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# Bernie The Therapy Dog

Once a rescue herself, she now helps others despite her disability



Bernie is one of the newest members of the CTDS and also has her own charity, 'Bernie's Buddies'. You can learn more about Bernie at [www.adventureswithbernie.com](http://www.adventureswithbernie.com)  
Photo: Michelle Young

By Michelle Young

They say it takes a special dog to be a therapy dog, and to some degree that is correct. Therapy dogs are brought in to help in a variety of situations whether it be to help a child build his or her confidence when reading, visiting a senior citizen in their care facility or in those most tragic of situations such as a large school shooting or a horrific house fire.

So, what does it take for a dog to be a therapy dog? Well they are assessed and checked out by a vet – but just like humans going through a job interview, you should never judge a book by its cover. Bernie is a 7 year old Saint Bernard who was found wandering the streets of Calgary when she was just 3 months old. Calgary Animal Services picked her up, took her in and as she was not wearing any tags and wasn't tattooed or micro-chipped, they put her up for adoption. In the short 1.5 weeks that Bernie was at the shelter, she had a waitlist of people that wanted to add her to their families, but after just a short time in the shelter, she went home to her forever family.

But Bernie was not a normal active large breed puppy. Upon her arrival to the animal shelter, it was quickly determined that Bernie was deaf and that her tail had also never grown. Wondering if that was going to deter people from wanting to adopt her, the quick forming waitlist for Bernie proved that her disability was not going to be an issue.

Angela Blenkhorne was the lucky lady who was selected to be Bernie's new family. Angela said that as soon as she saw Bernie, she knew she had to have her... and 6 years later they have a remarkable bond. But now, Angela had this almost 5 month old Saint Bernard puppy, that was deaf.... so how was there to be any training and communication? Well, believe it or not, Bernie can understand sign language.

"We worked with our vet, who has also been training dogs for many years. She taught us how to use operant conditioning (also known as clicker training) to help us communicate with Bernie through hand signals", explained Blenkhorne. I then watched as Angela signaled Bernie to sit, stand, lay down and even shake a paw all with simple hand signals...and of course, a thumbs up to show Bernie a job well done.

"To reliably perform the signals took about three months of consistent training. We continue to practice every day. Saint Bernards are a working breed and need to have their attention engaged in doing jobs. Bernie has even participated in tracking training and helps us find objects we hide around the yard", said Blenkhorne.

As remarkable as that all is, now what would you say if I told you that Bernie is one of the newest members of the Chestermere Therapy Dogs Society? Blenkhorne explains, "CTDS's (Chestermere Therapy Dogs Society)



As an independent candidate I will:

- encourage private and public investment in social programs and small businesses within Bow River, while keeping taxes low
- encourage safe environmentally responsible methods of extracting and moving resources
- promote water conservation and preservation of our lakes and rivers, including irrigation networks, while investing in research to improve usage and movement of water, a critical resource for our agriculture sector

My name is Andrew Kucy and I want to be your new Member of Parliament (MP). The election on October 19th will send a new MP to Ottawa to represent the interests and concerns of Chestermere, Langdon, and other Bow River communities. I wish to be that representative, to be a strong, honest and independent voice for Alberta concerning the issues that affect us all.

I believe that we need a change in the political environment here in Canada. I believe there are too many special interests and politicians in our system that do not work on behalf of the citizens they were elected to represent. I believe political parties have taken too much responsibility and independence away from their members. I believe the current system and approach can be improved and Canada needs new voices in government to positively influence policies and politics at the federal level. I can be that voice.

I will be a true and honourable representative of all citizens in the riding of Bow River. I will not personally attack my opponents or those with an opposing perspective. I will focus on the issues, not the drama and will be honest, transparent and accountable as your MP.

I look forward to your support and vote on October 19th.

My name is Andrew Kucy, and I Am Independent

Twitter: @AndrewKucy  
Website: [votekucy.ca](http://votekucy.ca)  
Facebook: [Vote Kucy](http://VoteKucy)

Authorized by Official Agent for Andrew Kucy

mission of helping people one dog at a time is a fantastic opportunity to expand the number of people Bernie can meet and connect with. We appreciate CTDS President and Founder Steve King's understanding of the therapeutic value of dogs. His committed leadership and creative approach were deciding factors in our decision to go through the assessment process and commit to visiting whenever possible".

"Participating with CTDS is also a natural programming fit for the visits Bernie and I have been doing throughout Calgary for the past five years, focusing on kids and adults experiencing grief from loss or a major life transition... "Bernie's Buddies" has grown over the years and is now a registered charity. We believe every person young or old has something positive to contribute in this world - even when they think they are different and nobody notices them or they are perhaps embarrassed or ashamed about their situations. Bernie is living proof that being different is an actually a good thing. Even though she thought nobody wanted her when she was a puppy, Bernie learned to

work with her challenges and grew into a dog who shows other people they can help too".

That's right...Bernie is no stranger to being a therapy dog as she has been doing it for quite some time and even has her own registered charity called 'Bernie's Bud-

due to finding safer situations, dealing with divorce, or the death of a loved one. We hope our visits will help them know it's OK to have feelings and that they are not alone. We also hope we can help them know it's even OK to be happy and enjoy life as much as possible, no

matter how different they think they are. Everyone has special gifts to share, just like me".

Chestermere Therapy Dogs Society President, Steve King said, "Angela contacted me out of the blue just about a year ago, interested in our program, particularly since she had her own charity offering a similar therapeutic dog program helping young kids get through setbacks in life". King also went on to say that despite Bernie being hearing impaired, that she sailed through her assessment. "She just demonstrates that you don't need to be able to hear to have good obedience".



Bernie & CTDS President Steve King who's proud to have Bernie join the CTDS family  
Photo: Michelle Young

dies". On her website, [www.adventureswithbernie.com](http://www.adventureswithbernie.com), they state "Our mission is to help kids who are dealing with big changes in their lives - these changes are often

It is the hopes that Bernie will participate in all three of the CTDS programs and in the words of King, "we feel she will be a star".

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