

# Working Dog

by Mike Thomas

## Casey Brightens Days at Brandywine Assisted Living

Recently I have heard many stories about the wonderful results that are being seen with the use of animals to help with improving the quality of life for people with medical problems. As we get older and our health starts to fail, the people around us seem to fade away. Friends pass on and young ones are older and living their lives. I cannot think of anything that would bring a smile to my face on a bad day more than a wagging tail and maybe even a friendly lick on the face. Many older or ill loved ones no longer live at home and do not have the luxury of having a pet of their own; the next best thing would be a regular visitor.

Carol Robinson, like many of us had recently lost her four-legged friend. Not long after her dog passed away Carol drove up to the Annapolis SPCA. As she approached, a puppy was sitting in the fenced area in front. He appeared to be a few months old and she was told he had just arrived earlier that day. He came over to Carol, sat down and put his head in her lap. He had already found his new best friend. The mixed breed, Bassett-



Griffon, started his new life with the name Casey. Casey and Carol took the Obedience Training Class at Pet Smart. Casey completed his class on February 24, 1998. Carol took notice that Casey was very good with people and was happy being around them. Casey's love of people would turn out to be a wonderful gift.

Carol had been involved in starting a program working with children using animals and was very excited, suddenly the director moved and the program ended before it even started. Not long after, Carol saw an advertisement for volunteers wanted at Brandywine Assisted Living in Fenwick Island. It seemed to be the perfect fit since it was right up the road from her home. Carol inquired about the positions and after some time and paper pushing she and Casey were in the door.

I went on a visit recently to see Casey in action. At 10:30 a.m. Casey enters the door and immediately barks in excitement to let everyone know that he is there. People can't help but smile, as Casey seems to smile at everyone he encounters. He makes his way around the room, led by Carol of course, saying hello and getting a rub from anyone showing interest in him. I was speaking with Kathleen who works at

Brandywine and she told me of one quiet gentleman, Ross, who keeps to himself, but not on days when Casey is there. I witnessed myself as Ross got down on the floor to pet Casey. Kathleen shared that the more reserved residents are more outgoing and enjoy participating in activities on the day that Casey visits.

Kathleen took me on a tour of the facility before I left. Brandywine Assisted Living in Fenwick Island is like a vacation condo at the beach. There is no shortage of things to do here. A few of the amenities

are a pool, theater room, bar, bingo hall, exercise room, and a full dining area that is as nice as any restaurant in the area.

Even in a place as nice as Brandywine, with all of its activities, a fluffy dog still seems to make all the difference in the world. Having had dogs most of my life, and knowing how wonderful they are, I can completely understand how they feel. I just hope that everyone gets to spend time with their pets and enjoy the "Casey" in their lives.

