

## Father-and-Son Team Relies On Extraordinary Helper to Soothe Their Patients' Anxiety and Ease Their Fears

Cooper is indispensable in Drs. Perry and Gary Opin's orthodontic practice in Milford CT. Every day he shows up to work with a cheerful disposition that never fails to calm, soothe patients and reduce their anxiety level.



Cooper also has fur and four legs. The three-year-old 17 pound Crestepoo is a certified medical therapy dog. Soon after Gary received Cooper as a gift, he brought him into the office. He and his father, Perry, immediately saw his potential. Cooper was a natural around the patients, and the patients loved him. It was then that Gary began researching how to make Cooper a legitimate member of the staff as a certified medical therapy dog.

To achieve this certification, the Opins enrolled him in a class through Delta Society. Delta Society is a national certifying organization that is dedicated to improving human health through therapy and service animals. Now that he is certified, Cooper is a regular sight around the office, and his services are invaluable. The Opins treat a considerable number of patients with cleft lip and palate and other craniofacial disorders. "These patients have had many surgeries and they do not trust anyone in a white coat," Perry said. Recently, he was working with a 4-year-old girl who has a hole in the roof of her mouth. He needed to take an impression so that he could fit her with an obturator. "Cooper jumped into her lap, and it was like anesthesia." From that point on, Perry had no problem completing his task.

"Cooper is one in a million," Gary said. "He just goes to any person who is nervous and puts his head in their lap."

His charms have also extended into the community. Cooper, for example, has completely won over the local FedEx driver. Perry stated "as soon as he see Cooper, he breaks into a wide grin and has a treat ready for him. If he sees us walking Cooper, he'll pull over his truck and give Cooper a treat." Gary also takes Cooper to the local hospitals, schools, and long-term care facilities so he can interact with more patients and spread his goodwill.

The Opins often take turns caring for Cooper at night. "Cooper usually goes home with me, but my parents fight me for him," Gary said. "He'll spend one or two nights a week with them."

Although he is well loved and the hero of the office, Perry admits Cooper has one minor flaw. "He'd leave me for a treat any day of the week," he said.

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