

Holistic Care for Dogs

Holistic Cures to Calm Your Dog While Traveling

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Dakota spent much of his first week of blindness lying in his crate, "almost as if he was confused," Lowrimore said. "But one day he started walking around. If he bumped into something, he'd back up and kind of tilt his head like he was thinking, 'I'll go another way.' "

Lowrimore briefly considered having Dakota euthanized. "I'd never had a blind dog, and I thought, 'What can he do? He's blind.' But the ophthalmologist looked at me like I was crazy. [Dakota] just amazes me. I can stand outside, tell him which neighbor's house I'm going to and he'll beat me there."

People in retirement homes relate to Dakota's disability and look forward to his visits. He's a role model for them, said Sue Eckles of Summerville. "They see that he's interacting and think, 'I'm sitting here not doing anything. I should feel better about myself,' " she said. "He's special."

When Dakota lost his sight, the teenagers became protective. The staff at New Hope Charleston, a center for psychologically troubled teens, noticed some diagnosed with serious behavior problems improved by caring for Dakota. "He's brought out a lot of nurturing qualities in them that we don't often see," recreation therapist Melissa Chipplis said.

The teen-agers write and draw about therapy dogs that visit them. One teen wrote that Dakota helped him get over his fear of large dogs: "I felt very comfortable around him. I guess I knew he would not hurt me. Since he was blind he could not see me, but I think he can see in his own way."

Another said Dakota is not intimidating: "He's almost like a great big stuffed animal. It's hard for me to be sad about my problems when I see Dakota getting along fine."