

Angel Dogs: Divine Messengers of Love

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Falling asleep on guard duty in the Air Force can lead to severe punishment, even court-martial, and that's what Fred had done: fallen asleep while guarding one of the president's planes. Lucky for Fred, his loyal and loving dog Freckles woke him with licks to his face just as the security superintendent walked into the hangar. His face wet with Freckles's kisses, Fred felt relieved that his career had been saved. He also felt astonished, because Freckles had passed away more than a year before.

Fred's story is just one of the many intriguing accounts of how dogs have acted as angels in people's lives. The authors, both writing teachers at The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis who have together published a series of books on the spirituality of animals, compiled the stories in this volume from submissions to their Angel Dogs Contest and their online newsletter, *Angel Animals Story of the Week*. They all show how dogs and humans have connected on not just an emotional level, but a spiritual one as well. From the woman who discovered her maternal instincts through caring for a puppy to the man whose dog saved him from a deadly rattlesnake bite, this collection shows how dogs have acted as spiritual guides, heroes, emotional and physical healers, and even messengers from beyond.

Hershey, a black Lab-Beagle mix, was taken by animal control to the Lee County Stockade Annex in Fort Meyers, FL. She hadn't committed a crime; instead, she was entering the cell dogs program, where inmates live with and train dogs to increase the animals' adoption potential. It was here that Hershey met Jay, a deaf inmate who had joined the program with the goal of learning to be more patient. During their eight weeks together, Hershey would teach him far more than that. As the dog grew in confidence and mastered her skills, Jay learned to love, trust, and be close to another living being. When she passed her final test to become an American Kennel Association Canine Good Citizen, Jay learned that he could be successful at something. Instead of leaving jail feeling like he would always be a failure, he left knowing that with hard work and patience, he could be successful again.

These inspirational stories will appeal to animal lovers of all types, and especially to those dog owners who know that their canine companion is more than a pet; he's a full-fledged member of the family. With meditations following each story to spark the reader's own thoughts on the connection between humans and animals, this book will invite quiet time for relaxation and reflection.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (August 18, 2009)

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