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# Farewell, Miya

Supplied by Vicky Graham, President



Miya, the sweetest little Pomeranian girl, was born on 23 October 2016. Her guardian, Suki Xu, joined Canine Friends Pet Therapy in 2015. She started visiting a rest home in East Auckland after Miya graduated from her puppy school, and then she started visiting Ivan Ward Centre at Selwyn Village in Auckland in October 2020. Miya received lots of love and cuddles from her adopted grandparents — residents. Her mission was to support them during the adjusting period of moving from their home to residential care, especially with those who already experienced social isolation or withdrawal.

Sadly, Miya left us and became a real puppy angel on New Year's Day 2022. Residents and staff at Ivan Ward said Miya left a legacy of happiness in their hearts. Below are a couple of instances where Miya made such a difference in the resident's lives.

### Miya with Brenda

Brenda moved to Ivan Ward due to her cognitive ability deterioration. Brenda had worked as a registered nurse and police officer in the past. She always wanted to help others in need and maintain independence as long as possible in her late years. It was a significant decision and

change in her life once she accepted the recommendation from her GP to move into the residential care home. Brenda loves animals and had cats when she lived at home.

During the first week of her admission, Brenda distanced herself from others, reluctant to socialise and wanted to stay in her room most of

the time, including at meal times. To minimise the risk of isolation, Suki initiated a weekly visit with Miya after speaking to Brenda's family. There were meet-and-greet sessions in Brenda's room for a few weeks until she was comfortable. Then Brenda started taking Miya for a leash walk in the garden area, accompanied by Suki and staff.

One afternoon, Brenda was very frustrated. She told everyone entering her room to "go away". The charge nurse informed Suki about it on arrival. She decided to send Miya inside her room since the care staff said Brenda had had enough of people! Suki knocked on her door and then let Miya enter Brenda's room while still holding the dog leash and watching from the doorway. After a few minutes, the situation changed. Suki heard Brenda talking to Miya, asking "Where is your mum?" Then the door was open and Brenda was holding Miya's leash with a big smile on her face. The charge nurse was surprised and pleased seeing them all go for a walk in the garden. Miya and Brenda were tightly bonded and ever since, Brenda started to join group activity sessions within the care facility.

### Miya with Paul

Paul was a family-oriented man and worked for his family until his retirement. In the past, he loved sports and working but after he lost his mobility, he preferred to have his own space in his room and not to mix and mingle with other residents except at meal times.

Paul had always owned dogs. Miya started to visit Paul weekly. Paul's wife, Maggie, said: "When Paul saw Miya being brought into his room, his face broke into the biggest smile. He would remember and talk about the present and past pets. He always asked when he would see his little girl (Miya) again as he looked forward to seeing her and having a cuddle. Miya was pure happiness for him. After a few weeks, Paul started to share his visitation experience with Miya with his human friends.

### Vaccination Day at Ivan Ward

This photo of Paul was taken after the first COVID-19 lockdown, on the residents' vaccination day. On this vaccination day, Miya provided emotional support and help to the residents overcoming their anxiety. Miya often sat on a resident's laps while they had to stay for the 20-minute observation after receiving their first vaccination, diverting their tension to joy. In fact, many residents started another queue to cuddle Miya after their vaccination.

Miya had done her job so well, she also received a COVID-19 vaccination sticker from the nurse. 🐾



by Suki Xu



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