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Tori has more than 2 years of experience in the pet health industry and is junior editor of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team.

When Jeanne first met her husband, Gerald Rittinger, she had told him she was afraid of dogs. That is, until she warmed up to their neighbors' chocolate lab. Gerald suffers from Type 2 diabetes and needs to take insulin four times a day. Unfortunately Jeanne sometimes travels for work, so she decided to get Gerald a dog so he wouldn't be so alone.

According to [Lane DeGregory of the Tampa Bay Times](#), the first time the Rittingers went to visit some puppies she recalls this one yellow Labrador, "He was only a month old, in this pile of puppies in a playpen. But as soon as he saw us he broke free and ran to us, wagging his tail." When they went back a second time, the same dog seemed to have remembered them as he ran over to Gerald and nuzzled up against his leg. Gerald explains, "You could see it in his eyes, he has this way of looking at you, like he knows something." He was the one, and they named him Zeke.

Although Zeke had ever experienced any specific training besides the basics, he wasn't just your average pup. "He never really even got 'fetch'," Gerald recalls. "He just ate the Frisbee." But one day he did something miraculous. Gerald had just received news that his diabetes was getting worse and he had just been diagnosed with prostate cancer, giving him about 6 months to live. The Rittinger's were driving to his family cemetery with Zeke, who had promptly been told to stay in the backseat, but kept putting his paws on the center console slowly moving forward. A few hours into the drive Zeke began barking uncontrollably, while Jeanne, tugging at his collar "Down! Zeke, get down!" But that didn't stop him. Zeke jumped up again, brushed his face against Gerald's neck and licking his face. Gerald, all while laughing, tried pushing him away but this persistent pup was going nowhere. Finally they decided to pull off the highway to tend to their clearly agitated dog and seconds later, Gerald had a seizure. Jeanne states, "If he had still been driving all of us would have been killed." That was about 12 years ago,

reports DeGregory. Gerald had it all planned out and already had his headstone engraved and planted. He would have been coming home to die, but not on Zeke's watch.

That's not the only time Zeke has come to the rescue. He would sense Gerald's blood sugar dramatically decreasing and seizures before they had a chance to happen, giving Gerald time to take his medicine or call 911. Sometimes, he found Gerald sunken in his chair or on the living room floor and when Jeanne wasn't home he would alert neighbors.

There was one night when Jeanne was asleep beside Gerald and Zeke had leapt onto the bed and tugged at her arm until she turned on the light and found Gerald, who had just had a stroke. If she hadn't realized and called an ambulance at that time, he wouldn't have survived, reports DeGregory.

Jeanne mentions, "I know of 30 times, at least, that dog has saved his life. All the paramedics know Zeke." As well as all of their neighbors. "He's a hero. Absolutely," said Ray Ockuly, who lives a couple doors down.

Zeke is a hero indeed. Do you know any dogs like this? Share your heart melting stories with us!