

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment, where we feature news and information that you can use to live a healthier lifestyle. I have as my guests on the show today, Gabby Brimhall and Olivia Daniels along with Jamie Nordick our director at the Cancer Center. Good morning ladies.

Jamie Nordick: Good morning.

Gabby Brimhall: Morning.

Katie Johnson: I am so excited to have you here today to talk about one of the most heartwarming stories that I've heard around our campus for a long time. It's the story of a therapy dog. First of all, Gabby and Olivia, I'd like you to introduce yourselves to our listeners, and then we'll get into your background with the therapy dog program. Tell us who you are, who your parents are, how old you are, where you go to school? All that good stuff.

Gabby Brimhall: I'm Gabby Brimhall, I'm 13 years old. I go to Kennedy Secondary School. My parents' name are Carrie and Matt Brimhall.

Olivia Daniels: I'm Olivia Daniels, I'm 12 years old. I go to Kennedy Secondary School, and my parents are Chad and Jessica Daniels.

Katie Johnson: Great. Jamie, I think most of our listeners know you. I won't ask you how old you are and who your parents are, and that good stuff, but tell us what your role is here at the Cancer Center and with the dog therapy program.

Jamie Nordick: I work at the Cancer Center, and have now for six years. I just kind of see the overall operations of what happen here on a day to day basis. My involvement with the HeLa program was just making sure that she became therapy certified and that we could provide a safe environment for her, and then also a good experience and a safe experience for our patients.

Katie Johnson: You mentioned HeLa, that's the topic of our program this morning. Girls, tell us who HeLa is and how old she is.

Gabby Brimhall: She's two years old and she is a therapy dog at the Cancer Center.

Katie Johnson: What kind of dog is she?

Gabby Brimhall: A golden retriever.

Katie Johnson: A golden retriever. Let's start out by talking about what is, is it dog therapy, pet therapy, exactly what is it and what is involved in certification for a program like it?

Jamie Nordick: Pet therapy is actually becoming a very new form of therapy that is really being

recognized in all areas. You see a lot of dog therapy programs being implemented in nursing homes, in military, people coming back from war and being a companion for people that have experienced traumatic things. These dogs are specially trained to provide comfort and they've been shown to reduce stress in the patient themselves and also family members.

Katie Johnson: Tell me girls, how was it that you came up with the idea that the Cancer Center here should have a Pet Therapy Program? Where did the idea come from and how did you then take that idea and make it a reality?

Gabby Brimhall: We just wanted to help out the community in some way and we weren't sure how at first. Then we thought of getting a dog for the Cancer Center, it'd help cheer patients up.

Katie Johnson: What did you do when you decided we want to bring pet therapy to the Cancer Center. What did you do to make it happen?

Olivia Daniels: We came here and we scheduled a meeting and then she told us some things we needed to research like how much the therapy would cost, and other prices.

Katie Johnson: Then I understand you raised the money yourselves, is that right?

Gabby Brimhall: Yes.

Katie Johnson: What did you do?

Gabby Brimhall: We sold hats and bracelets and stuff to people at our school. That was the first thing we did. Then we took that over to the grocery store and people donated money and bought our hats and bracelets as well.

Katie Johnson: How much money did you raise?

Olivia Daniels: Around \$800.

Katie Johnson: That's fantastic. Then you brought that money back to the Cancer Center, and as I understand it, Dr. Tate, one of our oncologists had recently lost his dog. His dog had died and he was the one who kind of stepped up and said he'd like to take a lead role in this. Tell us a little bit more about what happened then?

Jamie Nordick: Once Dr. Tate decided to take that role and become the owner of HeLa, we really started looking into programs, how we were going to get her trained and how we were going to get her registered with the therapy association. It kind of just was a long process of, a dog needs to be at least one year old before they can through the classes and test to become a therapy dog. Actually Dr. Tate started with a four week training, just a normal basic training for HeLa just to learn normal manners, and to be comfortable around people. Then from that point after she passed that, and then became, hit that one year old. Then we got her signed up with a therapy

person to do the testing and to do the walkthroughs with Dr. Tate in the training.

Katie Johnson: What's a typical workday like for HeLa? Is she here every day, all day?

Jamie Nordick: She is here often. I know one of the therapy requirements is that a dog needs to not be in the work environment every single day. Dr. Tate is very mindful of making sure that she has some downtime. A lot of that is spent either at home or in his office. He has a special bed for her in there that she can rest from being around the patient care areas. Otherwise, a lot of her time is spent with him in the patient care, the clinic area. You'll see a lot of patients as they come to and from appointments, always stopping to pet her, to talk to her, to give her treats, even though maybe she's not supposed to have treats.

Katie Johnson: We won't tell anyone.

Jamie Nordick: Really, is very much in that patient care area. Then every once in a while you'll see Dr. Tate walking around with her to the infusion center, to radiation oncology and then the front lobby.

Katie Johnson: Can you describe what some of the interactions are like between her and patients?

Jamie Nordick: Definitely, nothing but positive is what we've seen come from this. People look forward to seeing her for appointments. If she's not in the clinic area, they'll ask where she is, does she have the day off? Just love to swing by and give her a petting for a while, will talk to her. I just think it's really, it's something that when you are kind of in this area, everyone has a connection with the dog, whether it'd be early in their lives or even currently. You get to see a lot patients and families connect over HeLa because they talk about maybe something that happened in the past in their family, but always positive.

Katie Johnson: Dr. Tate owns HeLa but you guys got to name her? That's a really interesting name. Can you tell me how you decided on her name?

Gabby Brimhall: We got HeLa from the initial letters of Henrietta Lacks.

Olivia Daniels: She was a woman who had cancer and after she died her cancer cells kept growing in the lab and that's kind of revolutionized cancer treatment?

Katie Johnson: Do you guys get to see HeLa very often? When you do see her, or what you hear about how she interacts with patients, what is it that makes her special, what do you love about her?

Gabby Brimhall: I just like to think about how she makes people happy and we see her sometimes. We used to have her over at our houses, but we didn't get to see her as much this past year because she's kind of going through training and everything, but we got reunited with her a couple of weeks ago and that was good.

Katie Johnson: Is there anything else that you would like our listeners to know about HeLa or about pet therapy or about taking an idea and making it happen?

Jamie Nordick: I think I can talk to the fact that I think it's really neat that we have two young ladies in the community that have thought about the patients that we care for here. That's a huge deal.

Katie Johnson: That's pretty cool. To Dr. Tate too for being willing to invest his time and personal energy into becoming a handler, from what I understand that's a really important role too. It's not just that he owns the dog, he's invested in the training as well.

Jamie Nordick: Correct. He actually has gone through extensive training alongside HeLa. Any training that she has received he has kind of been right by her side receiving the same training and taking responsibility to make sure that everybody that comes in contact with HeLa has a safe and a good experience.

Katie Johnson: Gabby and Olivia, I just want to say thank you. You are inspirational. I hope that you feel really good about what you are doing for the patients here at the Cancer Center and what you've done with HeLa. I know that there are many people who echo my sentiments and saying thank you. Thank you for not only just thinking about others but actually acting on it and raising the money, making HeLa certification possible. Then continuing to follow up and see what she's doing here at the Cancer Center. It means the world to a lot of people. We appreciate you and thanks for taking time to talk with us this morning.

Gabby Brimhall: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: Jamie. Thanks for all you've done too and for everything you continue to do at the Cancer Center. Please extend our thanks to Dr. Tate as well.

Jamie Nordick: I sure will. Thanks.

Katie Johnson: This is Katie Johnson, along with gabby, Olivia and Jamie on Apple a Day, talking about HeLa and our Pet Therapy Program at the Cancer Center. All of us remind you that there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.