



The Peppertree POST

WINTER 2007 ISSUE

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.

Peppertree Policy Review: Euthanasia

Many people who are unable or unwilling to keep their dog approach Peppertree seeking to surrender the dog to our program. Frequently they ask for, and expect assurance that we are a “no kill” organization and therefore their dog will be safe with us, no matter what. This is not the case, however, and we explain to them, up front, what our position is on this difficult issue.

As is the case with any rescue or animal shelter in existence, we have had to adopt a position somewhere on the continuum between being a “100% no-kill” and a “100% kill” organization.

Absolutely no-kill organizations, shelters or rescues, have a laudable goal but one that is 1) almost impossible to reach and 2) means that these organizations can have only a very limited impact on the overall problem of homeless animals. Even where they actively encourage adoptions, they quickly fill up with un-adoptable animals and then have no room for others. Those other animals that they would otherwise accept or take into their program are then turned away, without regard to whether they might be adoptable and without regard to what will happen to them. To put it bluntly, many of us in rescue consider the total ‘no-kill’ facility as ‘someone else kills.’ The fact that these organizations are almost full of un-adoptable animals, means that they cannot play a significant role in the problem of homeless animals.

100% kill organizations are, hopefully, a thing of the past. These facilities, most often municipal shelters, are required to take animals in and after the legal waiting period, euthanize any that are not reclaimed by their owners. It is a Draconian way to address the problem of animal overpopula-

tion and it is based on a philosophy that is now discredited: the idea that there must be something “wrong” with any animal who becomes homeless. The reality is that there is something “wrong” with a person; the breeder, owner, or other individual who had a duty to care for the animal, but neglected to do so. Today, while there are few, if any, 100% kill facilities left, some shelters operate in this fashion with respect to certain breeds, most often Pit Bulls. This approach is based on the equally discredited belief that all dogs of the breed are dangerous and cannot be safely re-homed. One needs only to consider the amazing success stories of our local **Out of the Pits** rescue (<http://www.outofthepits.org/>) to see how false this belief is.

Peppertree, along with most area rescue groups and shelters, has adopted a position somewhere between these two extremes. We work very hard to maximize adoption of the dogs that we take into our program but we do not guarantee that none will be euthanized. Whenever we accept a dog, we do so because it appears to exhibit the “Golden temperament” we look for and therefore can be successfully re-homed. Sometimes, however, we later learn that there is a problem, either physical or behavioral, that will make it difficult or impossible to adopt the dog out. When that happens, we make every effort within our capabilities to treat, retrain, and otherwise rehabilitate the dog to help him or her become adoptable. Medical conditions usually are not a big problem. If the dog cannot be cured, we either adopt it out with special notice of the problem or place it in a hospice home, where it can live in comfort and with love for the remainder of its life. Behavioral problems are more

difficult and they can range from mildly irritating behaviors to truly dangerous tendencies. Our response to each situation is customized to the circumstance, but falls into the following groups: we may simply prolong its time in a foster home, enroll it in a training course, obtain the assistance and direction of a behavioral consultant or behaviorist, or look for a non-traditional placement, such as in a drug-sniffing or other working dog program. When, however, we consider that there is a poor prognosis for any meaningful improvement, we will consider euthanasia. This criteria – “poor prognosis for improvement” – has been articulated by Best Friends, Inc., the nationwide organization that was so effective in working with the Katrina animals and an interesting article regarding this policy can be found at (<http://www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/pdf/WinogradTempTesting.pdf>).

Once Peppertree volunteers conclude that euthanasia is an option that has to be considered for one of our dogs, a sequence of thoughtful steps are taken, except when seriously dangerous behavior has created an emergency. The first step is that a **Tough Decisions Committee** (TDC) is convened. The members consist of our Board of Directors, veteran volunteers who are willing to assist in this difficult task, our behavioral consultant, and anyone else who has a particular interest in, or knowledge of, the dog in question. The dog’s history is reviewed and TDC members try to think of some course of action other than euthanasia that might address the dog’s problems. Possible solutions may consist of alternative placements, moving the dog to a different

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A Shining Example

Nine-year-old **KeriAnne Robillard** is a special young lady who believes in taking action when she hears about animals in need. Touched by the stories she read on Peppertree Rescue's website last November, she decided that she had to do whatever she could to help out. Since then she has raised money, convinced her family to get involved by fostering a dog, and is training her foster dog to get him ready for a permanent home.

KeriAnne was a sickly child when she was born, but that rough beginning seems to have given her a special empathy for others in need, particularly dogs that have been treated unkindly. A devoted Animal Planet fan who wants to become a zoologist, she decided to help after reading about Andrew, the golden retriever mix used as a bait dog, and 11-year-old Atlas, the german shepherd dumped at a shelter because he was too big. The story of Atlas, she admits, "made her cry" and prompted her to ask her grandmother and friends if they could donate some money to help with medical

treatment and food. She collected a total of \$19.92 and presented it to Peppertree Rescue before Christmas.



She also convinced her parents, Michele and David Robillard, who raise champion golden retrievers, to foster a dog through

Peppertree Rescue. They made a special trip to one of the foster homes where there were multiple dogs to see if one would be well suited for their household. There they met and decided to foster one-year-old Jasper, a spaniel/rottweiler mix who had spent his young life in a kennel. Jasper has been with them since then and has thrived in the home environment. KeriAnne is very proud of her efforts to train Jasper. "I walk Jasper two times a day, trained him to sit and lay down in about two weeks and now he is learning how to shake," she said.

KeriAnne's generous spirit sets an example not only for her young friends, but for many adults who are not empathetic to the plight of homeless animals. Peppertree Rescue volunteers hope that KeriAnne and her family will stay involved for many years to come and that they will inspire others to participate as well.

by **Karen Harmon**

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foster home, a course of psychotropic medication, or anything that appears to be a viable and safe alternative. If someone can think of a rational, responsible alternative to try, we will do so. Sometimes the TDC deliberation is very short – a matter of days – because we know enough to realize the problem cannot be safely treated or a good solution becomes readily apparent. Sometimes the TDC will span weeks or even months as we put into effect the tentative solution that a member has suggested or find a quality-of-life situation where the dog in question can wait for that special one-of-a-kind adopter. For one Peppertree dog, the wait was 18 months. It is really amazing the creative solutions that 'group think' can sometimes achieve. Although we have never convened a TDC without feeling that euthanasia is probably going to be required, we have, in fact, been able to come up with a better, workable, and life-saving solution many times. Some years half of our TDCs have ended in this positive fashion.

When all alternatives have been explored and the choice comes down to euthanizing the dog or "warehousing" it for the rest of its life (typically being kenneled most of the time), we choose to euthanize. It is possible that the dog would prefer a long life of confinement, but to Peppertree this seems to be the crueler option. The long life of confinement option not only affects the dog in question but it also affects the adoptable dog that is "next in line" who we would accept into the program if space were available. There are so many dogs that need the safety net provided by rescues and shelters and unfortunately one thing every rescuer has to keep remembering is "we can't save them all." Any dog that we take into our program gets the very best chance we can provide, and most often that is all that is needed. Sometimes it isn't enough, however, and in those instances we are prepared to make the tough decision.

by **Elizabeth Sommers,**
President of Peppertree

Winter Walks:

Tips for keeping your dog fit year-round (and you, too)

It's not always easy to stay motivated to keep up outdoor activities when it is chilly outside and cozy indoors. Like humans, dogs are susceptible to packing on extra pounds in the winter if their exercise level wanes. Winter walks are a great spirit lifter and will keep you and your best friend in top shape through the winter months. Here are some tips to get you started and keep you winter walk ready.

First, if you haven't already done so, get out the hat, mittens, boots, the extra thermal layers and scarves. Having the right apparel means you are always ready to go and making that first step out the door more convenient is important in our changeable climate. Be sure to choose the right hand wear. It should serve two purposes: insulate you so you stay warm and be flexible enough that you can still work with your dog. Can you comfortably hold your dog's leash? Can you reach into your pocket for a healthy treat when it is time to reward your dog for some good behavior? Gloves or mittens that unsnap to convert to fingerless gloves can be good options for increased dexterity.

Take the terrain into careful consideration when choosing your footwear but don't forget comfort and endurance. Snow boots are great for keeping feet warm and dry, but pick a pair that are flexible and won't leave you with sore feet or strained ankles and shins. Look for a mid-calf boot with a sneaker type sole. Snow shoes are great fun and can be enjoyed with a dog that is reliable and doesn't need a lot of handling to control. Otherwise, leave the snow shoes at home unless you are very skilled on them or they will take your attention away from your dog. Don't forget something for your head and ears. If you get too hot, you can always remove these items.

What about preparing your dog? A coat is a good idea for dogs with short fur or smooth coats who need some extra insulation. Salt and other ice-melting treatment for roads and sidewalks can irritate and dry the pads on a dog's paws, so if you notice any limping try cleaning off your friends paws first as this is usually the cause. Trim any long fur between your dog's toes to prevent uncomfortable ice chunks from building up when you walk in the snow. Cut back the fur so it is even with the pads. Apply a light coating of edible oil, such as olive oil, to protect the paw pads. Wash your dog's paws after your walk to remove salt or even consider a pair of boots. Don't forget to pack water for yourself and your companion, it is important to hydrate, even in cold weather.

Thank You Nixon-Peabody

The good folks at the Nixon-Peabody Law Firm in Albany are great friends of Peppertree Rescue. Each holiday season they bypass traditional office gift giving and instead make a group donation to Peppertree. So this past December two of our Peppertree dogs, ANNIE and PABLO, made the trip to Nixon-Peabody to meet the staff and receive the generous donation.

ANNIE and PABLO were plenty excited by their road trip and the thrill of riding in an elevator to reach the ninth floor offices of Nixon-Peabody. Once there, they were flooded with attention from lawyers and staff who left their offices to offer petting and treats. They roamed the halls of the law firm, tails wagging,

making sure that everyone was thanked for their thoughtfulness.

The Nixon-Peabody folks turned over a check for \$450 and one very large bag of dog toys and treats. ANNIE and PABLO were much more interested in the bag than the check! A fine time was had by dogs and humans alike, and the elevator ride down was just as much fun as the one up.

As an all-volunteer organization, Peppertree relies on contributions to stay a viable organization, and the donations from the wonderful people at Nixon-Peabody does much to allow us to continue our mission. The Peppertree volunteers thank Nixon-Peabody and so do ANNIE, PABLO and the rest of our dogs.



Pablo (left), Annie (right)

by Robin Nagengast

by Rich Rini

Recommended Walking Paths in the Capital Districts

The following are some of my regular hikes. Some have stated rules on whether pets can be off leash. Check the websites for hours and regulations.

Capital Hills at Albany (formerly know as Albany Municipal Golf Course), 65 Oneil Road, Albany, NY: The golf course at Albany is a moderately challenging walk on pavement that covers gentle slopes and a couple of steeper graded hills. Since most of the terrain is cleared for greens and fairways, the majority of the walk allows a clear sightline with little obstruction from trees. There are a couple of wooded areas for a change of pace and a stretch of the course borders the bubbling Normanskill Creek. The loop takes about 45 minutes at a medium to brisk pace with a couple of breaks to stop and greet other dogs. It is a popular weekend and late afternoon dog walking spot. Watch for icy conditions since it is paved and not plowed. There is an easy access parking lot and a restaurant to grab a hot chocolate to go.

Albany Pine Bush Preserve: Prime trails throughout the original and best remaining wilderness in the metro Albany area. While it is quite lush and overgrown in the summer, the winter is also a great time to experience the various marked walks in the Pine Bush. A great place to get lost the first couple of times so watch your color coded trail posts and bring a cell phone, in case you need to call for assistance. There are several entry points located off or near the Washington Ave Extension; some offer more parking than others but all are easily accessible. Varied topography includes sand and packed earth, and occasionally "technical" hills, makes for great exercise for most. The Pine Bush Preserve is a must experience for anyone who calls this region home so check it out.

Schodack Island State Park: According to <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/parks> "Schodack Island State Park sits off the eastern shore of the Hudson River just south of Albany. Approximately seven miles of Hudson River and Schodack Creek shoreline bound the 1,052-acre site. A day-use facility, the park has been designated a State Estuary, and a portion of the park shelters a Bird Conservation Area (BCA) that is home to bald eagles, cerulean warblers and blue herons that nest in the cottonwood trees. Eight miles of multi-use trails wind through a variety of ecological communities." I could not have said it better. Easy rolling slopes and wood chip trails are great for dogs and owners alike. The terrain is not especially challenging but long enough for a good hike with lots of lovely sights. The parking is ample and there is a convenience building with facilities for dog owners, a water fountain and restrooms.

Spring will be here soon! Remember to check with your Vet about starting flea, tick and heartworm preventatives.

Mia and Izzie:

A tale of escape, capture, and recovery

We can only guess what life was like for these two girls before they, along with two other yellow Labs, were dropped off at a shelter on Long Island. What is clear is that they were very shy, probably spent their days in cages or runs and had little interaction with humans. Both girls appear to have produced multiple litters and were likely kept for breeding purposes only. Peppertree Rescue agreed to take in the two girls and find them homes.

On November 3rd the dogs were picked up from Hudson Valley Boarding Kennels, where they were held after their release from the shelter, and delivered to their foster home in Altamont. Soon after their arrival, when the foster mom looked away for just a minute, both dogs escaped from the fenced yard. No one knows how they managed it, but it seems possible that in their panic at being in a strange place they climbed the 6 ft. high chain link fence. What followed became an emotional roller coaster for Peppertree volunteers as well as the Altamont community.

As frightened as these dogs were, it was obvious they would not respond to or willingly approach humans. They would first have to be located then somehow trapped or caught. Katie and Steve, the couple who were fostering the dogs, began searching for them right away but had no luck finding them. Other Peppertree volunteers also began the search the same night the girls disappeared. The next day, Katie and Steve located the girls down a 100 ft. ravine behind their home. The girl known as Happy, now re-named Izzie, was skillfully cornered and caught by Katie and Steve. The disappointed search party was unable to capture her

sister, Bashful, despite having sighted her. Fliers describing her and providing contact information were printed and tacked up around the area, placed in mailboxes and handed out personally. Police and animal control were contacted and the local press was notified. Peppertree search parties were formed and regularly responded to areas where Bashful was last sighted. Many calls were received in response to the fliers, some reported sightings, some offered support and some let us know people were looking for her. The community response was tremendously helpful and reassuring. One woman allowed searchers to access all of her property without hesitation. With each reported sighting hopes would rise, only to plummet when the dog moved on before being caught. Little did poor Bashful know the humans, who frightened her so badly, were trying very hard to save her.

Time passed and hopes of finding her began to fade. Then, three weeks from the day of Bashful's escape, we received a call that both raised our hopes and filled us with fear. Sue Green, a well-known local rescuer, had been contacted by a man who found a dog in a hunter's trap. His description of the dog, particularly that she was wearing a green collar and leash reminded Sue of the dog on the fliers she'd seen posted. Sue went to a local store, which was at the time closed, and pounded on the door until someone let her in so she could read the flier containing the contact information for Bashful. After letting us know that she thought the dog in the trap was Bashful, Sue contacted the Guilderland Animal Hospital asking them to remain open after hours in case there were injuries needing immediate medical attention. They kindly agreed to do so and once Bashful was released from the trap and handed over to Sue she was rushed to the Guilderland Animal Hospital. Apart from having many ticks, some porcupine quills in her face and being very emaciated (she weighed only 23lbs.)

there were, amazingly, no serious injuries. Bashful was seen by the emergency vet who removed the ticks and quills and sent her home with her foster parents. She was reunited with her sister, and appropriately renamed Mia (Missing In Action) and began her recovery.

As of this writing both girls continue their growth physically and emotionally, Mia has actually outgrown one harness already! and while Mia and Izzie are becoming more comfortable and trusting in their foster home, they continue to be fearful of changes and new people. We at Peppertree hope that with continued love, security, and time they will learn to enjoy life and develop the sense of contentment every dog should experience.

Mia, Izzie and all of us at Peppertree would like to extend our gratitude to all of those who helped make this recovery possible, especially the Altamont community. To those of you who sent prayers,

kept your eyes opened, reported sightings of Mia, tramped through fields and forests, risked life and limb climbing down into that ravine and opened your businesses and hearts, we extend a sincere thank you to you.



Mia (chair), Izzie (floor)

by Donna Burdick



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A Rescue For Dogs Of Good Temperment