

# Shining Star Award 2019

Every year, the Collie Club of America selects the Shining Star Ambassador Collie. The award is open to any Collie that works as a Service Dog, Therapy Dog, Education/Library Assistance Dog or has done any exceptional good deed for his family or the community.

This year the CCA received 21 applications for the Shining Star program. The CCA Shining Star Committee has selected **Rose Marie Hutches and her Collie Fibber McGee** as the Shining Star Ambassador Team for 2019.

After adopting Fibber, an untrained, high-energy dog in 2013, Rose provided him with gentle, knowledgeable care and training. Fibber quickly earned several competition obedience and performance titles and was certified as a therapy dog through Therapy Dogs International. Today, Fibber provides comfort and courage to 13 facilities in central Illinois each month including senior assisted care and independent living facilities, a state mental health hospital, a shelter for abused women and their children, and several other facilities including hospital pediatric units, where he provides love and solace to children and their families.

Like most Collies, Fibber has an attraction to children. It's almost as though he is made of iron, and the child carries a magnet buried in its body. He leans toward the child, and soon they are tangled on the floor together. At two of the facilities Fibber visits with children, the children are burdened with mental or emotional problems, causing them to have outbursts, erratic movements, and unpredictable behaviors of all sorts. Fibber never flinches. He seems to know that these children cannot help what they are doing, and he remains calm, often quieting the child eventually. In another environment, the pediatrics department of a local hospital, the children often have serious physical ailments that cause them to not be as responsive as well children. Fibber accepts that. He is eerily quiet in these rooms, maybe showing them a trick or offering a paw to shake. In these hospital rooms, Fibber never forgets the weary-looking parents, aunts or uncles, or grandparents who spend countless hours with their beloved child. He offers them love and comfort as well. He is an equal opportunity lover when there is sadness.

Several nursing homes and independent living facilities welcome Fibber as well. There the population doesn't change as often as in the medical facilities, so he has old friends there



who call him by name, know his story, ask for his special “tricks” and who have pictures of him attached to mirrors in their rooms. These all know that when Fibber backs up to them, he'd like a “butt rub,” and soon they are delightfully scratching him, and he is doing his “moan” for them.

Fibber's favorite place to visit is a state mental health hospital. Here the patients feel fine physically, and not many volunteers come to visit. Often as Fibber enters the gathering room, a patient will shout, “Here's Fibber and his driver, Rose!” These young adults sit on the floor, and Fibber moves from one to the other, spending special time with each. The chaplain who oversees this program states that these residents often treat each other more nicely during these sessions than at other times and that the effect often lingers hours or days after Fibber has come to visit.

Fibber's work with those in stressful situations is extensive, and the number of people who have benefited from his calm, loving temperament is enormous. His moving, commendable story exemplifies the qualities of loyalty, devotion, courage and dignity for which the Collie breed is known, and qualifies him to serve as the 2019 Shining Star Ambassador.

Fibber McGee and Rose Marie Hutches received their official recognition at the 2019 Collie Club of America National Specialty at the Peoria Civic Center, Peoria, Illinois.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Shining Star Committee Co-Chairs: Corinne Boon and Deborah Gates*

*Committee Members: Ann Boles, MaryAnn Campbell, Susie Delorenzo, Ace Mask, Celia Van Voorhis ❖*