

K-9 Deker: Friend and Partner

While most families were sitting down to enjoy a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving Day, Deker was climbing through the ash and over the rubble of an apartment building that had been destroyed by fire, searching for a missing mother of two. In the fall, while many families were preparing for Halloween, Deker was searching a wilderness park in Canada for a daughter who had gone camping with friends and never returned to her family. In February, when fans were concentrating on their Super Bowl plans, Deker was searching the icy river for a missing young man whose snowmobile broke through the ice. Whether the call comes in the middle of the night or the dead of winter, Deker is always there to help those who are in need.

Deker joined our family when he was just 2 months old after our previous collie, Banner, lost his battle with cancer. He was named in memory of Derek, a young boy that Banner had befriended at the Ronald McDonald House who had been an inspiration to us all as he bravely lived life to the fullest while battling cancer. We had visions of Deker taking up where Banner had left off as a calm, quiet companion and Therapy Dog but Deker definitely had other plans! It was obvious from the beginning that Deker was a very bold Collie with a lot of energy who would follow a slightly different path within our family and serving our community.

As a member of Emergency K-9 Operations Search and Rescue team, Deker first served as a training dog. He worked with two junior members, one who learned about what it takes to train a dog to become a search dog and the other who experienced what is required of a therapy dog handler. Deker showed such promise that we soon decided that he should begin the rigorous training involved in becoming a search and rescue dog in earnest.

In addition to puppy, obedience and agility classes, Deker has attended over 400 hours of national level search and rescue training classes as well as weekly team training sessions. He attended classes at Camp Dodge National Guard Training Facility, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security Training Center at Camp Atterbury, the National Search Dog Alliance, and the North America Police Work Dog Association Workshops. He rappelled off of buildings, searched inside abandoned hospitals and schools, trained at factories and FEMA disaster sites, ridden on snowmobiles, ATV's and boats of every description.