

GHS welcomes new therapy dog

Sophie

By Jack Titzer
sports editor

Sophie, a 10-year-old golden retriever, is GHS's newest therapist.

Sophie's owner, Mrs. Jenny Ford, explained why the family decided to make Sophie a certified therapy dog.

"When Sophie was a puppy, I took her to a trainer for basic obedience. One day the trainer asked if I had ever thought of making her into a therapy dog. At that time, I had no idea what that meant so he provided me with more information. I thought it would be cool but hadn't looked into it any further. A few months later, Sophie was almost kicked out of her pet resort because she would not come when she was called. I was then put in contact with another trainer who actually did therapy dog training. At that point, I felt it was meant to be. After completing a six-week course, Sophie and I took a test, and we were certified by Therapy Dog International," Mrs. Ford said.

Students who experience anxiety or are under a lot of stress may need something furry to help them express their feelings and relax.

"We have been looking at using a therapy dog for a while now because people usually like dogs and it is just something that we can use if a student has high anxiety or just needs to take a minute to calm down. Sophie is very caring and loving, and having her here at GHS just makes students feel good and makes them more comfortable at school," Mrs. Samantha Young, student service advisor, said.

In the short time Sophie has been coming to school, she has already impacted many students.

"Some of the best experiences that I have had with Sophie at school is watching kids that would not normally be comfortable reading to her out loud. There was also a day when a friend was having a really bad day and was in the office. When Sophie went in to visit with this friend, they calmed down within a couple of minutes of petting Sophie, but within 15 minutes; they were skipping back to class," Mrs. Ford said.

Mrs. Ford shared her favorite part of having a therapy dog.

"My favorite part is the pure joy that Sophie gives to the people she comes into contact with. I feel like during the visit, everyone's bucket gets filled, including ours," she said.

Mrs. Young also talked about the impact she has witnessed.

"When I have seen Sophie interact with students, you can tell how comfortable the students feel around her and how much of an impact she has made in such a short time," she said.

