

A Dog's Purpose by W. Bruce Cameron 2010, Tom Doherty Associates, 319 pages

Bailey is a golden retriever puppy with vivid memories of his short, tragic life as a stray named Toby. Surprised to receive a second chance, he has a nagging sense that there is something he's supposed to be doing.

His first mother taught Bailey to open a gate and escape. Using this knowledge, he leaves the kennel where he was born to look for answers.

His search for his purpose leads Bailey to his boy, Ethan. It is love at first sight for eight-year-old Ethan and his new puppy. The two quickly become inseparable, spending the long summer days exploring the neighborhood together.

Life as a family pet is wonderful and fulfilling. Bailey takes great pride in being a "good dog," and spends a considerable amount of time trying to figure out exactly what that means. Bailey decides that his purpose is to take care of his boy, and throws himself wholeheartedly into the task.

Bailey adores summers on the grandparents' farm. There are ducks to chase, acres of pasture and woods to roam, and a pond for fishing. The first time Ethan jumps into the pond, Bailey panics, dives in and pulls his boy out. "Rescue" quickly becomes one of their favorite games, once Bailey realizes that his boy isn't really in any danger.

The years pass and Ethan, like all boys, grows up. Bicycle rides around the neighborhood become car rides to high school football games. Ethan begins spending time with a pretty girl named Hannah while Bailey spends more time with Ethan's mom, but he never doubts Ethan's love.

When the end of his life comes, Bailey is surrounded by his loving family. He lets go, filled with a sense of peace and convinced that he's fulfilled his purpose. Which is why he's shocked when he awakens as a German shepherd puppy.

As he gradually becomes aware of his new surroundings and circumstances, Bailey is surprised to find that this time, he's a girl. Once again, he remembers the details of his previous lives, and he aches with longing for his boy.

Bailey is selected by a policeman named Jakob for training as a search and rescue dog. Now called Ellie, she finds that her days spent playing "rescue" with her boy in the pond serve her well. She decides that her purpose in life is to find and save humans. But her heroic and successful career is not the end of her journey. Reborn once more, Bailey must draw on everything he's learned to discover his true purpose.

In *A Dog's Purpose*, author W. Bruce Cameron explores the bond between humans and dogs by putting his readers inside a dog's head. By turns funny, touching and heartbreaking, this book is a beautiful tribute to the relationship between dogs and humans.

I couldn't put this book down, and as I read, I couldn't help but recall the dogs that have enriched my life over the years. *A Dog's Purpose* is a must-read for anyone who's ever loved a dog!

Heather Holley-Hall is the Head of Branch Libraries with Alamance County Public Libraries. She may be reached at 336-570-6730 or hhlhall@alamancelibraries.org.

