

Stratford u3a monthly meeting 28 June 2023, Methodist Church Hall.

We welcomed Marilyn Chalmers and her dog Ash to our meeting about “Dogs for Good”.



The charity began when Frances Haye started training her own pet dog in 1986 after losing her leg. Then she thought that she could help other people by training other dogs, so in 1988 she registered as a charity called Dogs For The Disabled. In 2015 it was re-registered as Dogs For Good as they had diversified so much and started helping children with autism, people with learning difficulties and adults with dementia etc.

The premises are custom built in Banbury and the dogs, after being socialised, are trained there to pick items up, collect the post, pull socks and other clothing off, rest their heads on people's knees, which is a calming gesture, etc. They then go on to change lives for some lucky people.

Ash is not a working dog as he failed to qualify as he refuses to go into lifts or butchers'! He did, however, demonstrate a number of the tasks that these wonderful dogs do. Ash is his real name, but he has nicknames like Polar Bear and Ashy Bear. He is a golden Labrador/retriever. These are the breed of dogs most favoured, but spaniels and poodle crosses are also used as they have the right personalities and retrieving abilities.

The breeders are allowed to breed only 4 litters for the charity. About 80 puppies are trained annually. Puppies undergo 12-18 months of socialisation before training to make them adaptable to a variety of situations and technical tasks. Marilyn is a socialiser and temporary boarder for the charity. The dogs belong to the charity until they retire at about age 10 years after which they may be kept by the family of the disabled person or re-homed.

Ash performed a number of tasks, including pressing door opening pads, removing a sock and a jacket from Marilyn and barking on command. He was extremely well behaved throughout the meeting.

Dogs for Good is a charity which is entirely funded by donations from the public. The dogs give “Life Changing Devotion”.

Helen Elliott, Speaker Secretary.

