



**HOLLY**  
*Volunteer*

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# WALKING SMILE

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Thursdays might seem like average, ordinary days at Moffitt Cancer Center. But an average day at Moffitt includes groundbreaking research and treatments with remarkable patient care and unmistakable, exceptional compassion. An average Thursday might also include a visit with a beautiful Golden Retriever named Holly.

Through Moffitt's Pet Therapy Program, qualified dogs like Holly are able to visit and interact with patients, family and friends. This program is just one of the support services Moffitt offers to care for patients' physical, spiritual and emotional needs through every step of their journey.

Holly's job keeps her busy in the clinic lobby. She calms the patients and comforts them, which sometimes even lowers their blood pressure. It seems like a simple thing, letting people pet her and in turn "smiling" at them, but she lights up the room and the impact is almost overwhelming. Holly almost always makes a connection with the patients she meets, and now they share a unique and even stronger bond. She has also been diagnosed with cancer and is in the middle of the same scary fight. But she has yet to stop smiling and she still looks forward to visiting with her friends - old and new - on Thursdays.

That's when she gets her ears rubbed, her neck hugged, her belly scratched and her name called again and again. Holly loves it. She has even been nicknamed "The Walking Smile." This dog has so much love to give that she wouldn't be able to do anything else. This may be because she grew up alone on the streets and wasn't rescued until she was four or five years old. Her owner, Kelly Pavone, adopted Holly in June of 2009 and says rescue dogs know they've been rescued. They are so thankful to be loved they just give it right back tenfold. That is what Holly does. That's what she is uniquely equipped to do. Kelly says Holly has a sixth sense and knows exactly who to visit and how to help. She's right. Holly is patient with the children who run up and fall all over her. She is sweet to the elderly who reach down to give a gentle pat. She leans into you when she knows you need a hug. There is a noticeable difference in everyone after meeting this charming golden dog. She really is perfect for this job.

Kelly was first introduced to the idea of pet therapy when her father was able to interact with a pet therapy dog before going in for an open-heart surgery. She loved that idea and has wanted to care for others in the same manner ever since.

When Kelly adopted Holly she noticed right away the dog's special qualities and knew she was the right partner for Moffitt's Pet Therapy Program. Every dog has a personality, but Holly is full to the brim with it. She is mischievous, loving, quirky and charismatic. She has a few fantastic nicknames you will have to ask Kelly about, a favorite toy that is almost impossible to steal away and a history that rivals any orphan turned superhero. A dog this special deserves every chance.



*Kelly and Holly*

Holly's original diagnosis included seven tumors on her lungs and one on her chest. She was given only months to live and there didn't seem to be much hope, but Kelly believes Holly has much more love to give. So she began the search for any and all available treatments. After hearing about Holly's work with Moffitt, a research and development company agreed to treat her with an experimental vaccine that is part of a clinical trial for animals. The vaccine is showing promise and will be going into human clinical trials in 2014 at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Holly recently had her sixth cancer vaccine and the cancer in the lungs has stabilized, but the tumor on the chest continues to vary in size. Holly is monitored closely, though she doesn't even seem to know she has cancer. She goes about her day as happy as ever, wagging her tail just as often and loving those around her with the same amount of enthusiasm.

Kelly knows Holly has a purpose. She knows the fight against cancer is tough, and she hopes the clinical trial will lead to improvements in the treatment of animals and, ultimately, humans. She knows Holly is a huge part of Moffitt where so many are cheering for this great friend. Holly continues to do her job and brighten the clinic lobby every Thursday, which is anything but ordinary. 🐾