

Little dog acts as owner's ears

Bill Wundram | Posted: Thursday, May 28, 2009 10:30 pm |



Slices of Quad-City life: It could have passed for a foggy day in London town ... gray, grim and outside the windows, a drizzle. People are often nervous in doctors' waiting rooms, but there were passing smiles for the furry little dog at the feet of a woman.

I started to pet, but she smiled, "don't." On the dog was a little jacket that said: "Do not pet me. I'm working. Hearing dog."

Dawn Turner of Fulton, Ill., introduced me to the Shih Tzu. There are seeing-eye dogs, of course. But I had never heard of a hearing dog.

"Yoda Bear is a college-trained service dog, my ears," she said. Dawn is hearing impaired, but with the help of hearing aids, we could converse. She and Yoda were waiting for a friend, a patient.

"When my alarm goes off in the morning, Yoda hears and jumps on the bed to wake me up. If the doorbell rings, or someone knocks, Yoda gets me, a little dance to get my attention. He hears the phone ring, he fetches me. If I turn up my hearing aids, I can hear on the phone. He's alert to unusual noises, like sirens. He hears for me.

"He and I have traveled all over the country. Yoda is at my side, even when I work at Fulton Corp. People are so interested in a hearing dog that he even has his own Web site, www.yodabear.com."

Best of all: Yoda was "recruited" for his new role from a humane society pet shelter.