



# The Peppertree POST

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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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FALL 2003 ISSUE

## Just Looking For A Chance

If you ask a Peppertree volunteer exactly why they became involved in dog rescue, chances are their reply will be, "We do it for the dogs." Each dog that is saved, each dog that is placed in a new, loving, "forever home" brings a sense of hope to each of us.

There are certain dogs, however, that inevitably "touch" us a bit more than others, that make us smile a little bit wider, that make us stop and think about how much we appreciate our own two- and four-legged loved ones at home. These are the dogs that are considered to have "special needs."

While Peppertree looks for dogs with a "golden temperament," it opens its doors to dogs of all breeds (and mixes), all ages, all backgrounds - even those dogs considered to have a disability - so long as they are of good temperament with people and other animals. Be it a dog with epilepsy, hearing loss, diabetes, loss of sight, or undeveloped limbs, Peppertree tries to help, within our limited resources, and commits to finding these special needs dogs the forever homes they so greatly deserve.

Sadly, these dogs often go unnoticed. Too many people can find too many excuses to not adopt a special needs dog - not enough time, not enough money, not enough knowledge - and perhaps, just a hint of fear. What people don't often realize is that these dogs adapt much more quickly to their disability than "their" humans do. They are able to move past the disability, to grow beyond it, while we are still mulling about, attempting to determine how we will deal with it. Often, a "special need" is simply what we make of it.

What we at Peppertree are lucky enough to see, lucky enough to experience first-hand, is the



"Nell. Special need: deafness"

blossoming of these dogs. Often a foster home is just what these dogs need, providing a sense of security, stability, and consistent care. The dog's confidence is built, and what was once considered a "special need" no longer seems of much significance.

These special needs dogs teach us all so very much, but perhaps one of the most rewarding lessons we can learn from them is this: Although a dog may have a disability, this in no way effects its capacity to show and share its love selflessly. And while a dog may have special needs, its greatest need is the same as that of any other dog (or any other being, for that matter) - the need for love.

All these dogs need is a chance. Yes, it takes an extraordinary person to accept a special needs dog into their home - they have to be able to look beyond the disability, and see the whole worth of the dog, rather than simply a sum of its parts. But the reward? What greater reward is there than giving a dog a chance that might not have had one, only to receive in return an unending supply of love and devotion.

— Courtney Davis

## You Make My Heart Swell....

"You make my heart swell" are the words that automatically come to mind when I reflect on my big boy, Will. Will is a 4-5 year old shepherd that was born without his front left leg, has only half of his tail, an ear drop, fatty tumors ... and, most unfortunately, he has significant degenerative arthritis of his hips and spine.

His early days are sketchy. Will spent time in a U-Haul with several other animals. He was brought to the Mohawk Hudson River Humane Society as a neglect case. Will was instantly loved at the Shelter, and Peppertree was contacted. Our organization brought him into our program primarily as a hospice canine. When we can, Peppertree provides loving homes to aging, ill, often terminal dogs, so that their "ending days/months" are spent in loving, caring kindness.

Will attended one of our clinics in November 2002. He was depressed, limping and panting with exertion. The heart strings started to mesh at that point. Already a volunteer, who had two canines and two felines, I knew my home was full. But, the heart strings were swirling tighter. Will laid his big "Scooby" head in my lap, and I knew he would be happy at the



'Ark'. I really did not want the responsibility of a third dog, but I believe everything in life occurs for a reason.

In the past ten months, Will has given my home so much life, and most importantly, lesson. When you share your life with a "disabled" canine, you realize just how precious each day is, how unselfish animals are. Will has not had an easy time, but the exceptional expertise of Donald Dries, DVM, along with his compassion and concern, have given Will the opportunity to live a "normal" life. My boy awakes each day next to my bed with his goofy grin and "snorts" to get ME up and moving. Friends are coached: toss tennis balls...his favorite game in the world!

Will has a heart so big, a mind so sharp and smart, how could you not "love him best?" Sure, there are challenges to fostering/adopting a disabled animal. I spend time daily massaging his arthritic body, working on acceptable exercise to enhance his daily living yet not aggravate his pain level, and sitting quietly with him to open communication about how he feels (mindful, quiet time is so rewarding to communicate with your companions).

Will's gracious manner, his acceptance of all who enter our home, his goofy smile...well...he makes my heart swell! He has already surpassed his life expectancy; obviously he knows something vital in life that us humans have yet to touch.

— Liz Ammian

## Make Your Donations Count

New this year - the State Employees Federated Appeal (SEFA) has accepted Peppertree Rescue as a group eligible for donations through their annual SEFA Campaign.

If you are a New York State employee, you can help support Peppertree by having donations made directly from your paycheck to benefit Peppertree. Please see the booklet for the participating Charities and note Peppertree's code in your SEFA form. All of us (furry and non-furry creatures) thank you!

**Peppertree Rescue, Inc.**  
**(A 501 (c) (3) Not-for-Profit Charity)**  
**P.O. Box 2396**  
**Albany, New York 12220**

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# Looking For The (Not So) Perfect Companion



When you decide to be a foster parent, you open your family and your heart to a dog that may just be experiencing the joys of being part of a family for the very first time. Secretly, you hope that the dog might be housebroken, doesn't attempt to eat your favorite furniture and that life hasn't been so bad as to rob them of a wonderful temperament.

So when taking of all this into account, you don't consider for one minute that the dog you're going to foster may be totally blind.....

Earlier this year, my husband, Paul and I volunteered to foster such a dog, Cherub, a beautiful yellow lab. Cherub's only family had been an elderly gentleman who had passed away and she had been fostered for several months in a wonderful Peppertree foster home. By February, the activity of the other dogs was getting a little too stressful for Cherub so it was a good time to place her into a new foster home.

What were we thinking? We had no experience in taking care of a blind dog. We had little experience in taking care of a seeing dog. What did we know about special needs? Our own

dog, Nell, was deaf but we never considered her a special needs dog. She, well, she just couldn't hear - no big deal. So ... one evening, Cherub came into our home and we realized just what a special girl she was and how lucky we were to have her in our lives for even a short time.

On that first night Cherub paced and paced around the house using her paws and nose as a guide. We now realize that she was learning the layout of the house in her own unique way. After 3 or 4 days, she had mastered the whole layout of downstairs, and, more importantly, the location of the cookie cupboard. As soon as the pantry door opened she would run to get her treat. She was also able to respond to voice commands to take her up and down steps and to back up, away from a potentially hazardous situation. Or, as it was on many occasions in our home, backing up from out of the fridge!

We would all go out for walks and Cherub was at her most confident on a leash. This young lady would seek out a grassy area to go to the bathroom - every time. She trusted implicitly, that we weren't going to let anything happen to her and trotted along very happily at our side. On those few unfortunate occasions where Paul and I were taking time to catch up on the day and not totally aware of other things at hand, we would be brought back to reality with a resounding thud as we realized that our lack of concentration had caused poor Cherub to walk into, yet another, mail box. Bad, foster parents, BAAADDD!!!

One particular evening we were all out for a long walk and I accidentally dropped Cherub's leash. Cherub never liked to stand still and continued to trot off down the road. The more I ran to catch up with her, the more she thought it was time for a jog and so she continued, never slowing in speed as she happily ploughed through the neighbor's bushes with her foster mom covered in leaves trailing hopelessly behind her and her foster dad, quite nearly collapsing from hysterical laughter.

At home, Cherub was just a big, golden love bug and would love nothing more than to curl up at Paul's feet or nudge him occasionally to play and get all the love and attention she wanted.

Cherub has now left us and has found her forever home with Bonnie and Rob. They all met at an adoption clinic when Bonnie and Rob came in to buy cat food and 4 hours later left with Cherub. They were certainly not looking for a blind dog that day, but it was meant to be and they adore her.

It means so much to the dogs that come into the Peppertree program, in their not so perfect packages, to be given the chance to show what a wonderful companion they can be. After a week or so we just forgot that we were fostering a blind dog. She, and more importantly, we, had adapted to living with a special needs dog and it felt ..... totally normal.

We fostered Cherub for 5 months and during that time she brought us nothing but joy, smiles and, yes, hours of entertainment. Would we consider fostering a special needs dog again? Yes, in a heartbeat, because you never know when they are going to turn out to be the perfect dog - for you!

— Samantha Stelmaszyk

## Ha Ha!

I went to the cinema the other day and in the front row was an old man and with him was his dog. It was a sad, funny kind of film, you know the type. In the sad part, the dog cried his eyes out, and in the funny part, the dog laughed its head off. This happened all the way through the film. After the film had ended, I decided to go and speak to the man. "That's the most amazing thing I've seen," I said. "That dog really seemed to enjoy the film." The man turned to me and said, "Yeah, it is. He hated the book."

# The Story of a Physically Unappealing Dog

"Would you be willing to consider a dog with disabilities?" "No". I marked the box with some impatience. Granted, I had had Bourbon who was blind and Barclay is deaf, but these are conditions that developed with age in animals I loved. There are so many sound dogs who need homes, I don't need to take on other people's problems. This was the third set of forms from a net-based animal rescue agency I'd completed this evening. It was exasperating and amusing that the questions were as complex as the forms I had completed 30 years ago when I was preparing to adopt my children. Don't these people understand that these are DOGS? They should just be grateful that someone cares enough to fill out their silly forms. I proceeded with the revelation that, NO, my yard isn't fenced and YES, we have cats. They won't even bother to call, I figured. Forget it.

Like so many other animal lovers who have cared for and nurtured dogs and cats over many years, the thought of going to the shelter is always anguished. I have never been to an animal shelter for any reason that I didn't leave crying. I can't help it. I want to rescue everybody and I can't. We had lost our German Shepherd, Max, very suddenly, very prematurely, just before Christmas. Through tears my husband had said, For heavens sake, don't give me a puppy for Christmas! It had never entered my mind. Max was unique. He was a big, furry Yoda, exuding intelligence and wisdom that defied the limitations of being a dog. He was my husband's alter ego at home and at work. Nobody who knew Bob didn't know Max. My friends had cued me in to the internet option and it seemed like a good alternative. At least all the dogs saved by these groups would find a home.

Application complete. Send. Now I allowed myself to look at the Dogs for Adoption. They were a mixed bunch, all appealing in their way. We had gotten through the holiday but we were both so shaken that I wasn't sure when Max's spot would be filled. Thankfully we had Barclay, our 13 year-old adoptee, to fill the dog void. Where would we have been without him to feed, to walk, to stroke and fall over when he lay in the middle of the floor? We had taken Barclay in almost two years before when a friend moved to the West Coast, thinking only to give him a peaceful end to his days. Suddenly he had become our lifeline to normalcy. So now, looking at the array of dogs-on-the-web-page I thought only that it couldn't look like Max. The one criteria that I maintained was to find a dog who would look you in the eye; a dog unafraid of life or people, a dog looking to share a life, not have life created for her/him, a dog who could think for himself and would consider our commands as a strong suggestion, subject to his interpretation. It's a fine balance, I admit, but that's what our dogs are about.

Then, a face. Not a beautiful face, but THE face. All of it right there, big and square. Two years old - good, no puppy training. Available for adoption. Three legs -- a cripple - can he walk? How sad. Beautiful dog. Moving right along. . . A couple of other dogs were interesting. Why did I keep going back to the photo of the crippled, three legged dog? I closed the web page and went on to the other agencies. Over the course of the week I went back and looked again. Since they were local, it wouldn't do any harm to check out the Peppertree dogs at the adoption clinic, at least the other two. Bob would have to come, too, although I was sure he wouldn't want to. We had already had the discussion. . . argument? No more office dogs! Well, this would be an exploratory mission. That's all. We can just look.



The day was long and by the time we arrived at PetSmart it was 30 minutes to the end of the adoption clinic. We found our way in and looked around. Faith (age 6) was ecstatic with the beasts and began loving each one. Bob stood with his back to the wall and his hands in his pockets. I looked around for the dogs I had seen (not the crippled one). One was already gone, the other spoken for. And then, there he was. "This must be Chaz." "Yes, would you like to hold him?" "Uh, sure." His back leg sure was missing. It was recent, too. The hair hadn't even grown back over the incision. But he didn't seem to mind. He acted very normal. He was curious about everything that was going on, and wanted to meet everyone passing by. People responded positively to him, with the added comment, "Oh, what happened? What a shame, he's such a nice dog." Everything about Chaz said that he was the right dog for us except his missing leg. Faith loved him and his bio said he was OK with cats. He needed another dog and we had one. Too bad about that leg. He would have been perfect. Then Bob took his hands out of his pockets. He came over and began patting Chaz and stroking his head. "How you doing, boy? He does real well." Chaz was wagging at everything and at both of us. "Will he need a special ramp to get into the station wagon?" I heard myself asking. "Can he get up steps?" "No" and "Yes". "He doesn't have many problems," we were told. "Well," I heard myself asking my husband, "are we taking him?" "Yes," said Bob, who never says anything absolutely.

We couldn't take him that day but later that week I found myself, with child, finding my way to Chaz' foster home. The next day I took him to my vet. "Am I crazy? Is this going to be a lot of problems?" I asked. The vet was amazingly calm. "It's fine. He'll adapt. Don't worry. He'll make a great pet." And so he has. Chaz has become the neighborhood curiosity, but a beloved one in a community of dog people. Word has spread ahead of us, among them; and while I have told our story to a few, I keep hearing, "There he is! That's him. Oh, he's beautiful. What a good boy." Chaz just keeps wagging.

What's it like having Chaz? Well, kind of like having a 14 year-old boy. He's loud and brash. He leaves his toys everywhere people can fall over them. He spends a lot of time on the couch and I am highly suspicious that he occupies our bed when we're away. To Chaz, every day is a marvelous adventure. From his first joyous, "Woo, woo!" at 5:00 a. m. when I wake up, he's ready for anything to happen. The slightest jingle of a car key or rustle of a jacket and he's there. He's sweet and loving and very jealous for attention. And, yes, he is the new office dog. There are few accommodations that we've had to make. Luckily our house is on one level. The three steps to get to the porch are no problem but I do keep the basement door closed. Chaz manages to get in and out of the car just fine. He actually runs with abandon after tennis balls and anything else that moves. I have seen him stand upright on his one hind leg to follow an escaping squirrel up a tree. Walks? He adores them. While his three-legged gait is a little awkward, it works. He's strong and has the capacity to pull me if he is in a particular hurry. I have to watch if I pull him. Because he isn't solid on four legs, I can throw him off balance if I jerk the leash from his missing side. I am very careful not to. What happens when he falls? He gets

up. Can he stretch and shake himself off in the rain? Yes. How does he go to the bathroom? Fine, thank you.



I was talking to my brother over Easter this year. He remarked that our mother would have loved Chaz. "Yes," I replied, "but Dad wouldn't have." We nodded our agreement. I don't think I would have been swayed 20 years ago, even 10, to take a disabled animal. But then I didn't have the wisdom to search for the look in a dog's face.

Does it ever bother me that Chaz isn't perfect? Yes; especially in light of the fact that his injury was the direct result of a human's negligence. Mostly, however, I am indebted to a volunteer at the Menands shelter who wouldn't let Chaz be put down. She saw in him a wonderful character that deserved a chance at life and a new home. I am also indebted to a rescue organization that had room for a less than attractive animal because they, too, saw what a delightful soul he is. Chaz has his forever home and we are happy he's here.

We just discovered that 13-year-old Barclay has cancer and will probably be with us for only a few months more. What then? Well, Chaz won't be happy alone. So sometime before the end of the year you'll probably see us at another adoption clinic.

— Susan Feidner

*Since this article was written, Susan's beloved Barclay has passed on and is waiting for his family at the Rainbow Bridge. Susan has kept in constant contact with the group as to Chaz's development and antics, and she is a frequent visitor to Adoption Clinics where she is looking for a special companion for Chaz. Susan recently sent Peppertree this update and we'd like to add it as a footnote:-*

**You will appreciate this. I usually walk Chaz off leash. I can stay in the interior streets which are small and lightly traveled and he is such a good boy. Well, he saw a cat and gave chase. I was watching him run. Chaz is beautiful when he runs. His disability disappears and he manages a wonderful three-legged gait that carries him full out.**

**It is just astounding to watch him and think about the meaning (and limitation) of the very word "disability." Chaz is the happiest dog I have ever owned. Every day is the most beautiful, most promising, most wonderful event in his life and he's out there giving it everything he has. How amazing a life like his was spared.**

**How right! How splendid!**

**His lucky mom, Susan**

## Peppertree Adoption Clinic Schedule

- November 1st — LC Smith, Delmar (11.00am - 3.00pm)
- November 8th — Blue Seal Foods, Chatham (11.00am - 3.00pm)
- November 22nd — Petsmart, Latham (10.00am - 2.00pm)
- December 6th — LC Smith, Delmar (11.00am - 3.00pm)
- December 20th — Petsmart, Latham (10.00am - 2.00pm)
- January 3rd — LC Smith, Delmar (11.00am - 3.00pm)
- January 17th — Petsmart, Latham (10.00am - 2.00pm)

For locations of other Adoption Clinics:

Call our Voice-Mail 435-7425 or consult our web page (<http://www.peppertree.org>)



**We're here to remind you to visit our website for the link to the new Peppertree Store at Cafe Press**

**Help dogs while doing Holiday Shopping!**

**<http://www.peppertree.org/store.htm>**



**PEPPERTREE POST** 1 year (4 issues) \$10.00

**PEPPERTREE T-SHIRTS (ORIGINAL TEAL VERSION)**

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| <input type="checkbox"/> XL | <input type="checkbox"/> XXXL |                            |             | \$15.00 + \$3.00 shipping |

**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!!!!**

# Important Upcoming Events

## Holiday Happenings

Peppertree will be participating in two exciting holiday fundraisers this December!

First, we will be holding our own pet photo session, tentatively scheduled for December 6, at our clinic at L.C. Smith in Delmar (Delaware Ave., just south of Normanskill Bridge, two buildings south of McDonalds). 8" x 10", 5" x 7", and wallet sizes, and combinations of those. We will attempt to have both holiday and "plain" settings.

Second, show your family and friends that pets love Santa, too! Have your furry (or feathered!) friends photographed with Santa at PetSmart in Latham Farms.

As the dates and exact times are not yet determined, please check the Peppertree website for dates and times. The events will also be announced on our voicemail the week before the event at **(518) 435-7425**.

## Mini-Adoption Clinics

Peppertree may occasionally hold smaller clinics depending on dog and volunteer availability. Please check the website for further details.

## Fundraising Excitement! Win An NFL Autographed Football!

**An NFL football, autographed by the entire New York Giants Football Team, has been generously donated to benefit Peppertree Dog Rescue (not-for-profit/volunteer canine rescue).**

**Tickets are available now to win this fantastic prize!**

**Donation: \$1.00 per ticket**

**Drawing will be at: L.C. Smith Pet Center, Delmar  
Saturday December 6, 2003  
at 1.00pm**

**Tickets are available at upcoming Adoption Clinics or by mailing a check to: Peppertree Raffle, PO Box 2396, Albany, NY 12220 (must be postmarked by Nov. 30).**

**(Winner need not be present at time of drawing to win)**

## Baggage

*Now that I'm home, bathed, settled and fed,  
All nicely tucked in my warm new bed.  
I'd like to open my baggage  
Lest I forget,  
There is so much to carry-  
So much to regret.  
Hmmm... Yes, there it is, right on the top  
Let's unpack Loneliness, Heartache and  
Loss,  
And there by my leash hides Fear and  
Shame.  
As I look on these things I tried so hard to  
leave.*

*I still have to unpack my baggage called Pain.  
I loved them, the others, the ones who left me,  
But I wasn't good enough - for they didn't  
want me.  
Will you add to my baggage?  
Will you help me unpack?  
Or will you just look at my things -  
And take me right back?  
Do you have the time to help me unpack?  
To put away my baggage,  
To never repack?  
I pray that you do - I'm so tired, you see,  
But I do come with baggage-  
Will you still want me?*

— Evelyn Colbath

# HOMeward BOUND



**SEAMUS and DUSTY** - It's not very often that we take two dogs into the program that need to be placed together. Firstly, it's extremely difficult to find a family that wants the responsibility of two new dogs at the same time. Also, we have found that in many cases, it helps the dogs adjust within their new families if they are separated. Peppertree was first introduced to Seamus and Dusty when their family found that they couldn't give the time and attention to two dogs with a young family to raise. It took a matter of minutes for Peppertree volunteers to realise the special bond between these dogs and that they could never be separated. We knew then that we needed to work as hard as we could to ensure that these two were placed together. Karen Harmon, who handles the co-ordination of MAGRR in this area, immediately took on the task to find that special family amongst our applicants. Within a couple of weeks Art and Vicki Kittelson made the trip to meet our two special charges and, of course, it was a perfect match. Seamus and Dusty are loved, and will always be together.

**ZACK** - Peppertree Rescue has worked diligently to place dogs from other States that need our help and, most recently, we received a large group of dogs from a Missouri shelter. Zack was one of those special pups that was looking for just the right home and he was a wonderful foster at Tamara and Jay's home for a short time. Little did Tamara, Jay and Zack realise, but that was just the right place for him to be. It took two failed placements elsewhere before all 3 realised that they needed to be together, for good.

**NESTLE** - How frustrating and sad to think that this special boy with issues would never find a home. Unsocialised, not housetrained - we were losing hope. However, hope did come in the shape of Cocker Spaniel Rescue of New England ([www.csrne.org](http://www.csrne.org)). While Peppertree continued to board him, CSRNE found a very special family to adopt Nestle, a family who would be able to constantly work with his special needs. This boy is now happy and loved, and so he deserves to be.



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P.O. Box 2396  
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[www.peppertree.org](http://www.peppertree.org)

*A Rescue For Dogs Of Good Temperament*