



LEAVING NEW PAW TRACKS

Delray was born on the other side of the continent, at Southeastern Guide Dogs in Palmetto, Florida. Little did we know when the adorable little ball of black smooch arrived, that he would play a role that was the first of its kind in North America, if not the world.

Placed with his Advanced Care Paramedic partner Erica Olson, they are the first Alberta Health Services Emergency Medical Services Psychological Awareness and Wellness Support team (AHS EMS PAWS). Delray looks out each day for those that are looking out for us across the province of Alberta.

Paramedics are on the front line of every accident, tragedy and disaster... and this day in, day out role is demanding, both physically and psychologically. Promoting resilience and wellness long-term is a top priority to ensure they can continue to do their important work. Enter Delray, a world class dog, with an almost world famous full body wag.

Where his Accredited Facility Dog counterparts that work with victims are often super quiet and calm, Delray was chosen for this role because he has a little extra zest in all he does. If you're having a tough day, he'll dial down and lean in for a pat or belly rub, but just as often, he'll choose to grab a toy and make his people laugh with his ridiculously large personality.

Delray is the first of his kind to support first responders. He travels the province and visits amazing people each day. "He" also maintains a very active social media presence followed by EMS and the public where he shares wellness tips from his own furry perspective. This serves to meet one of his goals of reducing the stigma associated with psychological injuries.

Delray has demonstrated that he is not only a good fit for this job, he brings his whole heart. EMS practitioners have shared that he has turned their day around and he often hears he was the best part of their shift. Sometimes he goes further and provides body pressure or a head rest at a time when the provider he is with needs support. He is comfortable enough in his own skin and prepared enough to feel relaxed in a wide range of environments that his dog sense of what a human needs shines through.

The same wellness concepts he shares with his people are also applied to Delray. He has a deliberate daily care routine and works within a proactive response algorithm which ensures he is only on duty when it is healthy for him and he gets plenty of rest. He sometimes wears a "purple box" on his neck that tracks his vitals, and in combination with saliva samples for cortisol and regular behaviour tracking, his team (and PADS) are learning how the work environment affects these amazing dogs.

In talking to Delray he shares in his own words:

"As an Accredited Facility Dog, I get to spend every work day meeting and wiggling with EMS providers in Alberta. I think I have the best job, but Erica really likes her job too. She drives me around and talks about psychological health a lot. She's nice enough, but doesn't seem to realize how much I like treats."

To learn more about Delray, Erica and the PAWS program, visit them online at ahs.ca/paws, on Facebook **DelrayPAWS** or on Instagram **delray.paws**

Delray was raised by Vicki & Keith Wiseman in the Calgary Puppy-Raising Program, Advanced Trained by Rob Mackay and sponsored by the Andrew Mahon Foundation.