

September 7, 2015



 SCHOLASTIC

News[®] with Weekly Reader.

Edition 4

This Dog Is a Lifesaver

Video
Lending A Paw
scholastic.com/sn4

Meet Boo the Saint Bernard. Her super sense of smell helps keep her owner safe from a life-threatening allergy. **Page 4**

Vol. 78 No. 1 ISSN 0736-0592

Head to Our National Parks p. 2 • A Woman Makes Football History p. 3

Video
Learn more
about Boo!
scholastic.com/sn4

Boo wears a special vest to show that she is a service dog.

This Dog Is a Lifesaver

Meet Boo. This Saint Bernard does more than just roll over and play fetch. She's specially trained to save her owner's life.

One day in 2012, Gianna Minicucci (min-ih-KOO-chee) was shopping at Walmart. Suddenly, her dog, Boo, stepped in front of her and wouldn't let her move.

The huge dog had smelled danger ahead. A few peanut butter cup wrappers were wedged behind some nearby

Words to Know

detect (dee-TEHKT) *verb.* to notice or discover

allergens (AL-uhr-jehnz) *noun, plural.* substances that can cause an allergic reaction

cereal boxes. That might not sound dangerous, but it could have been deadly for Gianna.

That's because Gianna, now 11, has a severe peanut allergy. Being near peanuts, or even near someone who recently ate nuts, can trigger a serious allergic reaction. Gianna's skin gets itchy and swollen, and she has a hard time breathing. A severe reaction could even turn out to be life-threatening.

This wasn't the first time Boo had saved Gianna's life, and it

probably won't be the last.

"It's truly amazing to have her around," Gianna says of Boo.

A Dog With a Job

Boo didn't find those wrappers by accident. She is an allergy-alert service dog, specially trained to **detect** peanuts and other nuts. Boo went through a year of training to become a service dog. She learned special ways to alert Gianna to peanuts nearby.

"If the scent is really, really



Gianna and Boo are regular customers at a local deli.

bad, she will usually circle around me, or she will literally push me out of the way,” Gianna explains.

Boo also checks out new places to make sure they’re safe for Gianna to enter. She even sniffs people to check if they’ve been around peanuts.

Gianna takes Boo nearly everywhere with her. Because Boo is so big, she gets a lot of looks as they run errands in their hometown of North Haven, Connecticut. But Boo wears a special vest that shows she is a working service dog. That means she can go many places where regular dogs aren’t allowed, like grocery stores and restaurants.

One place Boo doesn’t go is Gianna’s school. But the school recently went peanut-free, and Gianna hasn’t had a reaction there since then.

The Nose Knows

Food allergies are a growing problem in the United States. Nearly 6 million kids have a food allergy. That’s according to

a group called FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education). With allergies on the rise, many families are turning to service dogs for help.

Part of what makes dogs great service animals is their amazing sense of smell. A dog’s nose is up to 100,000 times as sensitive as a human’s. That enables dogs to sniff out dangerous **allergens** that their owners wouldn’t notice.

In order to help Gianna, Boo always needs to stay alert. But she gets time to play and hang out, too. Gianna says Boo is like another member of the family.

“She’s more than just a service dog to me,” says Gianna.

—by *Lindsay Lowe*



Gianna and Boo in 2010

I’m Listening!



Springer on the job

Springer is a mixed-breed dog with an important job. He’s a reading buddy! Every week, Springer heads to the public library in Fletcher, North Carolina. The small dog listens quietly as kids read aloud to him.

Studies have shown that kids feel less nervous about reading aloud when they’re around a pup.

“There’s no judgment,” explains Springer’s owner, Rachelle Sher.

Springer is a therapy dog. Therapy dogs are different from service animals like Boo, which are trained to perform specific tasks for their owners. Therapy dogs offer comfort and affection to many people in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and other places. Therapy Dogs International, the group that trained Springer, has registered nearly 25,000 therapy animals in the U.S.