

This dog is spot on

Firefighter finds a place for Payton to teach children

By Halley Griffin, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Tuesday, July 14, 2009

Photos:



[+enlarge](#) [purchase](#)

Geoff Crimmins/Daily News



[+enlarge](#) [purchase](#)

Geoff Crimmins/Daily News

Payton doesn't know how to stop, drop and roll, but that might just be the next trick in this young dalmatian's book.

For now, he just gets plenty of pats and helps kids learn to "get low and go."

"Kids seem to get that message of crawling along with a dog to get out of a smoky house," said owner and Moscow volunteer firefighter Andrew Domras. "If Payton can teach them a message, maybe they'll remember that Payton taught them that message."

Payton isn't an official fire dog. He lives at home with Domras' family and doesn't go out on fire calls. He does attend fire safety events to help the firefighters teach children about fire safety.

"He's a volunteer, just like I am," said Domras, who has been a firefighter for nearly 11 years.

Domras didn't expect to find himself with a dalmatian when he and his wife agreed to consider adopting nine-month-old Payton several years ago.

Some students who lived in an apartment were looking for a new home for Payton, and Domras' family took him in for a trial run one weekend.

"I never thought of having a dalmatian, but he just happened to come on that phone call for a weekend and never went back," he said. "It just happened to be that I'm a firefighter and I have a dalmatian."

At the station, Payton knows to leap into a fire engine when Domras gives the signal and spends his spare time walking every inch of any room that he's in.

"His nickname is 'Pacing Payton' at home," Domras said, as Payton made tracks around the department's second station near the Latah County Fairgrounds on Sunday.

Payton knows he's not going anywhere when Domras' pager sounds in the middle of the night, but does recognize another cue: Domras pulling out a bright red leash and collar.

"He has a special red collar and bright red leash, and he knows when he gets those on that he's coming to the fire station," Domras said.

Payton also takes a bath to get his black-spotted coat clean and shiny for the children that mob him at every event.

Domras said he sometimes looks into the crowd and can't even see a dalmatian under the petting hands of eager children.

Luckily, Payton doesn't mind.

"He will go up to anybody and everybody and just wants to be petted and say, 'Here I am, I'm a dalmatian,' " Domras said.

Domras said children around town are starting to recognize Payton when they see him out and about.

As thrilled as the children are, they're not the only ones oohing and aahing over Payton.

"Almost as many adults are as excited to see the dalmatian with the fire department," Domras said.

Payton has also ridden alongside firefighters in the University of Idaho homecoming parade the past several years and likes to howl along with the ambulances as they drive down the street.

"I thought he'd do OK at the fire department when he started to howl along with that ambulance," Domras said.

Halley Griffin can be reached at (208) 882-5561, ext. 239, or by e-mail at hgriffin@dnews.com.