

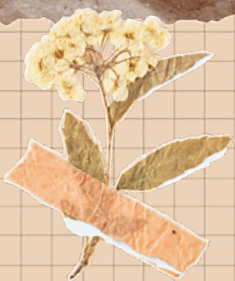
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Living with POTS & EDS

Junior Amelia Gibbons Philippon is the only Grandview wolf who attends school with Roman, her medical alert and response dog, and if it weren't for Roman, you'd have no idea that she's disabled. Gibbons Philippon has Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), a condition that causes your heart to beat faster than normal when you transition from sitting or lying down to standing up. Gibbons Philippon also has Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), which causes hyperflexible joints and stretchy, fragile skin. These syndromes affect Gibbons Philippon's life every minute of the day.

"I was a competitive soccer player, but I had to stop playing after an indoor season with Grandview," Gibbons Philippon said. "I'll immediately pass out if my heart rate gets too high. It's part of my condition, and quitting was difficult, but playing soccer hurt more than I enjoyed it."

Gibbons Philippon has had to give up other aspects of her life too.

"My sophomore year was really bad," Gibbons Philippon said. "A lot of the time, I'd be disoriented and confused, or I wouldn't be able to attend school at all. Roman was this year's attempt to help me mitigate that."

Gibbons Philippon was born with POTS and EDS, but as her condition began to worsen, it was an agreed consensus that a medical alert and response dog could be beneficial to Amelia's wellbeing.

"My parents were really supportive," Gibbons Philippon said. "My mom was immediately on board with the idea, especially since I was getting my driver's license at the time. She didn't want me driving with the possibility of me passing out randomly."

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Roman is able to alert Gibbons Philippon of a possible pass out twenty minutes before it occurs through one of the five basic senses: smell. Scent dogs can be trained on saliva, sweat, or blood, and Roman was trained on saliva samples taken before Gibbons Philippon passed out.

"He responds in several different ways depending on how bad an episode is going to be," Gibbons Philippon said. "He will mouth pretty intensely at my hand if I'm going to pass out, or he'll paw at me. If it's more of a sort of get really confused and out of it, he'll lick at my hand three times, or he'll lick my hand off, which is something he tends to do more often."

Although Roman has been a massive help to Gibbons Philippon, training a medical alert and response dog is harder than many may imagine.

"It's not an easy thing," Gibbons Philippon said. "I've been working with scent dogs for a little while now, and scent dogs specifically are really hard dogs to handle. He may not look like it, but Roman's a crazy nut job sometimes. The minute the vest comes off, he's a year old dog. He's been doing this since he was a puppy, and he's crazy because of it. It's hard, but I would definitely recommend looking into it."

Roman might just look like a cute golden retriever, but he's way more than a playful dog to Gibbons Philippon.

"Roman's consistency has put my entire family at ease," Gibbons Philippon said. "I have chronic and joint pain, and I'll have that for the rest of my life, but Roman is giving me my life back."



- 1. Photo from Amelia Gibbons Philippon
- 2. Photo from Amelia Gibbons Philippon
- 3. Photo from Amelia Gibbons Philippon
- 4. Photo from Amelia Gibbons Philippon
- 5. Photo from Amelia Gibbons Philippon



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