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Hickory Village resident Sharon Donnelly is shown with Ilse and owner Jerry Young.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Therapy dog popular visitor at Hickory Village

What has four legs and will work for a good scratch behind the ear? Ilse, a certified Therapy Dog International and one of the most popular visitors to Hickory Village Memory Care, a DePaul Senior Living Community in Hickory.

The 4-year-old German shepherd is owned by **Jerry Young**, of Conover.

"Dogs can get through to people when people cannot," Young said. "Seeing how people interact with dogs, it's life changing for some people and to me, it's more than worthwhile."

Young has owned certified therapy dogs for 30 years now. **Ilse** is his third. A good therapy dog should be "more or less bulletproof," Young said.

"They can't startle, they can't get upset and they can't react adversely in a bad situation," he said. "It requires some basic obedience training and they need to be able to

respond willingly to whatever command you give."

Hickory Village activities director **Anna Wilson** said everyone loves it when Ilse comes to visit. It brings back fun memories, and the dog provides residents with unconditional love.

"Dogs do not see your current situation, the wrinkles on your face, the gray in your hair, whether you walk or use a wheelchair or whether or not you have dementia or Alzheimer's disease," Wilson said. "They just know you need them just as much as they need you."

For information about Hickory Village, call administrator **Susan Blizard** at 828-322-2230.

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