, somebody to be next to you during the long nights of pain
and sorrow when it hurts to move or talk or think or be
So God made a Dog



God said I need somebody to hold onto your soul as if it were their favorite
toy, playing tug of war to keep you in this world. Somebody to
wait for you on the other side or stand guard in your
absence until they can join you in eternity
So God made a Dog

compiled by Jen Zollner