



# Mizzou Wire

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## Related links

- [MU College of Veterinary Medicine](#)
- [American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists](#)
- [Video transcript](#)

## Training Rover's doctor



Veterinary students who study for board-certified specializations such as ophthalmology complete four years of undergraduate work, four years of veterinary school, a one-year internship, a three-to-four-year residency and graduate work. Then they study for a four-day exam. Woof!

## Dogs with degrees

### MU veterinarians keep an eye on service dogs

Story by Nancy Moen Video by Shane Epping Published: May 28, 2010



Who let the dogs in? The [College of Veterinary Medicine](#) did. For two days in May veterinary ophthalmologists at [MU's teaching hospital](#) conducted complimentary eye exams for animals working as service and therapy specialists.

The sight-saving exams target canines with important jobs. Sydney, for example, warns her "mom" when migraine headaches are coming. Mason can locate the ladies' restrooms in stores. Flash understands hand signals. Chula knows how to open doors and drawers. Brownie works in a hospital and, in her spare time, performs with a dog drill team.

Assisting ophthalmologists [Elizabeth Giuliano](#) and [Jacqueline Pearce](#) with [National Service Dog Eye Exam Day](#) were several soon-to-be veterinarians. The fourth-year students of Team Vision soothed nervous patients, administered drops to dilate doggy eyes and distributed treats for good behavior.

### Sydney smells trouble

First up is Sydney, 7, a medical alert dog trained to tell Barbara Willis of Columbia when she should take medication for an oncoming migraine headache. Willis suffers as many as three migraines a week, some so severe that she temporarily loses her vision. By smell, Sydney knows when a headache is imminent and will lick Willis's ear to signal she has 30 to 40 minutes to prepare.

Born to a golden retriever who may have had a Rottweiler suitor, Sydney is a rescue from the Humane Society. She steps onto the movable exam table, which lifts her to working level for the veterinary team.

Sydney is nervous but accepting of the eye drops and later rubs her head on passersby in an attempt to clear her eyes. The students gather around to inspect her slow-growing cataracts. "No changes from last year," Giuliano says to the students, and to Sydney, "You are a very good dog."

She's clever, too. Willis taught Sydney a TV commercial trick — to retrieve cans of beer from the refrigerator — but had to untrain the precocious animal who began helping herself to the lunchmeat.

### Mason maneuvers through the mall



Students Mike Betley and Rachel Halpin assist Dr. Giuliano with Mason, a guide dog for Maud Campbell.

Mason, a golden retriever, is celebrating his sixth birthday with an eye exam. Giuliano uses a camera to display a magnified image of Mason's eyes on a video screen, giving the students a view of several uveal cysts at the periphery of his iris. Cysts are common among his breed and may grow over time, so Giuliano advises Mason to see an ophthalmology specialist yearly. Fortunately, he has healthy retinal vessels.

Mason's mom, Maud Campbell of Jefferson City, was born blind and relies on his guidance as a graduate of Leader Dogs for the Blind. Mason — her fourth guide dog — is so intelligent that she wants to keep him working as long as possible.

During the exam, Campbell ruffles her smiling dog's fur as she describes how perceptive he is (he once refused to get into a car with a flat tire); how assertive (he leads her to the front of a line rather than the back); and how smart (he can find an elevator or escalator on command). If she wants to buy peanut butter or soda at the store, he guides her directly to the brands she prefers. "He loves to shop," Campbell says.

But even a superdog isn't perfect. Mason made one memorable mistake early in his career when he led Campbell to a men's restroom instead of the ladies' room.

With emotion in her voice, Campbell thanks Giuliano for the complete ophthalmic examination on her golden boy. Giuliano took high-resolution photographs of Mason's eyes and will share them with Campbell,

Mason's home veterinarian and the specialty college that spearheads the free exams, the [American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists](#).

### **Will work for food**

Flash tries to hide under a seat in the exam room as the students and doctor enter. Eventually coaxed out, he leans against mom's leg while observing the team clustering around the exam table.

The 4-year-old Shetland sheepdog works as a mobility aid for Karen Darling. This "fetch-and-carry guy" excels in retrieving things for her and will even pick up dropped coins. In a quick demonstration, he paws at a dropped sheet of paper until he can grab it with his teeth and hand it to mom. Darling especially appreciates his ability to find a ringing cell phone and bring it to her.

Flash stand completely still while Giuliano checks his eyes. Only his shaking hind legs betray what otherwise looks like a calm demeanor. Patiently he waits for the release command to get down. The exam shows Flash has a healthy set of expressive brown eyes.

So where are the treats?

### **Good dogs for bad days**

Elsa and Brownie are sedatives on paws, therapy dogs who visit hospitals and nursing care centers to raise the spirits of patients.

Veterinary student Maren Jones, mom to Elsa, is training her for the Canine Good Citizen Test. To pass, Elsa must display good manners, be gentle and obey commands off leash. If the Rottweiler's comportment during her eye exam is any indicator, she's ready for the citizenship trial.

Certified therapy dog Brownie, a 7-year-old Brittany spaniel-pointer mix and Humane Society rescue, takes her job so seriously that even now she works the room. The friendly, freckled pooch makes eye contact and nuzzles hands for some petting. She gently puts two paws on the lap of anyone who's seated.

"Brownie knows when people need a friend, are depressed or upset," says mom Gina Stewart of Columbia. "If I cough, she comes to see if I'm OK."

Because Brownie is so calm, Giuliano can show the students detailed images of her optic nerve. The exam concludes with news that Brownie needs surgery to remove an eyelid tumor, so caregiver Brownie will soon be on the receiving end of the TLC she gives so freely.

### **Puppy love**

Just seven-months old, golden retriever Chula has a 20-word vocabulary and a personality that screams, "let's be friends."

She trots down the hallway to the exam room carrying a favorite squeaky toy in her mouth while staying tight to her foster mom, [Cristi Cook](#), DVM '94, MS '98.

A veterinary radiology assistant professor, Cook is raising Chula to become a service dog for [New Horizons Service Dogs](#). When she reaches 18 months, Chula will leave her foster home for job training as an assistant to someone who uses a wheelchair.

The pup is making great progress. Already she can tug open doors and drawers and drag a laundry basket with a rope. Eventually she'll learn to do the rest of the laundry chores, moving clothes from washer to dryer and from dryer to laundry basket.

Chula hops onto the exam table and turns to mom for approval but isn't the least bit intimidated. Surely, there will be more fun and petting.

Giuliano finishes the eye exam and says, "You're normal, Chula," but adds after a short pause, "No. You're

totally perfect.”

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