

THIS COLLIE CAN FLY

Meet Rhyannon, a competitive dock diver. A what?

It's as close to flying as a dog is likely to come. The sleek collie mix girl stands on a dock. Below her is a swimming pool; behind her is her handler, poised to throw a rubber dolphin toy. As the dolphin arches over the pool, the collie soars into the air after it. There's a splash, then a measurement where the base of her tail hits the water.

This new sport is called dock diving. It's now a worldwide thing — and on Dec. 16-17, Rhyannon, an SWCR rescue from the Las Cruces, NM shelter, will compete in the 2017 North America Diving Dogs/AKC/Eukanuba Championship in Orlando.

Her handler, Xena Carpenter of Tucson, AZ, adopted Rhyannon to be her service dog in 2015, when she was just 8 months old. But in April of this year, Rhyannon's



Two and a half years ago, SWCR rescued a skinny, high-energy collie mix puppy from the Las Cruces, NM shelter. She'd been picked up as a stray but no one came for her. She soon was adopted and became a service dog — and, a few months ago, a competitive dock diver, earning her Senior Title and then Masters Title with a personal best jump of 22.2 feet, which qualified her for the national championship.

foot was run over by a shopping cart and she became fearful of going into stores.

"This presented us with a challenge," Xena said. "We needed to find ways to rebuild her confidence. First we tried sheep-herding — lots of fun, but not as confidence-boosting as we had hoped. I knew she loved swimming and retrieving toys, so I put the two together and her true passion was born."

The pair took classes at Animal Watchers in Huachuca City, AZ. "We swam, did agility, and dog-parked for conditioning.

Rhyannon learned to deal with crowds, jump from new docks, and adjust to the sound of the announcer and loud music.

"Her coaches kept telling me she was really good ... and then she did it! At only her third competition, she qualified for the championship.

"I am so proud we kept at it, and so excited for Rhyannon's big adventure!"

If you'd like to help fund Rhyannon's trip to Orlando, go to www.gofundme.com. Search "Ammie Carpenter" and Select "Help Rhyannon get to Diving Finals."

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SOUTHWEST COLLIE RESCUE

