

Who is Norbert?

Meet a service dog that roams the GJHS halls and captures hearts.

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Grand Junction High School has a service dog on campus. His name is Norbert. He services GJHS teacher Cheyanne Gentry.

Norbert is a small dog with a big heart. He's just over one year old. Norbert got his name from the classic series "Harry Potter", after the character Hagrid's dragon. Gentry said after her second interaction with him she knew his name already. "He came right up to me and sat in my lap and popped his head up and looked at me, and the line from the book that says 'Hagrid sang when it hatched - Oh look, he knows his mummy. - popped in my head. So that's where he got his name," Gentry explained.

Here at school, Norbert is relatively popular. He has many friends throughout the school. Including many people in the attendance office, counseling office, and Gentry's classes. Gentry said many people who don't even know Norbert or her will come to visit with him in her classroom, room 224.

"I have kids who I don't know come stand in the doorway. They'll ask to visit with him, and he immediately walks over to them and look at me for the

'Okay' command and he'll curl up in their lap," Gentry said, noting that she can see the relief on the kids' faces every time.

Norbert starts his day excited and ready to go to work.

"When we get here, he's so excited," Gentry said. "We put his vest on and his leash, he knows right where to go. Comes around

the building, up the stairs, and looks at me like, 'Where are my kids?'"

Norbert has a pretty solid routine for each day. He starts with his greetings and then is on duty until lunchtime. Before lunch is his time to pay attention to his owner and surroundings from his carrier or bed. During lunch, he's off work, and he can socialize and take a walk. In the afternoon he's back on duty except for sixth hour, when he gets to hang out and play. Sixth hour is when GJHS sophomore Janae Collins-Redd is in Gentry's class. According to Gentry; Collins-Redd and Norbert have a special bond, he can't focus on work when she's around.

Collins-Redd and Norbert started building their bond over the summer after he was recently adopted. They've become over closer since then; she's definitely his favorite. Collins-Redd also finds Norbert favorable.

"He can tell when a person isn't feeling good. It's natural for him to help with that...He helps emotional support, not just with Gentry, but with everyone...He can sense people's feelings...He has certain favorites, but he comforts everyone," explained Collins-Redd.

Gentry and Norbert have a very good bond. She speaks very highly of him, saying that he saved her and helped her find her joy.

"He is so happy, life is good, I can be happy again. The more time goes on, he just heals me," Gentry said. "I can almost physically feel the tears in my heart healing. He makes me not be afraid anymore. He has literally saved my sanity and my heart."

Norbert was rescued from Harmony Animal Shelter and Sanctuary here in Grand Junction. He has gotten almost completely through all required service training and will be returning for more later this year. Norbert, as of now, is technically a "service dog in training." He became a service dog for Gentry because of personal reasons, providing her extra support at work.

Gentry would also like to give a "shout-out" to District 51 for being so supportive and willing to make this happen for her and Norbert.

Norbert not only helps Gentry but also makes and has friends all around the school.



GJHS teacher Cheyanne Gentry with her service dog, Norbert.