

TAMKANG GOES CRAZY OVER ‘OHARA’ , A LABRADOR FOR THE BLIND

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Through the popularity of the Japanese book “Quill” , and the movie based on it, Labrador dogs as guide dogs for the blind have become the ‘flavor of the month’ for Taiwanese fans. There is in fact such a dog on TKU campus called ‘Ohara’ belonging to the system engineer, Chang Kou-rui, working at the Center of Resources for the Blind.

The book and the movie “Quill” describe how this dog is devoted to its owner, who is visually impaired, all its life. The loyalty and intimate relationship between them touch anyone who has read and seen the work. Such a close companionship is confirmed by Chang, who attended the premier of the film with Ohara. He found the ending very close to home as he understands the mortality of his dog, too. Ohara has been with him for five years and is very intimate part of his life. Life without him would be very unthinkable—the thought of it is already extremely unbearable.

Ohara is a cross between the golden retriever and Labrador. Thanks to “Quill” , it is usually the center of attention wherever they go. Onlookers would whisper “I’ m positive that is Quill!” to one another, or some of them would come up to touch Ohara, calling out for “Quill!” Such acts are actually very confusing to Ohara and annoy Chang immensely. He often reminds people not to disturb the dog.

Ohara, of course, is not Quill. It was shipped from New Zealand in 1999 and was sent away for training when it was about 6 weeks old. This training was vital to it as it learned to like and trust human beings. It also developed a tremendous patience during this time and the ethic of work. Chang explains that once Ohara puts on its guiding gears, it knows it is time to work and never shy away from it. Ohara works literally all year round.

However, being mistaken for Quill cannot always be such a drawback. Chang told of an incident where Ohara received a celebrity treatment from an airline when they were flying back from Hualien. A flying attendant requested from the ground staff a seat right next to his for Ohara. She told him a matter-of-factly that “It is for Quill, of course.” Chang was perplexed with the appropriate reaction to that kindness.

