

GRREAT Foster Homes

Fall 2012 Edition

GRREAT Beginnings

www.GRREAT.org/fosters

WELCOME AND THANK YOU!

Barbara Bertsch Boyd, President
president@grreat.org

WELCOME TO THE REVITALIZED FOSTER HOME NEWSLETTER! We could not do it without you. While all our volunteers are important, our Foster Homes are the heart of GRREAT's success. Without your willingness to take our wonderful Golden Retrievers into your homes and provide them with love, guidance, and security we could not save roughly 250 dogs each year.

Dogs come to us for a wide variety of reasons and from diverse home situations. Some have been loved, some have been strays, some are sick, others have been neglected or abused. No matter their individual circumstances, you take them in and help them become the pups they were meant to be. Finding just the right forever home (even-if it's yours) for each one is what GRREAT is all about.

Thank you so very, very much for all that you do!

Fostering Challenges

by Mary Collings, Intake/Foster Home Coordinator
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There can often be numerous and unexpected challenges when taking in a foster dog.

Before bringing a dog into the rescue, a thorough intake interview is conducted with the owner where just about every imaginable question is asked about the dog. The purpose of asking these questions is to find the best and most suitable foster home for the dog. Unfortunately, there are times when what an owner tells us about their dog is not always accurate and often times, a foster home will get a dog who is nothing like he/she was described by the give-up owner. The reasons for this vary and can be as simple as the owner didn't actually know their dog very well or it could be that the dog's uncertainty by being in new surroundings has caused a new behavior.

When we bring dogs in from shelters, little background is provided to us by the shelter. Even when a dog is surrendered to a shelter by the owner, the owner doesn't often provide much information. There have been a couple of times when the owner didn't even tell the shelter the dog's name. These dogs can be more challenging as fosters.

Any time a foster home is having a behavior issue with their foster dog, the foster home can email their Support Team for help. Many of us on the Support Team can offer suggestions from our own experiences with foster dogs and/or our own dogs. If the problem is a serious behavior problem or a problem that we have no experience with, I will find a trainer to work with you and your foster dog to resolve the problem(s). Every foster home is assigned a POC (point of

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GRREAT AUTUMN UPDATES

FALL EVENTS: FUN FOR GOLDEN FAMILIES

Fall is the time of year where just about every weekend has a fun event lined up for you and your Golden. Check the Calendar of Events on the GRREAT website to find an event that interests you.

Howl-O-Wine (Sponsored by Wags for Hope)
Saturday, Oct 20, 2012 from 12pm-5pm
Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard
18125 Comus Road in Dickerson, MD

BARCStoberfest at Patterson Park
Saturday, Oct 20, 2012 from 11am-4pm
2601A E. Baltimore St. in Baltimore, MD

GRREAT 3K Walk
Saturday, October 27, 2012
Registration @9:30am; Walk begins at 10am
11021 Lee Hwy. in Fairfax, VA

FALL ADOPTION DAYS

- Oct 6th: PetCo in Alexandria, VA
- Nov 3rd: PetCo in Beltsville, MD
- Dec 1st: PetCo in Dale City, VA



Golden Opportunities

by Robert Moore, Education Coordinator
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Fostering a Golden...what does it mean? What does it involve? Why would I do it? Can I do it?

We've shared our life with GRREAT dogs since 1997, but have never fostered. Why? Fear I think, terrified of giving up a dog who has padded into our lives. Many GRREAT volunteers foster one or more Golden Retrievers and rely upon GRREAT and each other for tips, moral support, and general foster conversation. As GRREAT's Education Coordinator, I'm responsible for bringing back the *Foster Home Newsletter* after a three year hiatus; I reckon it's time I get a handle on this fostering business!

What would be my reason for fostering a dog? Is it a trial period to determine whether I want to adopt a particular dog, to find the right Golden to offer a forever home? Is it a smart way to obtain a "free" dog - vet care paid by the rescue, advice, necessary dog gear? Or, the big concern...how could I ever give the dog up?

Should I approach fostering with a prototypical dog in mind? Or do I welcome the dog that really needs my support, regardless of health or specific special needs? Many factors are called into play here, such as my existing animals and my ability to handle the special, including behavioral, needs. Ideally I'll respond favorably to the call telling me, "There's a dog here that really needs your help," and I'll end up with a Golden opportunity to make a difference.

Fostering is not a way to get a free dog, nor is it a trial period before adoption. It certainly isn't easy and can be stressful, requiring dedication, hard work, serious time commitments, lots of stain remover and above all an understanding of the purpose of the process. What fostering IS is a way to help a dog that really needs you. What fostering IS, people tell me, is the most rewarding thing they've ever done.

Many, probably most, who foster already have one or more dogs and most have finite capacity/room/facility/tolerance for the number of dogs they can manage. Somewhere I read this capacity thing is referred to as "slots." Say we have two dogs and either because of time or space constraints, personalities of our existing dogs, or some other reason, we can cope with a maximum of four dogs; accordingly we have two extra "slots" for additional dogs in our pack. If we adopt a dog we're fostering, that "slot" is no longer available for the next dog that needs us.

So how do we avoid becoming too attached? The advice I'm getting is "Never allow yourself to think of a dog you're fostering as 'yours.'" Each dog already belongs to someone else; you just haven't met that person yet." With that mindset we must understand we're providing lodging, care, security and love for the dog(s) we foster until their real family shows up to take them home.

My Foster Mom . . .

*She caught my defeated glance,
My bowed head. Trembling,
I was a broken dog.*

*"I'm so happy you're here,"
She whispered.*

*I cowered in the back seat
Awaiting the harsh word,
The angry outburst I knew
I deserved.*

*She just put her arms around me;
She buried her face in my neck. And
Wouldn't let me go.
"I'm so happy you're here."*

*I was scared; I was filthy; I was
embarrassed. I growled. But She . . .
never let go. She just never me let me
go . . .*

*Now, all these years later:
And me; look at me!
Happy, secure. At home.
Just like she always promised!*

*She believed in me. And
She did let me go
She let me go Home . . .*



Fostering Challenges

by Mary Collings
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contact) and the POC will vary from foster home to foster home. The rest of the Support Team, that never changes, consists of Ann Nelson (the POC Team Leader), Jessie Pickard (Adoptions Coordinator), Lucinda Twining (Medical Coordinator) and myself (Intake/Foster Home Coordinator).

In addition to unforeseen behavior problems, we also bring in dogs who are told are healthy but then find out that they aren't. This presents a new set of challenges for a foster home who might not feel equipped to deal with medical problems. Lucinda will work closely with you and your GRREAT vet to get your foster dog healthy again.

If at any time you feel that you are not the best foster home to deal with your foster dog's behavior or medical problems, the dog can be moved. We always hope that for the dog's sake, we won't have to move the dog to another home and possibly cause additional problems for the dog, but we also understand and know that not every home is the right home.

We appreciate your dedication to GRREAT and your willingness to help the Golden Retrievers who need and deserve a new start in life.





The Business of Fostering a Dog

by Jessie Pickard, Adoption Coordinator
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A Dog's Daily Routine

One of the best and quickest ways to help your foster feel more happy, healthy and confident, is to establish a routine. Dogs benefit from a schedule which includes things like eating and play time. Most dogs thrive on routine and, though they do not keep track of time like we do, their circadian rhythm, or internal clock, make it possible for them to tell when it's close to the time for a routine task.

The following sample schedule is appropriate for a dog of average activity and normal health. Adjustments can be made for age, activity level and health issues.

An Average Day with an Adult Dog

Food: Most adult dogs should eat twice a day. This keeps their metabolism stable and aids in digestion. You'll find they quickly catch on when feeding time comes. A sample schedule would be:

- 7:00 am - Breakfast
- 6:00 pm - Dinner

Water: In general, it is best to leave a fresh bowl of water out for your dog every morning and every evening. Dogs should always have clean water after any activity. If you're working on housetraining or have a dog that over-drinks, you can schedule the amount and times you provide it. But watch your dog carefully and, if he seems to be thirsty, increase the amount. A sample schedule for monitoring water would be:

- 7:00 am - Clean and fill bowl half-way
- Noon - Rinse out and refill half-way
- 6:00 pm - Rinse out and refill half-way
- Bedtime - Clean and fill bowl 1/4 of the way



Sleep: An average dog sleeps about 14 hours a day. Unlike humans, they sleep for shorter times more frequently. A dog's REM cycle is more active than a human's and may explain the phenomenon of "chasing in their sleep." By scheduling his activities throughout the day, you will naturally create a good sleeping routine.

Play: Play is imperative to keep a dog's skills honed, to provide stimulation and just to have fun. Play can mean a game of fetch with you, a board game where your dog has to do tricks to earn a turn, a doggie play date, or even interactive toys when you are away. Try to get two play sessions in a day. A sample schedule would be:

- 8:00 am - Spend atleast 15 minutes playing with your dog
- 4:00 pm (or when you get home) - Schedule a play date or try something creative like a game of hide and seek

Activity: Activity is imperative for a dog's mental and physical health. Ideally, a dog should be walked twice a day for 30 minutes. An extra walk does no harm and, in fact, will benefit you both. In our hectic society, however, this can be tough, so consider enlisting the help of a dog walker. Also keep in mind activities other than walking, such as the dog park. A sample schedule would be:

- 6:30 am - Walk your dog before his breakfast
- Noon - Walk your dog (this is where a dog walker could be helpful)
- 5:00 pm - Walk your dog before his dinner

Together Time: Together time is a bonding experience for you and your dog. This is the easiest thing to schedule as it can be on the couch while watching T.V. or outside reading a book, or on the bed at the end of the night. The key is to focus on your dog and pet and massage him. Dogs love a light massage and many are happy with your foot stroking their back. Even just sitting touching your dog is a bonding activity.

Every Year It's Something

by Lucinda Twining, Medical Coordinator
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Every year it's something!

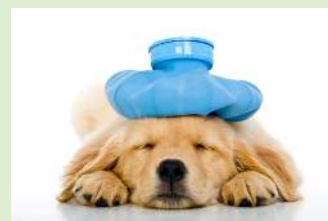
It seems that every year there is one thing that seems to dominate the list of medical issues bothering our golden foster dogs when they come into GRREAT. One year it is heartworms, another year it is Lyme disease, while another year it is cruciate ligament injuries.

So, what do you think it is this year?

- Ear Infections?
- Allergies?
- Hot Spots?
- Hip Dysplasia?
- Lyme disease, again?

Think about it for a minute. You know goldens; what do you think is topping the list so far in 2012? Think you know?

Well, would you believe that so far this year the number one medical issue is non-cancerous lumps or masses. As this is written we aren't quite halfway through 2012 but we have already had vets remove 17 non-cancerous masses from foster goldens coming into GRREAT. That is even ahead of the perennial favorite – ear infections which currently stands at 15.



We've had all kinds of non-cancerous masses; everything from a small mass on a gum to a very large mass on a hip! The good news is once the mass is removed, these pups go on to lead happy and healthy lives.

So far this year the top 6 medical issues are:

1. Non-cancerous lump/mass - 17
2. Ear Infection - 15
3. Tick borne diseases & intestinal worms - tied at 8
4. Underweight & UTI (Urinary Tract Infection) - tied at 7

As you can see, there are more than twice as many cases of non-cancerous masses than there were dogs with tick borne diseases (including Lyme disease) and intestinal worms (including whipworms, hookworms, and roundworms).

Yes, every year it is something; will it still be non-cancerous lumps/masses by the end 2012? Come to the Annual Meeting in January 2013 and find out!

Meet & Greet

MIRANDA McELROY, POINT OF CONTACT

I am Miranda McElroy and have been a volunteer with GRREAT since 2009 when I realized my affinity for the breed after meeting my now husband and his golden Wesley. I was lucky enough to foster and adopt my girl Dixie from GRREAT in April, 2009. The four of us (and occasionally a foster) live in Wilmington, Delaware. We enjoy being able to travel and boat with our dogs and most recently took them to Niagara Falls!



MIRANDA WITH HER GOLDENS, WESLEY AND DIXIE

JEANNIE BLOOD, POINT OF CONTACT

I'm Jeannie Blood and have been owned by Goldens for over 30 years. Currently, my husband, Ken, & I have 2: Jack, (who we fostered and then quickly decided to adopt) and Takota. We love to be outdoors and we take our "boys" with us wherever we go. They love to go hiking with us, as well as, to the beach every summer for some fun R&R.

I got involved with GRREAT when our previous Golden, Argus, traveled to the Rainbow Bridge and the house was way too quiet. So, we decided we'd foster to break up the silence. I picked up Jack a few days after Christmas 2003 (a late, but wonderful Christmas present). Although in need of some medical attention, he was a very sweet, well-behaved dog. It was Ken that said – we have to keep him! We then got him a puppy little brother in the spring. I've increased my volunteering with GRREAT from doing transports, to home visits, to becoming a POC; and we even foster from time to time. I enjoy attending the many assorted GRREAT events, especially with the "boys"!



BOB McDONALD, POINT OF CONTACT

I am Bob McDonald, one of GRREAT's Points of Contact (POC's). Following graduation from Georgia Tech (Civil Engineering), I married my best friend and we began our odyssey in life that has included 21 years in the Army, 4 years working for an engineering consultant in Chantilly, 18 years working for the Virginia Department of Transportation, and now our retirement.

While we had long-haired Dachshunds for several years (very stubborn dogs), we switched to Golden Retrievers in 1985 when we returned from Germany, and have stuck with Goldens ever since. We appreciate their patience and gentleness (particularly around grand kids) in addition to their innate desire to be near us and please us. Abby (07-057) is our second GRREAT dog and, while there is some Golden in her, her mother was not a virtuous lady -- there are also traces of Terrier, Pit Bull, and possibly hunting dog in her. But, Abby is gentle, obedient, and a great companion. I very much appreciate and am glad to support the work that GRREAT does to save these "gentle giants" (as I once heard them described) and pair them with loving families.



BOB WITH HIS GOLDEN, ABBY