



The Peppertree POST

What do we do? Rescue Dogs of good temperament who need new homes • Cooperate with and assist other rescues, shelters, and animal control • Educate the public about how to obtain a companion animal.

SPRING 2006 ISSUE

Statistically (and Historically) Speaking ...

Now that I've put you to sleep with that headline ... grab a cup of coffee and read on.

This is Peppertree's 8th year of operation; we began on January 1, 1999. At that point we had 32 dogs in the program that had been "inherited," if you will, from the purebred Golden Retriever rescue group, GRROWLS, from which we branched off.

Historical note: At the time we were beginning operation, Peppertree was a bit of an odd creature. The organization continued as a purebred Golden Retriever rescue. We are currently recognized as such by the



Nelma

Dogs placed	100
Dogs on trial placement	3
Dogs not placed	15
Assisted Katrina dogs	12
Other	28
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Dogs taken into program	158
Spayed/Neutered	76

GRCA's National Rescue Committee: www.grca-nrc.com, but we also became an all-breed/ mixed-breed rescue. Fortunately for the breed, Goldens (and almost-Goldens), are well-protected by a national club that is supportive of rescue and by a number of excellent breed rescue groups in the northeast. That allowed us to be able to continue working with "our" breed but also expand our services and safety net to many other dogs.

Beginning with those 32 dogs, we have taken in a total of 1,707 dogs during our first seven years. The annual totals for 1999 through 2005 are, in order, 285, 237, 259, 267, 284, 217, and 158. As you can see, the last two years have seen a marked decline in the number of intakes, and as best we can figure out, there are two primary reasons for this.

continued on page 2, see Statistically

Statistically, continued from page 1

One reason is very positive: there are simply fewer litters of unwanted puppies in this area. Unfortunately, our detailed statistical breakdowns for 1999 through 2001 are (we hope) on some as-yet-unlocated floppy disk where they were saved when there was a change in computers. But we have the numbers for 2002 through 2005 and they confirm that there are in fact fewer puppies coming into the program, with the annual numbers for dogs under 6 months going down from 63 in 2002 to 22 in 2005. This can only be good news, as it reflects the increased willingness of people to spay and neuter their own pets and the increased ability (or sometimes just sheer determination) of shelters and rescue groups to make sure that every animal that comes into their care is spayed and neutered. The gain in terms of quality of life for the puppies that are born is incalculable. We are currently working with some Southern shelters and rescue transport people to develop a good, safe system to get some of the many unwanted puppies in that

area of the country up here where there are homes waiting. This has become a national trend recently, but the actual transport has to be done very carefully, so as not to risk the health of the puppies or the dogs in this area.

The other reason for the decline, as best we can tell, is less encouraging and very pragmatic. The simple truth is that taking care of the dogs costs a great deal more now than it did seven years ago. We still get excellent cooperation and help by way of discounts from veterinarians (especially Shaker Veterinary Clinic, which has been a willing and excellent partner in our rescue work for years) and other service providers, but it also costs them more these days. We have raised our adoption fees from \$125 -- to \$150 -- to the current \$175 (\$200 for puppies) — but the average cost of caring for a dog has increased far more. I'll leave the details of that story to another day — and another author. Suffice it to say that we have had to devote more of our time to raising funds for the dogs than we have in past years, which means less time and energy working with the dogs themselves and arranging suitable placements for them. That isn't a complaint so much as it is a regret. But it would be a far deeper regret if our volunteers and supporters hadn't responded to the need so wonderfully. [The story - and statistics - of what volunteers and individual donors, Girl Scout troops, area businesses, and national organizations have done to allow Peppertree to continue its work and (particularly in the last year) to care for some gravely ill dogs is utterly amazing, and well beyond anything we would have dreamed possible back when we started.]

Fundraising is also an entire other article, today's focus, however, is going to be on the dogs: an overview of what the numbers tell us about what we are accomplishing, what the need is.

Last year, as noted, we took 158 dogs into our program.

GENDER: 74 males; 84 females. There is a slight, but odd, trend here, for which we have no explanation. Up until 2004, the number of males was always greater than the number of females. In 2004, it was about even, but a few more females (111) than males (106). This year the gap is greater in that new direction. Maybe this is just a random effect, or maybe it means something. We'll keep our eye on it.

SPAY/NEUTER: 82 of our intakes were already altered; 76 unaltered. You might expect, given the overall national and regional statistics that we would be seeing more and more dogs that were already altered but, strangely, this is not true. Each year the number already altered have been between 49 and 52 percent of the total; this year it's 51 percent.

AGE: This is where the numbers tell a pretty clear story — several stories in fact.

PUPPIES and SENIORS:

In the years 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005, the percentage of our dogs under 6 months has been falling (24% - 21% - 15% - 14%), while the percentage of those over 8 years old has been, for the most part, increasing (8% - 10% - 18% - 15%). Why? Fewer puppies is the reason for the first set of figures, but that wouldn't necessarily mean that we would take more seniors. We could just increase the percentages of those 6 months through 7 years. I think there are several reasons that the number and proportion of seniors have been increasing. Consider this another plug for the adoption of a senior dog. Some reasons: they are far easier to foster. There are fewer behavioral problems because, to be blunt, bad-tempered dogs just don't often make it to an advanced age. Seniors are, candidly, the

Peppertree Rescue, Inc. (A 501 (c) (3) Not-for-Profit Charity)	
P.O. Box 2396, Albany, New York 12220 Voice-Mail (518) 435-7425 rescue@peppertree.org http://www.peppertree.org	
Betsy Sommers President esommers2@yahoo.com	Nicole Duda (CT) Recordkeeping nmduda@aol.com
David Sawicki Treasurer psawicki@capital.net	Patti Conroy Behavioral Advisor pconroy@nycap.rr.com
Peg Boughton Secretary peggyapat@prodigy.net	Liz Ammian Newsletter liz16paws@yahoo.com
Donna Burdick (MA) Director golddog1@adelphia.net	Sam Stelmasyk Photos samstel@nycap.rr.com
Kevin Wilcox Director kwilcox1@nycap.rr.com	Nancy Williams Voice-Mail rwnw3@aol.com
Martie De Fronzo Advisor to the Board puppydogs4@cs.com	

most rewarding, gratifying and “feel good” group to work with. Most people in rescue will agree that the seniors seem to KNOW what you are doing for them: they’ve seen bad things happen, they know bad things did happen or almost happened to them, and they are grateful for the chance to be in a warm home, fed, played with and loved. They reward you with gratitude. We have several repeat adopters who simply won’t consider a dog unless it is over 5 years old; for one woman 9 years is the minimum age she will consider. When I first got into rescue, I thought this was really quite odd, but I no longer think so.

This is probably a common phenomenon in rescue: the majority of adopters want a two year old while the majority of rescuers and foster homes are increasingly drawn to the 8 and 9 year old (or up to 15 year olds!). My own personal opinion is that more families should consider a 2 year old AND a 9 year old. Which leads to the next story that the age statistics tell us.

“Yahoos” and YAMs:

We use five age groups in our record-keeping: under 6 months - 6 mo to 2 years - 2 years to 5 years - 5 years to 8 years - and over 8. Take a moment to see if you can guess which category is *always* the largest (if the sub-title hasn’t given it away). It’s the youngsters: 6 months to 2 years. Always. The percentages represented by this group over the four years I’ve been reporting are 32%, 45%, 24%, and 37%. That’s just one age group out of five, which is pretty amazing. And those of us who do intake can tell you that, without doubt, we have to reject or turn away more in this age group than any other.

It’s another one of those abiding rescue ironies: the dogs that people

most want to adopt - dogs that are two years old and younger - are also the group that more people give up, or perhaps “give up on” would be more accurate. It’s the old story of the cute fuzzy puppy, perhaps a Christmas gift, who becomes a gangly, hyperactive, testing-the-limits teenager and suddenly isn’t so much fun any more. They especially aren’t so much fun if the owners didn’t take the time to give them basic training and socialization when they were younger and truly eager to please. I guess teenagers, of whatever species, don’t have “pleasing mom and dad” as their top priority in life.

So we get the “Yahoos” as in “Let it rip! Yee haw! Put on some speed! Yaaah Hoo!! and within that group, the really tough bunch: the YAMs (Young, Active Males). Now, contrary to popular belief, at least in most of the breeds we deal with, particularly Golden Retrievers and Labs, the males are markedly sweeter and more easy-going than the females. Truth! But even the sweetest is also typically bigger - and stronger - than the females. This means they are more likely to be untrained, because they may have been too much for the original owner to handle, and when they are untrained they are more of a “handful” than an equally untrained female. So, despite the fact that most adopters approach us wanting a dog around two years old, most of them - for good reason - backpedal pretty rapidly if we bring out an untrained, active and exuberant mini-horse who knocks them over or jumps up and proceeds to give a very messy face-wash.

These are the ones that almost break your heart sometimes – the ones that aren’t bad dogs at all, who would have been awesome dogs if properly trained early on and who, if they survive into a more settled age, may

become awesome even without that good early start ... but these days are euthanized in record numbers in shelters because right now - right in the midst of the wild teenage years, without a home, and being too much to handle for many adoptive or foster homes - there is just no place for them. To make it worse, because of their youth, wildness and strength, they don’t “show” well in the shelters where they turn up in great numbers. If you ever need to remind someone of the responsibility that comes with accepting a cute little puppy - especially a pup of the more intense breeds -- go to the local shelter and look at the rows of young, strong, untrained and now difficult to manage dogs whose only “problem” is that someone didn’t care enough.

OUTCOMES: What happens to our dogs?

We cannot, and do not, claim that we have successfully placed 1,707 dogs in new homes where all are living happily ever after. Rescue intake decisions are rarely more than an ‘educated guess’ at best, and sometimes they are quite simply a long-shot effort to give a dog a chance, because for whatever reason, we believe he or she deserves one. For example, when we agreed to take 12 dogs who were refugees from Hurricane Katrina, all we knew about them was their species: canine. If there is a puppy mill closure, we will often sign on to take a certain number of dogs, knowing only that they surely deserve a chance, not whether that chance will be enough for them. So we don’t aim for a 100% success rate, and if we should ever achieve one, we’d know we failed because we’d have stopped giving a chance to ones who deserve it and probably, but not certainly, will make it with that chance.

*continued on page 7, see **Statistically***

Assemblyman Reilly Carries Out Promise: Peppertree Rescue Benefits

The Community Foundation for the Capital Region's Assemblyman Robert Reilly Salary Fund.

Along with many other rescue organizations, Peppertree shares the problem of having expenses regularly exceed revenues. However, this year has been a successful one for fundraising. In addition to the successes from the holiday fundraisers that were published in the last newsletter, more recently Peppertree received \$3,000 from an unusual source. Please read on because this is a truly remarkable story of public service, sacrifice, and generosity.

Perhaps some of you know Assemblyman Robert Reilly because you live in the 109th New York State Assembly District, which covers Colonie, Halfmoon, and Clifton Park. You may remember hearing about the quiet candidate who managed an upset victory over a long time incumbent in the last Assembly race. During the campaign, Assemblyman Reilly made three promises: to be independent of any organization or political party, to visit each neighborhood in the district twice a year, and to continue what he had done as a county legislator, which was to donate his salary to charity. While the donation of his annual county legislative salary of



Kevin Wilcox, Assemblyman Robert Reilly and Paige Davis

\$12,000 was an amazingly generous feat, the donation of his annual Assembly salary of just under \$80,000 would not only be beyond belief, it would not be a simple or easy task. However, Assembly Reilly did just that.

At the press conference on February 9th when the Assemblyman announced how he was carrying out his campaign promise, he explained the process of his philanthropy to the charities and to the public. He wanted to be sure that the money was spent fairly, not just on his favorite causes, and therefore removed himself from the decision-making process and partnered with The Community Foundation for the Capital Region to handle the grant applications and selections.

The Community Foundation is a public charity whose mantra is to gather, grow, and grant. Simply put, they gather money from philanthropic

individuals, families, businesses and organizations, grow the money through prudent investing, and make grants to the community. For Assemblyman Reilly's donation, The Foundation formed a committee which developed a grant application process, chose the charities with the most deserving projects, disbursed the funds, and will follow-up to assure the money is spent as it was intended. The committee decided that only charities doing work in the Assemblyman's district would be eligible. Fourteen charities received money across a spectrum of causes in order to impact the community in a diverse and meaningful manner.

The grant received by Peppertree will be used to establish a special program within The John Davis Senior Fund, called "Serve a Senior by Saving a Senior". The John Davis Senior Fund was originally started by Paige Davis in memory of her husband John to

aid senior dogs looking for a home. In an effort to expand this fund, Peppertree narrowed the focus of the senior fund in the Assemblyman Reilly grant to emphasize the senior part two fold.

Unfortunately, it is common for Peppertree to receive surrendered dogs because the owner has either passed away, had to move into assisted living where pets are not allowed, or become too ill to care for the animal. Often the dogs being surrendered are older and have been with the person for some time. This is one of the saddest situations for both seniors involved as up until this point both have enjoyed the love and affection a pet and their owner share. Elderly people make great pet owners because they have plenty of time and love to devote to their animal and in return those pets provide loyal and loving companionship to someone who may otherwise feel lonely or isolated. It is the goal of Peppertree and the Serve a Senior program to ease the pain of these life transitions by having a fund specifically for these dogs. The generous donation by Assemblyman Reilly will allow Peppertree to accept dogs of advancing years into its program knowing that a dog may need more costly veterinarian care and take a

bit more time to re-home, without worrying about a significant drain on the organization's limited financial resources that might severely limit their ability to help other dogs. As a result, the former pet owner can move on to their next phase in life knowing that their owing companion will be well cared for and eventually rehomed.

It was evident at the press conference that Assemblyman Reilly is sincere in his devotion to the community. He spoke at length about non-profit groups and the integral roll that they play in the everyday lives of people and creatures in the community. He was visibly emotional at times and jokingly reassured everyone that he was not crying at the loss of his salary, but at the thought of all of the good work that is done in his community by charities and volunteer organizations. Peppertree sincerely thanks Assemblyman Reilly for his generosity and if he is your Assemblyman, or even if he is not and you think what he has done is great, please tell him (and don't forget to tell him about the friend you found at Peppertree Rescue, too).

— Lucia Perfetti Clark

ASPCA Commits \$500,000 to Reunite Pets and People

The previous newsletter featured a story about Peppertree Volunteer Rich Rini and the integral part that he played as the Peppertree liaison to Best Friends, the organization tracking our Hurricane Katrina dogs in an effort to reunite them with their owners. Rich and Peppertree selflessly carried out this task, which was quite time consuming and logistically difficult, it was the kind of care and concern we would want for our pets in the event of catastrophe in the Capital Region. However, unbeknownst to Peppertree, the

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was going one step further to encourage pet and family reunions. The ASPCA pledged \$500,000 to help animals lost in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita find their way back home. A \$500 reward was offered for each reunion of a pet and their family to the rescues or shelters that facilitated these reunions, up to 1,000 reunions in all. On top of the reward money, the ASPCA also reimbursed shelters or rescues for the cost of transporting the animals back to their families. Peppertree was fortunate that Best Friends had already paid for all of the costs related to transporting the dogs. At the time that Peppertree was made aware of the ASPCA reward money, three dogs had been reunited with

their owners and subsequently a check to Peppertree for \$1500 was received for those reunions.

Peppertree made two additional pet family connections and submitted those for reward money. As far as Peppertree is concerned, whether another check for \$1,000 arrives in the mail to help Peppertree continue making a difference in the lives of dogs, or no money is received because the ASPCA has reached their goal of 1,000 reunions, just putting these dogs and their owners back together is reward enough. More than 8,500 animals were rescued in the aftermath of the hurricanes and the more animal orphans that can get back to their original families, the better.

— Lucia Perfetti Clark

Peppertree Adoption Clinic Schedule

clinic dates

2006 PEPPERTREE ADOPTION CLINIC SCHEDULE:

Saturday May 20
NEW PetSmart,
East Greenbush, Rt 4
10:00 – 1:30

Saturday June 17
PetSmart,
East Greenbush, Rt 4
10:00 – 1:30

Saturday July 15
PetSmart,
East Greenbush, Rt 4
10:00 – 1:30

Saturday June 3
Checkerhills Farm Pet
Food & Access.
53 Freeman's Bridge
Rd. Scotia
10:00 – 1:30

Saturday July 1
Checkerhills Farm Pet
Food & Access.
53 Freeman's Bridge
Rd. Scotia
10:00 – 1:30

Saturday August 5
Checkerhills Farm Pet
Food & Access.
53 Freeman's Bridge
Rd. Scotia
10:00 – 1:30

Saturday May 20th 2006 | 10:00 - 1:30

Working With Animals & Adoption Clinic
Children's Museum of Science & Technology,
250 Jordan Road, Rensselaer Technology Park, Troy

Save The Date

Peppertree Picnic scheduled for Saturday September 16, 2006
More details to follow in next newsletter

For locations of other Adoption Clinics and further details of all events, call our Voice-Mail 435-7425 or visit our website (<http://www.peppertree.org>)

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Peppertree Post 1 year (4 issues) \$10.00

Peppertree Rescue Pins _____ @ \$5.00 each

Peppertree T-Shirts (Original Teal Version - only 8 remaining)

(check one) £ S \$10.00 + \$3.00 shipping

Peppertree has a limited number of our original teal T-shirts left. To clear the stock we are discounting the prices for all T-shirts to \$10, including shipping. Order before the remaining stock disappears forever!

Donation (Tax-deductible).

Donation (Tax-deductible). Written receipts will automatically be provided for donations of \$50 or more. If you wish a written receipt for audit purposes for amounts less than \$50, please note. Any donations of \$10 or more will automatically be subscribed for 1 year to the Peppertree Post, unless noted that the subscription is not wanted.

If you wish to £ foster, £ adopt or £ volunteer,
please check here and an Application will be mailed or e-mailed to you.

Name _____

E-mail Address _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone No. (with area code, please note if day or evening) (_____) _____

Send form & check to: Peppertree Rescue, PO Box 2396, Albany, NY 12220

Applications can also be downloaded or copied from our website. Woof!!!!

Statistically, *continued from page 3*

We've always been careful to point out that we are not a "no kill" organization. When we feel a dog cannot be safely placed in a home and we can find no alternative placement, we will euthanize. I've recently discovered that we do, however, fit into the definition of "no kill" that is coming to be more widely accepted: we do not euthanize a dog unless it is unadoptable because of physical – or behavioral – problems from which there is little chance of improvement or recovery. In truth, unless and until a dog is in pain, we rarely euthanize because of a fatal illness. We've been very fortunate in finding hospice homes for those who are unadoptable for that reason. Last year, for example, we euthanized only 2 dogs for severe medical problems ... but there were 5 that we determined were so aggressive they could not be placed. Each year since Peppertree began, our euthanasia-for-aggression rate has been between 3% and 5%. We don't expect that to change and, frankly, we don't want it to. Because a 0% rate would mean that we didn't take any risks and in this business, we feel, we should take risks.

The risk may be offering blindly to accept unknown dogs who are the victim of tragedy, be it a natural hurricane or an all too human puppy mill, or deciding to accept that badly-behaved dog who somehow looks at you as if to say "If you'll just get me out of here and give me some love, I'll be the best friend you ever had," sometimes that is literally all it takes. We recently visited with one of our alumni, a purebred German Shepherd, who has been the light of his family's lives for six years now and a delight to several foster families before that. But we couldn't help but recall the wild, ferocious creature he appeared to be in the shelter's cage: towering on his hind legs, scratching and howling, even frothing a bit. But, still, he had an innocent and terrified look in his eye, so two of us

decided to assume a big risk and take him out. I don't believe he gave anyone a moment's serious trouble – only untold amounts of joy – from the instant we led him out of the shelter. Sometimes those risky intakes don't work out so well, but if we weren't willing to make them, then Frisco and others like him would never have been saved.

There are other outcomes that don't result in successful placements by Peppertree but that aren't necessarily failures either. If we take in a purebred for whom there is a willing and responsible breed rescue group, we will transfer and transport the dog to that group, leaving us more time and energy for the ones that don't have such options. Sometimes we agree to take a dog but ask the owner to foster for a while and, in taking the pressure off the home and working with the family and the dog, they decide they won't give up after all. Those are the really good ones! And on occasion, when we do a blind intake on the word of a distant evaluator (usually an individual rescuer or another group), we will return the dog if he or she isn't one that we can successfully or safely place. That's how we learn which evaluators to trust. But the majority of the dogs we take into our program are successfully placed. For the years I've been reporting, the average - and the rate for 2005 - is 78%. That works out to successful direct placement of approximately 1,332 Peppertree dogs since we started this organization. Our volunteers know very well how much tough work went into that – but when you start listing the names and remembering the faces, of both the dogs and their new families, it's very much worth it.

— Betsy Sommers, President



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Congratulations Winners!

Assisted by 2 of our wonderful, younger volunteers - Katie Lee and Renée Reynolds - Kevin Wilcox announced the Peppertree Raffle results on Saturday, April 1. Proceeds from the ticket sales to Peppertree totaled \$2,260. However, with the generosity of two of the winners, who donated winnings back to Peppertree (Adrienne Kerwin - \$2,000 and Nancy Beck - \$200), Peppertree's dogs actually raised \$4,460!!!!!!!

Here are the winners (besides the dogs)

1st prize - \$4,000 - Adrienne Kerwin

2nd prize - \$500 - Kevin P. Burke

3rd prize - \$300 - Michelle Reilly

4th prize - \$200 - Nancy Beck



Peppertree Rescue, Inc.
P.O. Box 2396
Albany, New York 12220

www.peppertree.org

A Rescue For Dogs Of Good Temperament