

A photograph of Joe LaPorta, a middle-aged man with a grey beard and mustache, smiling warmly. He is wearing a black leather jacket over a red shirt. He is holding a large Bernese Mountain Dog named Duke. Duke has black, white, and brown fur and is looking up with its mouth open, showing its pink tongue. They are in a wooded area with many brown, fallen leaves on the ground.

Joe LaPorta- The Friendly Accountant

As Great As He Is, You'll Love His Best Friend, Duke, Even Better

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Meet Duke. He'd like you to get to know his human, Joe LaPorta. Joe's an accountant by trade and a hiker by choice. And for Duke, he's the best human ever.

There's likely plenty of humans who would agree with Duke. Joe's a gregarious man, friendly, open – not the usual sort that you'd expect to be an accountant. It's his way. He says that sometimes he thinks it's a curse. "I'll be at the grocery store and I'll make four friends in line."

What accountant could say that?

"If I have to put words to it, my claim to fame is that I'm called 'the friendly accountant,'" he admits. "I'm not one to talk about myself, but I'm very approachable and I treat people the way I want to be treated. I try to educate and be friendly. I find that there's a lot of value when you try to educate." This transparency doesn't cost anything extra. It's just Joe living the way he is.

"But if anybody's going to get anybody's attention, it's not me. It's gonna be Duke. He's a beauty, a Bernese Mountain Dog. He was my daughter's dog, but when her living circumstances changed, it became a permanent dog sitting situation. Then we bonded, and that was just that."

Although Duke's his roommate now, his three daughters are his world. "What could be more important in life?", he asks. But now, one will have to settle for visitation rights with Duke.

Outside of his daughters and dog, one of Joe's biggest passions is hiking. He's the organizer of the New Jersey Nomads, a hiking club that boasts about 2,300 members. "You meet a lot of people and it's just a healthy way of living. And Duke loves it – and they love him. But I have to have an appointment set up at the groomer on my way home. If he sees a mud puddle, he'll be in it. He won't be brown, black, and white anymore. He'll be all black – nothing you want to bring into your house."

Professionally, Joe's carved out a niche in construction accounting as the owner of JLP Accounting. "The construction industry is my forte. I actually love it. You really gotta be up on it or you could sink really fast, even if you're a seasoned accountant." Construction has been part of his business for a majority of his 30 years in accounting. But it's far from the only work he's been doing. His local clients include sports shops, beauty salons, and landscapers, among others.

So if you find yourself hiking some trails somewhere and a huge, (possibly) mud-covered dog wants to introduce you to his human, you might come off the trail with a new accountant and a couple of new friends.