

KATY'S PET CORNER

Mendy Hassen loves to pamper her Maltipoo, Chanel



Katy's *Most Spoiled* Pets

Furry Friends Living the Good Life

Written by Natalie Cook Clark
& Photography by Marisa Hugonnett



Greenly and Holly love watching TV with Katyite, Carolyn Cook

*W*e've all seen the commercials of a fluffy, well-groomed dog waking from a nap on a satin pillow to eat gourmet dog food from a sparkling crystal bowl. As fancy as this may seem, some Katy families are taking pet owning to an even more sophisticated level by showing others, through their love, how precious their canine family members can be. "Whatever I give them, I get back in return many more times over," says Katy dog owner, Carolyn Cook. Like many Katy pet owners – myself included – Cook treats her two Shetland sheepdogs as members of her family. Katyite, Kelly Hlinak can relate. "I spoil my kids, so I'm going to spoil my dogs," she says.

A Reason to Pamper Pets

Mendy Hassen of Katy says that her Maltese poodle mix, Chanel deserves to be spoiled. When Chanel was 8 months old, she underwent major surgery to repair a spinal cord damaged since birth. The surgery was a success, but it didn't come without its complications. Today, most looking in would see a spoiled Maltipoo, but Hassen sees more than just a dog that she makes hand-mixed food for. "After all she's been through medically, she still has such a great attitude on life," explains Hassen. "She's inspiring."

Chanel earned a laugh or two on Facebook recently when she was photographed visiting her mommy's daughter, Shea. The fact that Chanel traveled wasn't unique, but her luggage was a sight to see!

Pets can tie us down. Cook is reminded of this each day when her dogs are often the reason for why she can't spend more time with her husband in Saudi Arabia where he works. I had to drive over nine hours to move, because I refused to fly my epileptic dog. Hlinak goes so far as to pick out furniture with her dogs in mind.

It's a Dog's Life

At the Hlinak house, it's definitely good to be a dog. The Hlinak dogs, Angel and Emma have total reign of the house. If they look cold, they are wrapped in a freshly warmed towel from the dryer. If they seem bored, they are taken for car rides even if it is just around the block. Hlinak has been spoiling - or as she prefers, loving - dogs since she was a child.

It is a good thing that Hlinak loves dogs, because lately, her home is running with them! Two of her daughters are home and have added their own dogs to the mix, including a litter of puppies taking the tail count to 11 dogs.

At the Cook residence, Shelties, Greenly and Holly look forward to their cozy nights of watching TV with their mommy, Carolyn. "I'm not spoiling them," says Cook. "When I watch TV, they join me." She has always had dogs and most of them have overlapped over the years. Currently, Greenly and Holly rule the roost. "You get so much from them," Cook shares. "The old saying, 'I wish I was half the person my dog thinks I am' is true. If you haven't experienced the unconditional love that a dog can give, then you are selling yourself short."

A Cherished Member of the Family

Many Katy families open their homes and hearts each day to furry friends. "My husband jokes that the family order goes: dogs, kids, then him!" says Hlinak. Dogs and cats bring love and unforgettable memories with them. I know from painful experience the sadness that comes with losing a family pet. It's like losing your best friend. A piece of them will always be with you and you hope that future pets can live up to the high standards that have been set – and they always do.



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"Each dog has been unique in their own right," Hlinak shares. Many times, puppies will take after and learn from an older family dog. "Having the dogs overlap has come with its problems," says Cook. "They teach one another their own bad habits." Holly goes crazy every time Cook wipes down the table, a bad habit of Greenly's that she learned from Tiffany, the dog before her. Holly also barks when Cook puts a new trash bag in the trashcan. "That bad habit is all Holly!" says Cook.

“Whatever I give them, I get back in return many more times over.”

–Carolyn Cook

TLC for Man's Best Friend

Bad habits aside, Hassen knows her pet is thankful for all she does for her. "I don't spoil my dog," Hassen says. "I'm only treating Chanel the way she deserves to be treated." People may laugh at the luggage, the warm towels, or the cozy nights in front of the TV, but these Katy pet owners don't let it stop them from showing their love. "They are so dependent on us," says Hassen. "I am responsible for feeding them, taking them to the vet on time, and so on. And in return, they give me everything."

So why do some people spoil their pets? I guess the real question is why are some people not spoiling their pet? Like the dogs at the Cook, Hassen, and Hlinak residences have proven, dogs spoil us. **KM**

NATALIE COOK CLARK is sad to be leaving Katy with her husband, daughter, and spoiled dog. She will continue her writing career from the forests of Arkansas and plans to frequent her hometown of Katy often until her family returns permanently.



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Carolyn Cook treats her dog, Holly as a member of the family

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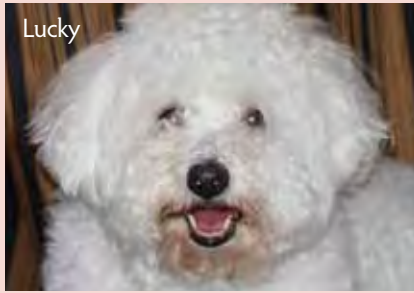
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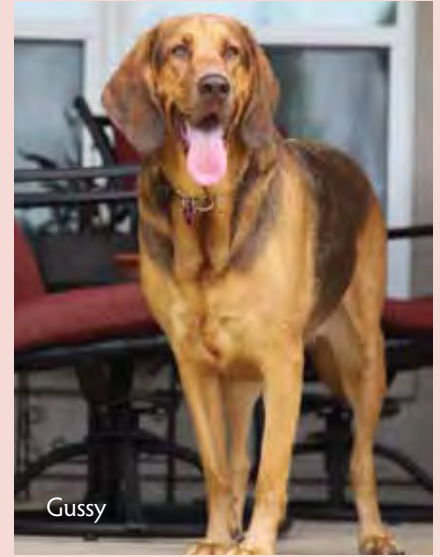
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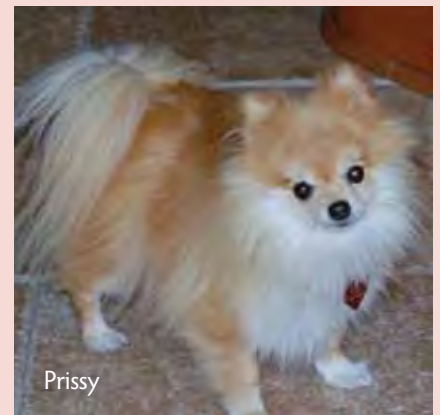
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