



# The Peppertree POST

2008 Volume 1

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## 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.

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## A Loving Tribute: Molson, 1992 – 2007

BY PETER BURKE

**Peter and Tamara Burke run Rag Tag Golden Retriever Rescue in Vermont. Rag Tag and Peppertree are collaborators in rescue, we acknowledge the hard work that they do, and we celebrate the canine contributions of their Alpha Pack Leader, Molson. As Peppertree continues to feel the loss of Pepper, so too will Rag Tag feel Molson's absence. He is fondly remembered here.**

Molson slipped oh-so-gently across the bridge last Friday, bathed in autumn sunlight and held in my arms. We had a long chat while waiting for the vet to join us outside, and while he couldn't hear me because of his deafness, for the first time since he came to us he looked right into my eyes and held my gaze with steady confidence. When the vet arrived he bared his fangs, just one, briefly, as if warning the man not to harm his Dad, then lay his big white head in my hands and closed his eyes as I kissed his face, dignified to the end, the way a dog should go.

He is buried in our family graveyard, just uphill from Tetley and Glenfiddich because he was, after all, the pack Alpha. You wonder, up until the final breath, if you're doing the right thing. If he has a few more weeks of quality life left. In Molson's case the fact he slipped away when only a tiny fraction of sedative had



been injected told me the timing was right, that there was just a bit of wag left in the dog. My only wish is that he had come to us as a pup and known nothing but love in his life. But as hard as his first years were, he found love and purpose, which is a lot more than most dogs can claim.

Molson came to use eleven years ago when a no kill shelter a few counties

over called us with a problem dog. Molson aged four, with a vague history of being a stud in an Amish puppy mill where he was controlled with cattle prods, had bitten a child in the face in his first foster home, then bitten and nearly killed a cocker pup in his second adoptive home. Because Golden Retrievers are considered by many to be warm and friendly dogs, the danger of an aggressive golden biting was, in our opinion, an unacceptable risk for the breed in general. We drove to St. Alban's intending to pick him up and take him directly to our vet to have him euthanized.

But the entire trip took place in a wicked heavy blizzard and our vet, being an avid skier, was on the slopes by the time we got home. We had stopped for fast food on the way and when I offered Molson a few fries he took them with exceptional gentleness. One of the skills I was taught in the Marine Corps was how to deal with

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## Molson

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attack dogs, so I felt confident taking Molson, a mere Golden Retriever, for a snowshoe walk on a tight lead while waiting for the vet. Before long I realized that this beautiful dog was terribly afraid of me, wincing every time I reached down to pat his head. He was also moderately well trained and loved tennis balls. I had a pom-pom on top of my ski hat, and once as I bent down and it shifted I noticed Molson opening his mouth as if to catch a ball. Could that be what happened with the child? And biting an eight week old puppy that had been curled up in his belly at night? I alpha rolled Molson and sure enough, there were puppy fang marks down there. Heck I would have bitten too!

When the vet finally called back I had decided to neuter the dog and watch him carefully for a few weeks before making a decision. During his recovery period I slept with him on the floor and it was obvious he had never been treated with kindness before. He really didn't know how to handle it. If he curled his lip at me he was immediately alpha rolled, and I can snarl into a furry throat with the best of them. So he controlled his aggression out of fear of me, but openly snarled at everyone else, including my wife.



out of something other than fear. That was also the point at which he became very protective of me. Raise your voice in my presence and he'd sit in front of me baring his fangs at the threat and sounding like Cujo. More work, more training, and he reached the point where he would face the threat and give a warning growl, but fall silent the moment I acknowledged an approaching person.

After a year he expanded that protective nature to cover my wife as well, protecting her from possible threats. It was at that point we started bringing other rescue dogs into our program, noticing with surprise and delight that he would not allow a dog to be aggressive in any way toward us. So instead of rescuing any golden, we started specializing in abused dogs, fear biters, dogs that wanted nothing to do with humans, and Molson set the rules. In the rigid structure of his pack dozens of abused dogs were socialized, learned the rules of canine etiquette, learned to trust people, and went on to good homes. Should they display fangs or any other signs of aggression toward us, he'd wade in with that beautiful tail flagging, that big chest puffed out, and all fangs bared as if to say, "None of that crap with THESE humans!"

I'm not sure why I tolerated it other than he was VERY good with our other dogs, Mercedes and Glendfid-dich, and had a marvelous way of breaking up fights between other dogs without causing any injuries. He had very large fangs and was heavily muscled in his prime. He fought like a wolf, but backed off the moment the opponent submitted. After about six months he decided I was the best thing in his life and started obeying

We had some exciting moments when gassing up with the pack in the car, usually when some foolhardy type ignored his warning growl and stuck a hand thru the open window to pet the nice doggies. Molson would grab any hand directed at his pack members, not biting, just holding fast and refusing to release until I returned from paying the bill and told him to let go. He also saved my life one

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winter when I fell down an icy well-shaft headfirst and couldn't get out. The well was about 200 yards from the house, and with my head five feet down just above the ice cold water I had little hope of Tamara hearing me at home. But after a couple of minutes I heard Molson snarling above me as he and one year old Tetley dragged me to safety by the cuff of my pants. Tamara later told me he had been resting in front of the woodstove and suddenly went berserk, hurling himself at the plate glass windows repeatedly until she opened the door out of fear for her safety. Tetley followed him as he raced up the road in search of me.

When Molson was seven or eight he started trusting most people, saving his snarls for those who looked untrustworthy or anyone who made aggressive moves toward the pack. He actually went belly up for a few people, mostly women, and loved anyone who scratched his butt. And at that age he started touching me anytime I was within reach. A paw on the shoulder, a head on my lap, or his entire body

draped over my feet. By age ten he was an absolute mush of a dog, assuming people were decent unless they acted inappropriately.

That attitude pretty much characterized the last five years of his life. A big, lumbering dog who had learned to balance his belief in pack hierarchy, which is why he NEVER met my loving gaze, with soft skills learned over the years with the net result that he found happiness in life, the contentment that comes to a dog when he knows he is both loved and respected.

At the bitter end, when I spoke to him and he met my gaze for the last five minutes of his life, he spoke volumes to me of love and devotion. He had experienced both the best and the worst in humanity, and my old friend went out with a wag.

Molson left behind Tuppence, Tadcaster and Barley, and went on to meet Mercedes, Tetley, Glenfiddich, Harley, Killian Red, April, Cossette and Canny at the Bridge. 🐾



## Rainbow Bridge

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge.

When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge.

There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together.

There is plenty of food, water and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.

All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor; those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by.

The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing; they each miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind.

They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent; his eager body quivers. Suddenly he begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.

You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together. . .



# Family and Dog Reunited at Adoption Clinic

By JIM FRANCO NEWS@SPOTLIGHTNEWS.COM

**This article was originally run in the January 23, 2008 issue of The Spotlight, and is being re-run by Peppertree with The Spotlight's permission.**

Two months ago, Trooper went missing. His owner, John Longton, let the 4-year-old German shepherd run free on his 156-acre Genovesi Lane farm that sits off the main road in Slingerlands. He thought a hunter shot the dog because although he likes to run, Longton lives in the perfect spot for it, and Trooper always came back home. That day he didn't.

Longton called the Mohawk and Hudson River Humane Society in Menands, which is where most municipalities across Albany County used to take strays. His daughter, Samantha, hung flyers up around town asking for help in the family's mission to find Trooper. As the days turned into weeks, and the weeks into months, the family gave up hope of finding Trooper alive. "I never thought I would see him again," Samantha said at a recent Peppertree Rescue dog adoption clinic at PetSmart in Glenmont.

Trooper had wandered into Bethlehem and was picked up by the town animal control officer. The full grown shepherd, who weighed about 80 pounds, had a decent enough temperament, even if he was a bit skittish about being in a strange place



Trooper, reunited with John and Samantha Longton

surrounded by strange people, so he was taken to Reigning Cats and Dogs, where the town now takes some of the better-behaved strays, according to Peppertree President Betsy Sommers.

Trooper stayed there for the shelter-allotted 10 days given so people have a chance to reclaim strays, and then he went into the care of Peppertree Rescue. Peppertree is an Albany-based dog rescue and adoption agency. Peppertree, as it often does at venues throughout the Capital District, sponsored an adoption clinic Saturday, Jan. 19, at PetSmart, and Trooper was one of the many dogs they were showcasing for adoption.

And Longton's sister-in-law was one of the many people checking out the dogs — including Trooper.

"It took a moment for me to realize it was Trooper, but I had a feeling it was. I started petting him and he seemed familiar, and then I noticed his eye, which he hurt in an accident, and I can't tell you how good I felt," said Kim Zwack. "It was just an awesome feeling. I really can't put it into words."

When she knew for sure it was Trooper, she immediately called Longton, who had guests and didn't answer the first phone call, and nearly didn't answer the second, but figured if she was calling twice in such a short time, it must be something important.

"She said 'Trooper is here' and I honestly couldn't believe it," he said. "So we hopped in the truck and raced over and sure enough, here's Trooper."

## Family Reunited

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When Longton and Samantha walked into the store, they spotted the dog and called his name. Trooper just started “going nuts,” Longton said. “I’m just really, really excited to have him back,” Samantha said while stroking Trooper’s back. Trooper, no worse for wear, though now neutered as per Peppertree policy, seemed hyped-up. On occasion, he jumped straight up in the air, his snout more than 5 feet off the ground, and spun around 360 degrees – a German shepherd pirouette.

Sommers said the way Trooper’s story, and happy ending, unfolded is a first since she co-founded the organization in 1999, but added it probably will not be the last time an owner makes an honest effort to find their wandering dog and can’t. A change in policy at the Mohawk and Hudson River Humane Society increased the cost to municipalities to house dogs, so many towns look for other options for strays.

By state law, municipalities have to pick up stray dogs, designate a place to take them and care for them and pay that place to do it. “With all the pressures of formulating a budget and the concerns that go along with it, animals are not a high priority with everything else they are facing,” Sommers said of the smaller municipalities.

Animal control officers look for ways to house the dogs during the redemption period before they go to a rescue. The village of Ravena uses its department of public works garage to house dogs before they look to a rescue group like Peppertree, and Bethlehem uses Reigning Cats and Dogs, she said, adding some animal control officers will keep the strays in their vans while they try to find the owner. With each municipality doing its own thing, it makes it difficult for the owners to know where to look for their pets that have been picked up, Sommers said, and that is a problem across the board.

For the Longtons and Trooper, it was a matter of the right time and the right place. As they finished filling out paperwork and put Trooper’s leash on, staff and visitors to the store gathered around the new celebrity – glad for a happy ending. 🐾

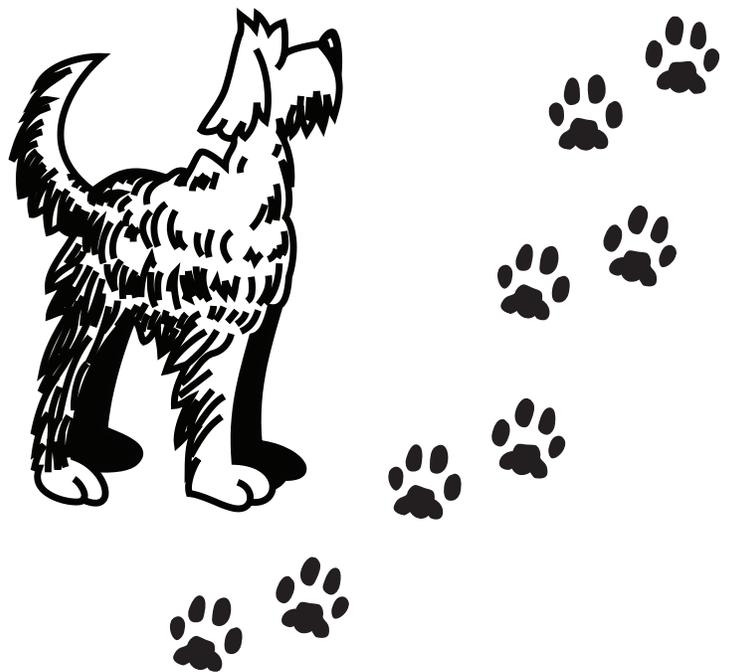
**Step into Spring with  
your Best Friend  
and help Peppertree  
Rescue Too!**



# **Furry Fun Run: Peppertree Rescue’s 5K walk/run**

**March 29<sup>th</sup> at 9AM on the  
SUNY Albany Campus**

**See the Peppertree  
website for more details.**



# A Life's Work Happily Gone to the Dogs

BY MARY ELLEN GRIMALDI

“When you see a dog behaving poorly look up to the other end of the leash to better understand why,” says Cydney Cross with a chuckle. After thirty years of experience that has included teaching, being a veterinary technician, and working with shelters and rescue groups, Cydney has launched her business, Crossroads for Dogs. She is a nationally recognized expert on the evaluation, rescue and re-homing of dogs. Cyd specializes in Pit Bulls, and is a guest writer for “Fully Bully” magazine. After Hurricane Katrina, Cross traveled south with a small group of peers on the sometimes heartbreaking, physically and emotionally exhausting mission of evaluating eighty dogs abandoned after the disaster. Her knowledge and common sense approach is illustrated in her mission which is “to help dogs live harmoniously in their homes and stay safe in the world.” This mission extends to all breeds, especially the working breeds- – Germans Shepherd, Doberman, Rottweiler, Bull Terrier, and Border Collie, to name a few.

Cydney came to Pit Bull rescue in an interesting way. She was doing Greyhound rescue for twelve years, during which time she helped place 160 dogs in adoptive homes.

She acquired a Greyhound/Pit Bull mix named Rose who is now 14 years old and has been a certified therapy dog for a dozen years. As

Cross started to research Pit Bulls she realized that while many people were helping to rescue Greyhounds, hardly anyone was reaching out for the many Pit Bulls in need. Out of the Pits was founded with Mary Allen in 1994 and is still going strong today. It is natural that Cross and Pit Bulls found each other. The qualities that she lists as foremost in the breed: “people-loving, under all circumstances; perfectly



Grace gives Cydney Cross a doggy facial

creature comfort-loving; they need a job to do; loyal and strong; and comical – they make you laugh” also apply to Cydney herself.

For three years Cydney was employed at the Mohawk and Hudson River Humane Society in various capacities which always involved adoption counseling, temperament evaluation, and making the right match between dog and adopter. In addition, during this time, twelve shelter dogs were placed in law enforcement as working police dogs,

whether in bomb sniffing, drug detection, search and rescue, or on duty with an officer. Cross ultimately became Shelter Manager. In those years she saw thousands of dogs come through the shelter doors, encompassing every breed, mix, age and circumstance imaginable. Many witnessed or experienced first-hand her deep compassion and commitment, often under trying conditions. Of course this employment contributed greatly to Cydney’s understanding of dogs’ behavioral problems and how important it is that each dog be placed in the best home for its temperament. During her tenure at Mohawk and Hudson River Humane Society, there was only a 5% return rate on adoptions, a figure that is almost unheard of. Cydney credits the dedication of the staff and volunteers she worked with in helping

make so many successful placements. Out of the Pits boasts a 1% return rate, and this too is due to careful initial placement of each dog in an adoptive home.

Unrealistic expectations on the part of the person who has acquired a dog lead to most of the calls Cross receives. She has learned to ask, at the beginning of a conversation with any dog owner who calls her for a consultation, “Is this a dog you would like to keep?” because she feels strongly that with commitment and patience

almost all behavioral problems can be resolved. Cross firmly believes that if dogs were trained and socialized from puppyhood, spayed or neutered, given adequate exercise, and kept on leashes whenever in public ("NOT the retractable, extend-o leashes!" which tangle easily and allow for little control) there would be much less need for her services. She also feels that if everyone who wants to add a dog to their families thought honestly beforehand about his or her lifestyle, for example, do you want a hiking companion or a couch potato to join you on the sofa? And if they understood how much of a commitment and responsibility dog ownership is, and researched breeds including breed mixes, it would result in more permanent and loving homes for dogs.

Her usual process with a client is to do a phone consult and then follow it up with a home visit. Cydney feels one must see a dog in its home setting to really understand the problematic behavior. Clients are amazed at her ability to communicate with both them and their dogs. Kathy Cootware's dog Maisey had problems that Cootware says had been unsuccessfully tackled by other professionals, and some had even suggested euthanasia. "At first introduction I knew Cydney would have the answer I needed; I just hoped it would be the answer I wanted. She helped me with common sense to understand the true nature of my dog and the language of all dogs. I learned tools to teach, not hurt, Maisey's timid soul, and also learned never to set her up for failure and to only create situations where she can succeed. Cydney is an incredible trainer. She has a sixth sense about dogs."

We in the Capital District are fortunate to have access to her abilities. She brings to her work a unique perspective and is adept at working with people, as well as dogs, which is an important part of success in the field. She is positive, upbeat and approachable and these are important qualities not always found in trainers and behaviorists. It is no wonder that private rescue groups, municipal shelters, dog owners, and veterinarians call upon Cydney Cross to offer insight and workable solutions to various problems. Kathy Cootware sums up the way many feel, including no doubt countless Pit Bulls:

"She saves the lives of broken dogs and for this she is my hero!" 🐾

## Holiday Appeal: A Major Success

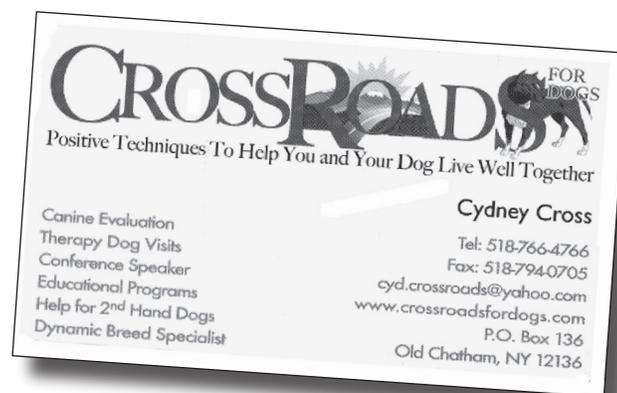
By JOE GRIMALDI

Although you have each been thanked individually, we would like to publicly thank everybody who made a contribution to Peppertree this holiday season. Your contributions totaled \$11,500. That will go far in helping us serve dogs in need.

Almost one third of the contributions can be tied directly to the Holiday Appeal letter, the 2<sup>nd</sup> one in Peppertree's history. The appeal resulted in fifty eight donations for over \$3,500. This is an average gift of over \$60, with individuals giving anywhere from \$5 to \$240.

There is no end to the number of dogs who need to be rescued from their unfortunate situations. Your generosity ensures that Peppertree Rescue will be able to continue helping dogs in need. To see the smiles on the faces of adopters and the reactions of the dogs, who somehow know they are going to their forever home, is the reward for your contributions.

Thank you, again, for making this all possible. 🐾



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*A Rescue For Dogs Of Good Temperament*

## Peppertree Wags It's Tail to State Ed

BY LUCIA PERFETTI CLARK

In early December, the State Education Department invited Peppertree Rescue to participate in their holiday party. Peppertree volunteers, Kevin Wilcox and Katie Muller, took a few Peppertree dogs who were eligible for adoption to the event, as well as the regular materials we have on hand to let people know what Peppertree is all about. Peppertree experienced great exposure to a new audience of potential adopters, and everyone enjoyed the day, including the dogs who were the center of attention. After the event Peppertree was pleasantly surprised with a donation of \$610.00, which was raised by their holiday raffle, and a generous donation from avid pet advocate and local meteorologist Steve Caporizzo. Peppertree would like to thank all of those who contributed to that donation, especially Karen Hanna for her part in organizing the holiday event and donation.

### FEATURED DOG

**CODY** is a Shepherd/Husky, male, 8 years, who is looking for a foster family. He is good with adults, children, and other non-aggressive dogs. Cody's thoughts about cats are yet unknown. He is very smart, eager to please, friendly, and would make a great family addition. A warm, loyal, loving friend, he loves to snuggle and to be petted. In his quest for cuddles, if you are sitting on the floor, he may mistake himself for a lap dog and sit on you. He loves to hug and will sit on his hind legs, wrap his front legs around you and lay his head on you. Cody is a great watch dog and alerts you when strangers come around. For treats he likes green peppers (without the seeds please!) and will sometimes eat a carrot stick like a bone. He appreciates music in the car while he is riding. He understands "no", "down", "sit", "wait" and "enough". He is trained to sit while his dinner is being dished up, and waits until he hears "on your mark, get set, GO!" Cody needs a contained area outside, like a fenced yard or a dog run.

