

WHEN LOVE COMES HOME AGAIN



Special Angel's Legacy 🐾

Last Friday, our friend Joanne lost Special Angel. Angel was 12, and her death was sudden. For 3½ years, this beautiful Australian Shepherd had been Joanne's constant companion and certified service partner. Joanne is disabled, but she walks miles every day with her dog—part of how she stays strong, healthy and connected to the world. Losing Angel left an enormous silence.

But Angel was not the first extraordinary dog whose life became intertwined with Joanne's—and this week reminded us that sometimes the greatest tribute to a dog we have loved is opening the door for another one who needs us.

A LOVE STORY THAT BEGAN YEARS AGO



Joanne's story with AnimalVillageNM goes back many years. When her beloved Mastiff service partner, Noel, was failing from congestive heart failure, Joanne adopted Obi from AnimalVillageNM.

THEN CAME OBI



Joanne + Obi — her devoted service partner for many years.

Obi had been returned to us a week earlier by an adopter who said he was “too stupid to train.” Within hours of coming back to us, Obi was responding beautifully to obedience training. He was soon chosen by Nathaniel Lucas, Pawsitively Transformational, as the best candidate for Joanne’s new service partner. Just one week after Obi joined Joanne, Noel died. Obi was there.

He became Joanne's devoted service partner and remained beside her for years, until cancer eventually took Obi, too.

THEN CAME SPECIAL ANGEL



Angel had originally been placed as a service dog through AnimalVillageNM. Years later, she came back to us when her adopter could no longer provide her a home. Joanne fostered her, Angel was re-certified as Joanne's service partner—and another remarkable partnership began. For 3½ years, they walked together.

A LIFE FULL OF SEASONS



Joanne celebrated the seasons with Special Angel and shared their adventures with us through the years.

And then, last Friday, Angel was suddenly gone.



THREE DAYS AFTER GOODBYE...

On Monday—just three days later—I drove Joanne to Animal Services Center of El Paso. Joanne needs a service partner. My longtime friend and Shero, Loretta Hyde, its director and someone whose commitment to thoughtful animal placement I have

admired for about 25 years, helped identify a dog she believed could be right for Joanne.

And his name is Ranger.

🐾 RANGER SHOWED HIS HEART 🐾

👉 We let **Joanne** “fall” to see if Ranger had service dog instincts. *He did.* 📈❤️



Joanne *gently* lowered herself to the floor...



Ranger stayed close, *steady* and *strong*.

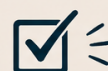


He let Joanne brace herself and *pull herself up*.



More than a dog...
a partner.

👉 **RANGER PASSED THE TEST** 👉
SERVICE DOG INSTINCTS: CONFIRMED 📈

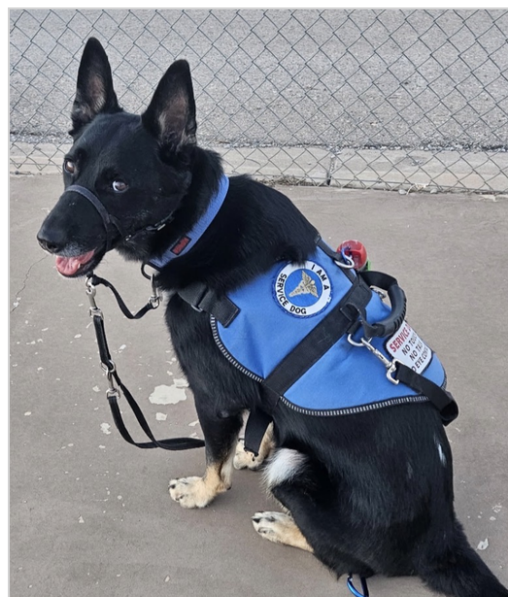


🐾 **WELCOME HOME, RANGER!** 🐾

FROM GOTCHA DAY TO HIS NEW ROLE



GOTCHA DAY



READY FOR HIS NEW ROLE



Joanne's relationship with AnimalVillageNM didn't end when she adopted from us. Today, she serves on our Board of Directors, where she researches grant opportunities and helps us find the resources to continue helping animals and families throughout our community. The woman who once came to AnimalVillageNM looking for the right dog eventually became one of the people helping us continue our work.

For those of us who have loved and lost dogs, opening our hearts again happens in its own time.

Ranger doesn't replace Angel.

Angel didn't replace Obi.

Obi didn't replace Noel.

Love doesn't work that way.

Each dog occupies a place that belongs only to them. But after years of waking up beside your dog, walking miles together, depending upon one another and sharing virtually every part of life, an empty leash can be almost unbearable. Opening your home and heart to another dog in need isn't forgetting the one you lost.

Life is better with a dog beside you.

Love is worth the eventual grief.

And there is always another animal waiting for someone willing to love again.

Welcome home, Ranger.

And Special Angel—your work here mattered. ❤️🐾