

# These two love to work like dogs

On the surface, a mini mutt and a fearsome K9 seem to have little in common.

Yet, Chloe the mixed terrier and Titan, a police dog with the Stafford Sheriff's Office, both do best when they're fulfilling their purpose. Granted, their jobs are vastly different, but it seems like there's nothing else either would rather do than work.

Chloe, who weighs 12 pounds and is adorable, is fixated on performing whatever trick her owner, Christina Jones, asks of her. The Stafford County dog can play the piano



**CATHY  
DYSON**

Chloe is rewarded with chicken jerky or kibble but Jones is convinced she would do tricks regardless of treats, at least for a while, because she's so set on her job and pleasing her owner.

Titan is a black German

or play dead, shoot hoops, ride a skateboard or put her back legs against a wall and do a handstand. Seriously, I saw that. Blew my mind.

shepherd who weighs 85 pounds and can bring down suspects two or three times his weight. When I saw him training recently with his handler, Sgt. Baris Demirci, Titan showed the same enthusiasm as Chloe. His work is apprehending bad guys, and as the officers explained, it's all a game to him.

The "toy" is Titan's reward, and the toy can be the person in a bite suit during training or a real-life robber, runaway driver or man attempting to

# Dyson

From A1

kidnap a child.

It's clear that Jones and Demirci, like other owners, trainers and K9 handlers, have spent hours working with their dogs and have developed an incredible bond. Breed and size don't matter.

After adopting and training Chloe, Jones wants others to know that all dogs are trainable. "They're so smart and are bred to have a job," she said.

For centuries, dogs have been herding animals, protecting livestock or running rescue missions. Chloe's ancestors were great at hunting rats, and while there may not be many calls, hopefully, for that kind of work these days, she can still learn tricks to share with others. Chloe often "performs" at an assisted living facility in Northern Virginia.

Other dogs continue to be human helpers as therapy and

service dogs or as they detect diseases or drugs, bombs or people hidden behind walls. Titan did just that and helped the police apprehend a man who tried to abduct a child in Embrey Mill earlier this year.

An interesting story from the American Kennel Club lists 15 unique jobs of humans' best friends, ranging from dogs who herd reindeer to those who hunt for truffles but don't eat the pungent fungi as their piggy predecessors did. Others can sniff out bugs that might ruin priceless art or chase rodents and birds of prey away from airport runways to avoid a possible collision with planes.

I'm not at all surprised that canines are so good at all these different tasks, and more, because of both their work ethic and their desire to please. After all, no one's ever as tired as when they've worked like a dog.

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# High school grad celebrates special moments with food

**W**HEN MY oldest grandson, Tyler, was asked to share his favorite memories of lacrosse, as part of the recent Senior Night festivities at Liberty High School in Bealeton, he answered: “Eating before the game with the team.”

Most of the other seniors said the same.

When his family gathered at the school for a ceremonial “signing,” noting his plans to attend Randolph–Macon College, where he’ll also play lacrosse, his mother fretted she hadn’t brought balloons in the appropriate school colors the way moms of two girl lacrosse players had done.

Tyler didn’t care about inflated celebrations. His first question after walking out of the school was, “Where are we going to eat?” Never mind it was only 3:30 in the afternoon.

And, when his mother, sister and I sat down to plan his graduation party, which will happen next weekend, he grunted or shrugged his shoulders in response to most questions about photo displays, party favors and decorations.

But when the discussion turned to the menu—and more specifically desserts—he fired off his requests with the same velocity we’ve seen him whale the ball into the ridiculously tiny net on the LAX field. He wanted banana pudding from his mother, mini cheesecakes from me and lemon meringue pie from my mother.

Certainly you’ve sensed the trend. Tyler has a healthy appetite, but at 6 foot, 3 inches tall, he’s got a lot of room to fill. A few years ago, we had dinner at my mom’s, and everything she’d made had been



At a recent ceremony, Cathy Dyson’s grandson, Tyler (center), signs his intention to attend and play lacrosse at Randolph–Macon College.

## REAL LIFE

Cathy Dyson



eaten. When Tyler was still hungry, she handed him a loaf of bread and butter—and said later that she worried he was going to eat the legs off the table.

But Tyler’s stature isn’t limited to his height. If this grandma can say so herself, he’s grown into a handsome and talented young man, well-grounded in athletics, academics and his single-minded pursuit of a lacrosse-related scholarship to pay for college. He got a dean’s award based on grades and another allotment for lacrosse, and he and his family are extremely grateful.

As Tyler has enjoyed some of his senior-year events, there’s been lots of joy as well as a measure of sadness. His maternal grandfather died from COVID-19 last fall and his maternal grandmother later entered a memory-care facility. Not having them be part of these milestones is gut-wrenchingly painful for his family.

On graduation night, his mother’s Facebook

post was filled with pictures of him, posed with each group of relatives. There also was one of Tyler holding a photo of his Pop and MawMaw, who were there in spirit. I get teary-eyed every time I see it.

As we were planning his party, his mother texted the other day to say he wanted to add a few items to the menu. (Always with the food.) We’re having barbecue and some of fixings that traditionally are served, but others that aren’t.

That’s because Tyler wants his favorites: His mother’s broccoli casserole. His grandmother’s corn pudding. His great-grandmother’s potato salad. His aunt’s mac and cheese. His uncle’s baked beans. His step-grandmother’s pasta salad.

Almost everything on the table will have special meaning to the graduate, and that’s the best menu a party could offer as far as I’m concerned. Tyler’s made it clear during other special moments of his senior year, that food figures mightily into his celebrations, and it’s great that this one will be paired with some of his family favorites.

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# New work arrangement is worth writing home about

**T**O MY esteemed colleague Donnie Johnston and others who suggest those of us working from home have gotten lazy, I don't want to say kiss my pajama-clad rear end because that would be rude.

But I would like to offer a counterpoint to a recent column in which Donnie said it's time for "all these people who just love to work from home in their pajamas to get their rear ends back to the office." He said we've been pampered—a word I would never associate with the pandemic—and that we like sleeping late and don't want to get up early and drive to work.

When Donnie expressed a similar opinion last year, I reminded him that he shouldn't paint us all with the same brush. I bristled at the description because I know from personal experience—as well as that of my co-workers—that we've worked harder than ever before since setting up home offices. Part of it was because COVID-19 came along when the newsroom staff already was overloaded and undersized.

I agree there probably are folks who have spent more time watching their kids, or TV, than on their jobs while at home just as there are people who devote more time to gossip than tasks at the office. But there are many of us who've found working remotely a productive way to do business.

A report published almost a year ago by Microsoft's Work Trend Index found that two of every three employers around the world recognized the shift in employee attitudes, and locations, and were redesigning workplaces to accommodate the hybrid mix of workers who return to the office and those who want to remain at home.

Obviously, it's not possible in every field, but working remotely has been one of the few positive offshoots of the pandemic. I never would have believed it would work for me, but I'm a convert.

Yeah, I like the convenience of my home office. Of not being in traffic every day with tailgaters, speeders and erratic lane-changers. Of wearing comfortable clothes—not necessarily pajamas, but certainly pants with



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**For those in many fields, working remotely can be just as—if not more—productive than in-office work.**

## REAL LIFE

Cathy Dyson



waistbands instead of zippers and buttons.

I also like covering meetings remotely, then turning off the laptop and "commuting" from one bedroom to another—instead of driving almost an hour to get home the way I used to do. Those late-night meetings often threw off my schedule for days because, after the long session and long drive, it took an equally long time to decompress and go to sleep.

Early on, I missed in-person interviews because there's nothing like seeing for yourself the individual or situation that's the subject of a story. As vaccines and boosters came on the scene and cases dropped after each surge, I went back to meeting people in person.

Two weeks ago, I resumed the routine again and have enjoyed once more seeing folks face to face—or at least mask to mask. I'll still wear mine in public for a while because, as many of you have pointed out regularly, it's a personal choice and I'm opting on the side of extra protection.

I've written about too many deaths as well as far too many otherwise healthy people left with long-lasting problems after COVID-19. They weren't among the lucky ones who got little more than a cold. For almost two years, I've wondered, would I be the person to get a few sniffles or the one whose heart and lungs were impaired?

Even though I'm reporting in-person again, I'm not breaking my neck to return to the office. I can just as easily make phone calls, do research

and write stories without making the 42-mile roundtrip to Central Park. Not only does that save time and gas money and hopefully reduce carbon emissions and global warming, but it also keeps my sanity in check.

In the last week, I've talked with two former co-workers whose jobs were changed by the pandemic. One went to work for the military before COVID dawned and initially was surprised by her new schedule. When her shift ended, it looked like someone had rung the school bell as workers filed out of the office and headed to the train station or commuter lots for the ride south.

Since the pandemic has kept her home, she said she often works well past her shift, especially if she's in the middle of a task and wants to finish. Then, there's all the time saved by not having water-cooler conversations about what she did this weekend or watched on TV.

Another is doing IT and covers a large region, offering phone support when problems arise. It doesn't matter if she's in a cubicle at the office or on the couch in her living room, she does the same work wherever.

If she's able to wear her pajamas while doing so or even put something in the Crockpot, in between providing technical help, what's the big deal? She's still getting all her work done and she's got a better quality of life in the process.

As long as people do what's expected of them—whether they're cranking out stories or government-related projects—does it really matter where they do it? For me, this new way of working is something to write home about.

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