

# RUFFDRAFTS

the DOG WRITERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

SPRING 2025



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*Awards Banquet Coverage*

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*Member News*

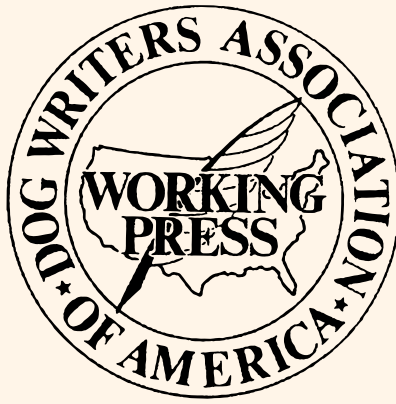
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*Writing Opportunities*

ON THE DWAA BLOG

**THE RESCUE ISSUE**



## Ruff Drafts

Send all material to Merrie Meyers at: [rdeditor@dogwriters.org](mailto:rdeditor@dogwriters.org)

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Spring 2025, February 14  
Summer 2025, May 16  
Fall 2025, August 15  
Winter 2025, November 14

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### REUSE, RECYCLE, REPURPOSE

I'VE DEVOTED THE last two decades of my life to recycling. I'm not referring to plastic and glass, though I do that too.

When I stopped showing dogs in conformation, I stopped breeding them because I believed the purpose of showing my dogs was to prove that they were good enough, (after checks for hereditary problems) to breed. My goal was to improve my chosen breeds, not to just make more of them.

After my retirement from exhibition, my first thought was, "now what?" I'd shown in both conformation and obedience and understood how much work I was about to undertake. Or so I thought...

My "now what" became rescue and adopt. I wanted to give some unwanted dogs a second chance.

Without the opportunity to live a fulfilling life, to be trained, to work and be loved, American canines don't have a chance in hell to a continued existence. According to animal advocacy group *Shelter Animals Count*, more than 359,000 dogs were euthanized in 2023, marking a five-year peak. I am disgusted and ashamed that we as a country have so little respect for life.

This issue of Ruff Drafts is near and dear to me. There were so many submissions about dogs experiencing Second Chances that we nearly ran out of room to print them all. Thank heaven for those who repurpose, recycle and reuse dogs, for those folks save lives.



◀  
Therese Backowski  
and her dogs, Lucy  
and Hank

*Therese Backowski*

**Therese Backowski**

DWAA President

# RUFFDRAFTS

Spring 2025

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



I AM A FAN of do-overs. It seems many of you are as well. When we announced the Second Chance theme for this issue, we were flooded with submissions. I was so glad to find my people.

Throughout my dog parenting, I've always adopted dogs that needed a new start; dogs from shelters or friends; dogs who, through no fault of their own, needed to change their mailing address. When I got my first dog, at 10, my mother was not happy. She didn't want any additional responsibility. A single parent, she worked full-time and had a young, inquisitive little girl to contend with. But, my great-aunt, who lived with us, convinced my mom that she would not have to worry about walking and feeding the dog. This was true. Initially, my aunt handled the daily chores, but quickly, she transitioned them to me. I enjoyed getting to know Corky, a Wire-haired Fox Terrier, and he became my buddy and helped me cope with my

mom's growing physical disability, resulting in anger and emotional issues.

At the time of his adoption the shelter told my aunt that Corky was supposed to be about two years old. I think they just said that because she said she was looking for an older dog. The veterinarian estimated he was maybe six months old. That worked out in my favor because Corky lived a good, long life. He lived another 10 years, passing away while I was away at graduate school.

There's been a succession of dogs in my life since then. Corky's successors all found their second chance with me, finding a path to me instead of me looking for them. I liked it that way. It seemed that destiny smiled on me and every dog who adopted me seemed to shine through with a quirky and loveable personality.

Now that I'm getting older and my vision is limited, I need help getting around. So, I'm going to turn the tables and find a dog who can give me a second chance to navigate spaces and enter new places without fear of falling or bumping into things. We'll become a team and travel mates. I'm looking forward to my second chance. There is a Turkish proverb that goes like this, "No road is long while in great company."

*Merrie Meyers*

**Merrie Meyers, Ph.D. APR, Fellow PRSA**

Ruff Drafts Editor

▲  
Merrie Meyers  
with Danny

J. WYNN ROUSUCK

# I DEDICATE *this* AWARD TO...

*When I walked to the front of the banquet hall to accept the DWAA Award for my novel, Please Write: A Novel in Letters, I was accompanied by three gentlemen. No one could see them because they were there only in spirit.*



A

AS I SAID WHEN ACCEPTING the award, I'm not the first dog writer in my family. My uncle, E.J. Rousuck, wrote one of the first books about Boston Terriers in 1926. It has been reprinted at least twice.

One of his younger brothers, my father, Morton Rousuck, was a dog judge for more than 50 years. He began taking me to dog shows when I was about three years old. Some of my earliest memories are of sitting ringside.

Whenever he judged a show, my father wore a pair of cufflinks that his mother had given him. Each featured a Boston Terrier, hand painted on a mother-of-pearl disk, covered with a domed crystal. After my father's death, my mother had the cufflinks made into earrings for me.

I wore those earrings proudly when I accepted the Maxwell Medallion for *Please Write*, a novel whose protagonist just happens to be a dog judge's daughter. Over the course of a conversation between two Baltimore dogs and a Cleveland artist, the protagonist discovers the role that imagination, laughter, love — and, of course, dogs — can play in coping with hardship and loss.

The Maxwell Medallion has meaning to me that extends beyond the great honor bestowed on my novel. My father, a lifelong Clevelander, was a friend of Maxwell Riddle's for decades, and I remember him well. I still have Cleveland Press clippings about my father judging a show, or about a champion Rousuck Boston. To my delight, on one



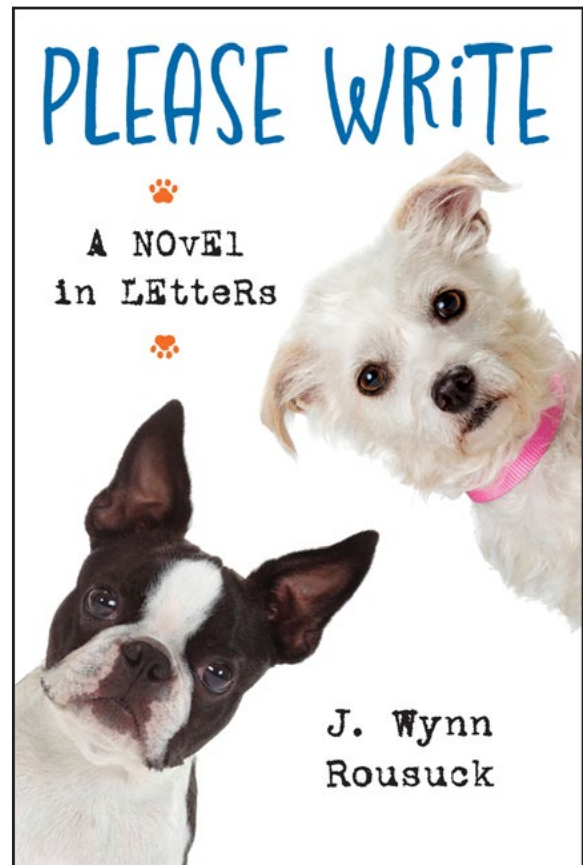
occasion he even ran a photo of my Boston puppy, “Judy’s Punch.”

My father died on February 7, 1991, shortly before that year’s Westminster Kennel Club Show. One of our last conversations was about the Westminster, which was on the cover of the latest New Yorker, his favorite magazine. He died with his final Boston keeping watch by the side of his bed. And yet, I know in my heart that on the second Saturday in February, 2025, my father, my uncle, and Maxwell Riddle were at the Dog Writers Association of America banquet, cheering me on. ■

J. Wynn Rousuck is the award-winning theater critic at Baltimore’s NPR affiliate, WYPR, and the former longtime theater critic at The Baltimore Sun. She has been published in magazines ranging from American Theatre to Dog World. Judy and her husband Alan Fink live in Baltimore with their Boston Terrier, Daisy. Please Write is her first novel.



[jwynnrousuck.com](http://jwynnrousuck.com)



## Our Thanks!

**W**HEN A LAST MINUTE challenge prevented our keynote speaker Adam Christman, DVM, MBA, from attending the Annual Awards Banquet, long time DWAA member Teoti Anderson, CPDT-KA, KPA-CTP, stepped in. Anderson, co-owner of A Dog’s Best Friend with her husband Tim Mullally, is a professional dog trainer and author of seven books, a regular columnist for Modern Dog magazine and a contributor to multiple national publications. Anderson used her experiences as both an author and dog trainer to provide the dinner guests with an uplifting and at times humorous look at life with dogs and their people. THANKS TEOTI!! ■

▶  
Teoti Anderson’s  
remarks were  
well received by  
attendees.



# Meeting Minutes

ANNUAL MEETING *of the* DOG WRITERS ASSOCIATION *of* AMERICA

For the first time in five years, DWAA held an in-person annual meeting. DWAA president Therese Backowski presided over the meeting. A summary of the meeting follows.

## Treasurer's Report

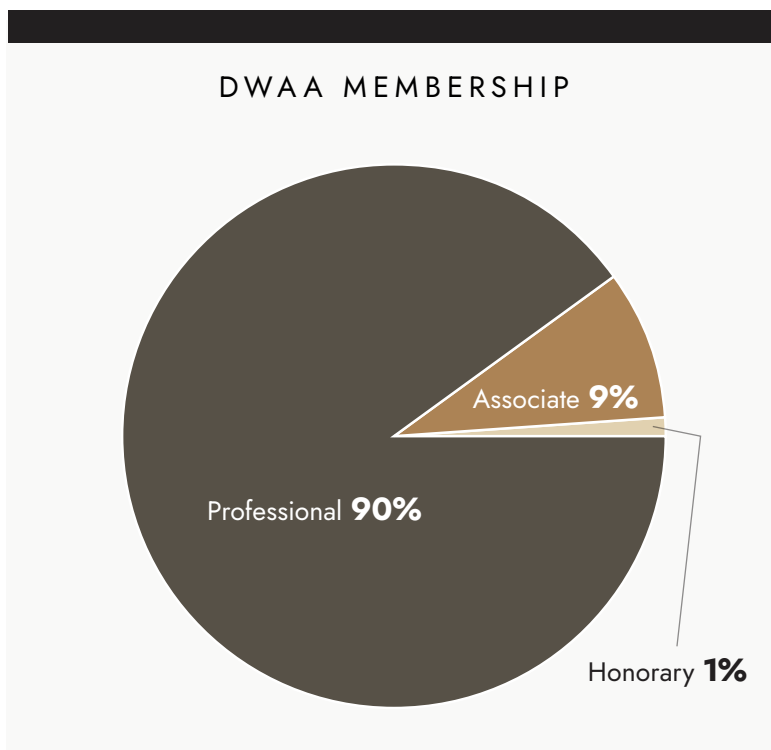
Treasurer Marsha Pugh presented the annual Treasurer's Report. The report is included in this issue. DWAA continues to operate in the black.

## Contest Report

Competition Chair Dr. Merrie Meyers reported that the 2024 contest was a success with nearly 600 entries and 95 judges. Winners attending the banquet will receive medallions or cash awards at the dinner. Remaining winners will receive them by mail. All finalists were sent frame-worthy certificates. Judges received certificates by email. Contest income was \$14,074.28; \$8633.25 from entry fees and \$5441.03 from sponsored awards. Contest expenses are still coming in, including computer work, program printing, medallions, lapel pins, and mailing. This year, youth-only categories were added in the written and other media areas to encourage young writers, providing them with the opportunity to enter without having to compete against adults.

## Membership Committee

Membership Committee Chair Christine Caplan submitted a report which Dr. Meyers read it in her absence. There are currently 233 active members. This is a decrease from our highest membership in 2019 which was about 400. Current memberships are 90% Professional Members, 9% Associate Members, and 1% Honorary Members. We are trying to increase member engagement so that we can grow our membership and create a steady stream of individuals who can lead DWAA into the future. Ms. Backowski mentioned that recruiting other



▲  
Membership by  
percentage of  
membership type

writers is sometimes a challenge in our competitive environment. She would like DWAA to focus on recruiting young writers, and encouraging members to write more educational articles discussing breed characteristics, regardless of registry. The general public may not know how to find a purebred dog and/or analyze whether that's the right breed for them. Our members can help with this.

## Attendees brainstormed other ideas for increasing membership and contest entries:

- Enhancing Member Benefits; create a series of professional development workshops with differing registration prices for members and non-members.



- Encouraging local and national breed clubs to submit articles to the contest.
- Contacting columnists for canine-focused publications such as AKC Gazette, Canine Chronicle and Show Scene.
- Visiting local schools to encourage participation in the contest.
- Establishing a mentoring for other writers to help them navigate the organization.
- Listing/advertising DWAA contest and membership information in national literature publications such as Writer’s Digest, Poets & Writers.
- Offering non-member contest finalists a reduced membership fee.
- Winning contest entries with author interviews and publishing them in Ruff Drafts.
- Continuing to enhance the website with resources for members.
- Creating outreach to members that did not renew.



To view the  
 2024 Writing Competition  
 Finalists and Winners,  
 please visit our website:

 [dogwriters.org/winners](https://dogwriters.org/winners)

## TREASURER'S REPORT

1/1/2024 through 12/31/2024

Description	Amount	
Opening Balance January 1, 2024		\$26,094.69

<b>INCOME</b>		<b>\$37,725.77</b>
Banquet	\$863.29	
Contest Entry Fees	\$8,633.25	
Contest Special Award Sponsor	\$5,441.03	
Dues	\$18,124.89	
Membership Application Fee	\$2,568.06	
Restitution	\$2,095.25	
<b>EXPENSES</b>		<b>\$(34,098.56)</b>
Bank Charge	\$(50.00)	
Banquet expenses	\$(1,000.00)	
Computerelectronic svc	\$(159.90)	
Computer Domain Service	\$(747.34)	
Computer Services	\$(16,950.68)	
Insurance	\$(879.00)	
Office supplies	\$(647.02)	
Printing and Postage	\$(637.11)	
Printing expenses contest	\$(3,932.73)	
Professional Service - audit tax filing	\$(600.00)	
Service fees	\$(41.69)	
Special Award Winner	\$(7,800.00)	
Subscriptions - email services	\$(653.09)	

Ending Balance December 31, 2024		\$29,721.90
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# JEN REEDER

HALL of FAME HONOREE



## D

WAA'S LATEST Hall of Fame recipient, Jen Reeder, grew up with cats. She didn't become a dog fan until she and husband, Bryan Fryklund, visited a dog shelter in Farmington, New Mexico, while on vacation. He pointed at the litter of unwanted puppies and told the shelter guy, "We'd like to meet the yellow one," Jen explained. They named that yellow dog Rio.

Rio had a profound effect on Reeder's professional life. "I took 'crazy dog lady' to the next level by narrowing my focus as a journalist to pets." Since then, she's written over 1,000 articles about pets for national publications, including Reader's Digest, BBC News, Woman's World, HuffPost, PBS's Next Avenue, The Daily Beast, Wine Enthusiast, Family Circle and Family Dog. She's covered breaking news about pets for the TODAY show's website after hurricanes, wild-

fires, the invasion of Ukraine and the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

A former therapy dog handler, she also volunteers for the nonprofit PawsCo by writing bios of adoptable dogs and cats.

Reeder served on the DWAA leadership team from 2017-2021, including two years as President. Inspired by Rio, her column for *Just Labs Magazine* features Labrador retrievers that help make the world a better place.

Along with her husband, she sponsors a Special Award Category in the DWAA Writing Competition, the Rio Award, in memory of Rio. She's also engaged her parents, Tom and Sally Reeder, to support another category in the writing contest in honor of Harrison Stephens, a newspaper editor who wrote thought-provoking and humorous features until his death just before his 100th birthday.

▲  
Jen Reeder  
receives her  
HOF Plaque  
from Dr. Joel  
Gavrielle-Gold,  
HOF Committee  
Chair

Reeder was awarded her plaque by DWAA Board Member Dr. Joel Gavriale-Gold, chair of the HOF selection committee, at DWAA's Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet on February 8, 2025. In her acceptance speech, she expressed her gratitude to her husband, parents, brother, and seven nieces and nephews, two of whom attended the banquet with their partners, and all of whom have taught her important life lessons.

Thanking the attendees, including DWAA's Board of Governors, for being part of the dog writing community, Reeder concluded, "Times are tough in journalism and publishing, but I fervently believe that the work we do to educate and inspire our readers is vitally important to dogs and the people who love them." ■

“

Times are tough in journalism and publishing, but I fervently believe that the work we do to educate and inspire our readers is vitally important to dogs and the people who love them.”

JEN REEDER

MERRIE MEYERS

## Recognition *for* Outstanding Service

ANNE MARIE DUQUETTE has been named recipient of the DWAA Distinguished Service Award. She was selected because of her contribution to and expansion of DWAA's digital footprint. During the past year she conducted dozens of interviews with the 2023 writing competition winners and sponsors which were posted to the blog. She also conceived of and curated the new Flash Fiction section in the blog. She continues to write blog posts and will interview this year's member-winners and sponsors once again.

Duquette lives in Southern California, but was raised all over the United States with a strong appreciation for the richness of the land, wildlife, and its beauty. Her love of her country and its people grew during her many travels as the daughter of a career U.S. Air Force pilot, as a Navy veteran herself, and as the wife of a career Navy Chief Petty Officer. She's loved the many dogs in her life, including two service dogs, which have inspired her stories.

She obtained a degree in Mass Communications (Journalism, TV, Film) from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville and set out for Hollywood. But apart from an un-produced treatment sale to Paramount Studios for Star Trek The Next Generation, her fate seemed to lay in the books she so loved to read. In 1987 she made her first sale to Harlequin Romances, her primary publisher of 25 books, and has ventured into the self-publishing

world of non-fiction as well. She has an adult education teaching certificate in writing from the state of California, and has taught religious education for fifteen years at her church. ■

You can find her titles on [Amazon](#), [Goodreads](#), and [Fantasticfiction.com](#)

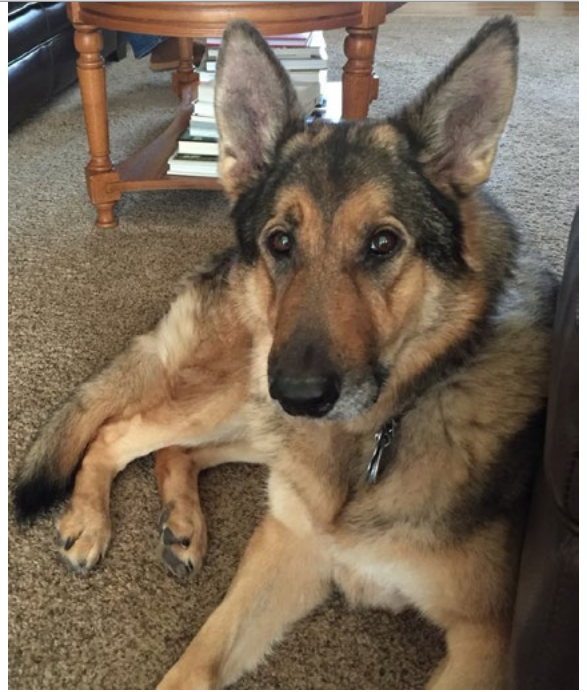


◀ Anne Marie Duquette and her dog, Niko, courtesy, Anne Marie Duquette.



BARBARA E. MAGERA MD, PHARMD, MMM

# CANINE TRANSITIONS



F

OR SEVERAL YEARS, Jason helped his grandfather who for decades socialized German Shepherd (GS) puppies to become guide dogs for the blind. Jason would romp and play with the puppies several times a week to teach them various tasks. His grandfather often lamented that the hardest part of training was when one of the canines graduated from socialization class to serious guide dog training. If successful, the trained adult GS guide dog would be paired with a blind human and both would continue with more extensive and specialized training. Jason and his grandfather were invited to observe how well their student-dog performed but neither were allowed to have any close contact with the GS. The trainers felt that the guide dog needed to establish a protective bond with their caretaker and not be distracted by previous human-dog relationships. Further training required the blind human and guide dog to master specific tasks.

After graduation, the guide dog would transition to the blind owner's home and serve as their caretaker. Usually, the guide dog would not encounter the socialization team again except if dog and owner returned to the center for the annual celebration party.

On the last afternoon of play, Jason and Xylo ended their day with emotional goodbyes. Whimpering, Xylo covered Jason's face with wet kisses. Tears streamed across Jason's cheeks as he tightly hugged his favorite puppy. Reluctantly, Xylo entered his crate for travel to the education center. When the SUV tail lights were no longer visible, Jason's composure collapsed. He ran to the room where Xylo's bed and basket of dog toys lay. Jason

sunk into Xylo's doggie bed, buried his head into Xylo's blankets and cried his heart out. He could not imagine life without Xylo.

As the years passed, Jason fondly reminisced about his fun times with Xylo. Periodically, his grandfather received updates about Xylo and his care of a blind man.

One day the foundation contacted Jason's grandfather with disturbing news. A family member of the blind man was arrested for elder abuse. The abuse also included neglect of the blind man's guide dog, Xylo. The foundation asked if Jason's grandfather would help with Xylo's medical expenses. A chronic untreated ear infection required specialized surgery and the foundation could not cover the veterinary bills. Jason's grandfather immediately agreed to pay for Xylo's medical expenses and to re-adopt Xylo.

When Jason learned about Xylo's condition and circumstances, he also was devastated. For several weeks, Jason recalled his nightmarish life when he was in the foster care system. Emotions of heartbreak and anxiety filled his mind. Now, his beloved Xylo was living a similar scenario and Jason's heart ached.

Living in foster homes left Jason with a sense of never feeling loved by anyone. His young life was a constant upheaval of moving from one family to another. He vividly recalled the old sense of feeling unwanted as a young child. Stability in Jason's life didn't occur until age five when finally loving parents adopted him. Jason formed strong bonds with his grandfather who himself held deep emotional scars as a Vietnam veteran. When

See XYLO pg 25 ▶

EMELISE BAUGHMAN

# Ruby

**S** “IS THIS EMELISE?” The voice on the phone was a whisper; I could hardly hear her. Still very softly, the voice said “I know you have an interest in Catahoulas and there is a little puppy here at the Humane Society, but they are going to put her to sleep. If you come soon, you can save her. But please don’t tell them I called you.”

That was it, but that was enough. I told my husband about the whispery call and we made the drive into town right away. When we got there and asked politely to see the Catahoula puppy, an employee took us back to a kennel run in the back, with a dark hallway and wet floor. There she huddled, very young, so vulnerable. The employee said their vet had diagnosed her with ringworm, so she was put on the list to be euthanized so she wouldn’t infect other dogs. They agreed to let us take her off their hands. We couldn’t get her out of there fast enough. I never discovered who had called me, but I suspect it was the employee who so readily agreed to let us take her even though she was not up for adoption. I am forever grateful to her!

With the possibility of ringworm, we wanted to take her to the vet before bringing her home to our Chesapeakes. Our vet examined her carefully and pronounced her free of ringworm, but rather with very dry skin, and probably only about 5-6 weeks old. We had no idea of her provenance since this native Louisiana hunting breed was not generally found in Nebraska.

This pretty puppy was a red brindle, my favorite color for dogs, but not as common in Catahoula Leopard Dogs which are more often any solid color with or without trim, or the classic leopard pattern in various base colors. And she was tiny. We treated that dry skin with Isle of Dog products, which not only cured the dryness but gave her a soft, lustrous coat. We gave her high quality puppy food which allowed her to thrive. She was bright and happy, and loved both

cuddling and playing, but she always had a rather serious demeanor. At the time when we rescued her, we agreed that we didn’t need another dog, certainly not a Catahoula, certainly not a dog I couldn’t show. But our daughter’s friend did want a Catahoula, so we decided to get her healthy and then send her to him. But not long before, a terrible housefire had left us devastated, and I had been so lost and vulnerable myself since then. When this puppy came, it seemed that she was a gift meant to help me heal from my searing grief. One day I broke down emotionally and told my husband how I felt, and this Southern girl became my Ruby. Our daughter’s friend was philosophical about it; he just adopted a pitbull.

Our dogs had always been Chesapeakes, with a brief affair with Italian greyhounds and our daughter’s junior showmanship English Setter and pugs. Our Chesapeakes had a job, two really, to be my show dogs and my husband’s waterfowl hunting dogs. All of the dogs had jobs, but the Catahoula was developed in the deep South to hunt wild hogs, round up feral cattle, and be a tough guard dog. I knew, though, that Ruby was sent to me with a very important job in mind. No, she didn’t retrieve a mallard or bring home purple ribbons. But she took care of me with absolute devotion. She knew her job was me, and she always took that very seriously. She knew when I was due home from work and waited by the front window. She knew when I needed to feel her warmth and my tough would-be wild hog hunter allowed my long hugs. Her deep brown eyes were so different from the Chesapeakes’ yellow-gold eyes, but they held a serious expression that said she knew her job and took it seriously.

She did love running in the fields when we took our small pack out to stretch their legs. The retrievers swam, of course, but Ruby would get in the water and lie down, enjoying the lake in her

See RUBY pg 37 ►

CINDY OJCZYK

## From Puppy Mill *to* Second Chance:

SHELBY'S JOURNEY OF HEALING



**W**HEN I HEARD the melodic ring of my phone and saw the Second Chance Animal Rescue number on the screen, I thought I'd be greeted with a cheerful hello and a request to foster. Instead, anger bubbled at the edges of co-founder Lynda's voice. The owner of a puppy mill had euthanized one thousand dogs in her quest to downsize her breeding business. My eyes shut tight against Lynda's words, holding back the image of what that meant for all those dogs.

A rescue agency had learned of the cruelty and negotiated with the woman to end the killings. Other agencies and shelters around the state rallied in the January freeze to pitch in with the



Shelby came to love the snow. Photo by Ojczyk.

hauling and housing of the remaining 200 dogs. A volunteer from Second Chance was driving back from the property with 22 for our team.

I worked with my daughters and a few volunteers to stage the wraparound porch of a Victorian home in St. Paul, Minnesota. Food and supplies had been hauled from the pet shed so we could quickly move dogs into the warm cars of foster folks waiting along the snowy street.

The somewhat festive mood from the gathering of people on a joint mission was quickly dampened by the stench of new vomit and old feces from filthy, fearful, uprooted dogs. One by one, the little carriers holding covering pups were brought to the porch. A gloved hand would carefully remove each straining dog for a quick assessment and the assigning of a name.

Almost all were small females around the age of four who'd spent their entire lives producing litters of puppies for the pet trade market while confined to tiny kennels stacked warehouse style, like factory-farm chickens.

I was steeped in fury when I felt the soft nudge of my daughter's elbow, stirring me from my thoughts. "Mom, there are only three dogs left in the van. Lynda wants to know who we'd like to take home."

"You've been so helpful. You and your sister choose."

We secured nine-pound Shelby between the girls. While the kids gaggled from the stink rising from the carrier, I formulated a plan for her recovery.

First up was a much-needed bath. One bath quickly turned into three as we fought the buildup of matted feces. Once dry, a doe-eyed poodle mix with a hint of apricot emerged from the tangles.





I later took Shelby outside with resident dogs Margo and Poet where she danced from foot to foot in panic in the snow. Once inside, she tried walking to her kennel. Years of confinement left her unable to navigate a straight line.

We created a home for Shelby in my office using a pet fence so she could move from the kennel to the training pad to the soft bed outside her kennel as she grew comfortable with her surroundings. I would work at my desk. The girls would do homework in the chair by the window. As our familiarity with each other grew, Shelby sought a pat on the head, a scratch under her chin.

Two weeks of forward movement ended the day I drove her to the veterinary clinic. During spay surgery, twelve rotted teeth were removed. She returned sore and trembling. We were back to square one with building trust and healing.

Shelby turned a corner in her recovery a few weeks later. I was leashing big Margo for a walk, when I heard a mournful “wooooo” coming from Shelby’s pen. She was no longer happy to be left behind. I swaddled her like a newborn in a thick fleece blanket, stuffed her into a messenger bag with only nose and eyes peeking through the flap, and slung her over my shoulder. She rode happily in her sling two times a day.

One morning, as I tried to settle her into the bag, her legs stiffened like a toddler in a tantrum. “Come on, Shelby,” I muttered in frustration. She made it clear she would not be getting into the

bag. From that day forward, she ran to the back door and waited patiently to be put into a winter coat to join us. As one block turned to two miles, strong muscles enabled her to walk a straight line.

One morning upon our return, Papillon Poet ran to the toy box in my office, found a small, knotted rope and dropped it at Shelby’s feet. She stepped back, eyeing it like a hiker inspecting a stick that looks like a snake. Poet nudged it closer to her with his little black nose, marble eyes gleaming, tailing wagging. He picked it up and shook it, letting out a little, “Grrrrr.” Shelby gently grabbed the rope’s end and tugged. Poet gently tugged back. Startled by the tension, Shelby dropped the rope. Poet dropped his end, waiting until she had the courage to pick up hers. In a matter of minutes, Poet had Shelby engaged in the first game of her new dog life.

A few days later, I received a phone call from my daughter. Barely able to contain her excitement, she shouted, “Mom, Shelby’s playing with the Santa toy, tossing it in the air and growling as it falls. She’s playing by herself!” It was the sign I needed to start searching for her forever home.

Sharon locked souls with Shelby when she came across her pictures on Petfinder.com. She had been searching for the right dog to help her tiny Maltese recover after the death of her husband. I spent a week of afternoons visiting Sharon, her extended family, and Maltese Molly. It was the slow transition I needed to find comfort in letting Shelby go. It also gave Sharon and Molly time to get used to a new dog in their home. One sunny Sunday, I closed the door to Sharon’s house, leaving Shelby behind in the good hands of many adoring people. ■

Cindy Ojczyk writes a weekly post, *Like People, Like Pets*, at [cindyojczyk.substack.com](http://cindyojczyk.substack.com).

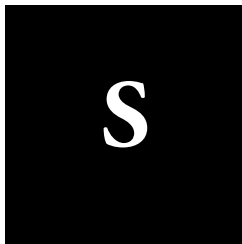


[cindyojczyk.substack.com](http://cindyojczyk.substack.com)

◀  
Photo by Cindy  
Cindy Ojczyk

ELIZABETH ANNE JOHNSON

## Sage *the* Healer Dog



AGE WAS an approximately 10-week-old yellow lab mix puppy that came to me in a dream. In that dream, she told me her name and asked me loud and clear to please come get her out of

her cage. In the haze of the dream, it looked like she was in an animal shelter.

I was at a seminar with my husband at the time. He had just lost his Bloodhound/Australian Shepherd mix, K.C., at age fifteen. His heart was sore and tender. Sometimes, the only thing to repair the loss of a beloved dog is another beloved dog. We were staying at a hotel and the next morning I went to the front desk to ask if there was an animal shelter nearby. I was told it was just one block away. I talked my husband into stopping on our way out of town and there she was, little Sage, the puppy from my dream.

I recognized her instantly and she recognized me, responding immediately to her name. We lovingly packed Sage in the car and off we went. Sage was a smart little thing and resourceful. A wee bit feral and yet very devoted to our existing pack family. She was a Metal element in Traditional Chinese Medicine's Five Element Theory – purposeful and quietly introverted. However, she also had a strong secondary Fire element and a tertiary Earth element, which both required her having the comfort and stimulation of family and friends around her...all the time.

That quickly became apparent as she had a terrible problem with separation anxiety. She had initially bonded with me and would chew anything that I had touched before leaving for work. One sad morning it was the toilet seat!

My husband's grief over losing his last dog kept him from bonding with her. He was a new middle school teacher and was working long days.

I had two other dogs going to work with me each day and did not have enough time or energy to take puppy Sage, so she stayed home with uncle-dog Riley, the best puppy sitter in the world, for the first two weeks.

After the toilet seat massacre, several eviscerated pillows, two disemboweled plants, and a family discussion, she proudly went to school with her dad and their bond was formed. She was the most perfect and cute pup, and all the school staff and students fell in love with her sweet, sociable Fire element side. Her Earth element formed deep lasting family-like bonds with many kids, parents and teachers. Her primary Metal made her the star of the school as an unofficial therapy dog and Sage was quickly recruited to work in the library for Reading with Rover time - before there was such a thing. She spent her days in my husband's classroom as well as other classrooms, a vigilant mascot for signaling physical and emotional issues in children while also providing a calming Earth element touchstone for little hands and hearts. In a few years, this included Sage taking the special education children for walks when they needed a friend or any emotional assistance. Turns out she had a knack for signaling epileptic seizures in the classrooms and had a gentle, calming influence on ADHD and anxiety-ridden children. She just knew who needed what and when.

Even in our home pack life, she always took the Metal/Earth role of nurse and often alerted me to issues with our other animals, showing me exactly where in their bodies they needed care. She also became mascot of the surf team, spending early mornings on the beach carefully counting heads in the water and notifying my husband - the coach - if someone was having a hard time out there. Sage had an amazing working dog career for thirteen years. Then her Fire/Metal element dad retired from teaching and both he and Sage flopped into a slump. With the loss of her job and the emotional withdrawal of my husband, she too



◀ Elizabeth Johnson (l), handles Sage while working with Dr. Georgia Edwards, a retired oncologist turned National Association of Canine Scent Work (NACSW) certified nosework instructor.

became apathetic, bored, and depressed. Her grief was palpable. Sage began to develop a slow growing tumor on her nose that eventually affected her breathing, exactly where she had been bitten by a rattlesnake when she was three years old.

At the time, I had a precocious and highly intelligent Labrador-cross pup named Luna (also known as the “tiny terrorist”) who needed a job. Luna had an excellent working mind and was an amazing scent dog, so I put her in a nose work class in preparation for doing search and rescue work with me. One day I had Sage in the car with us as we were arriving at Luna’s nose work class. Our instructor Georgia, a retired oncologist turned nose work instructor, immediately spotted Sage’s tumor and her obvious apathy. We talked about Sage’s amazing life adventures and her current depression, and Georgia invited Sage in to do some nose work. Sage loved it! Finding biscuits hidden in boxes and cubbies, what could be better? This fun work brought her out of her doldrums, and she lived two more years, to the ripe old age of fifteen.

Sage’s last service work was a month before she passed. She and I were asked to do a nose work

demonstration hosted by the American Cancer Society. The ACS goal was to show that there can still be ways to have fun during life with cancer, even for our animals. Sage, wearing a pink bandanna, pink harness, pink leash, and her now large pink facial tumor, raced through the boxes, finding the scents in record time. The crowd roared! What a sweet “Shero” she was. She left her mark on so many hearts, right up to the end.

Sadly, on my birthday, Sage was quite clear it was her time to go. I carried her down to the ocean for her last earthly feel of the water she loved and knew so well. After a dip in my arms, a long glance out into the waves – one more surf check – and a big sigh, she looked at me and said goodbye. To sort through my sore heart strings, I went back to the beach, walking slowly with both sadness for the loss of her sweet spirit and joy for having had her amazing magic in our lives. A large balloon came floating towards me and landed in the branches of a tree eye level where I stood. On the balloon was a yellow lab puppy and the words, Happy Birthday Mom! I wept and laughed and wept and laughed some more. I will always wonder how she managed that amazing goodbye! ■





HOLLY COOK

# Underdog *to* Wonderdog:

## The Road to Going Rogue

I

MAGINE A DOG with such high energy and ball drive, that he gets shuffled from shelter to foster home back to the shelter seven times. The intensity of his energy is so high that he is finally taken into a rescue for his specific breed. He's an Australian Cattle Dog. Even with the experience and knowledge of the breed, the rescue believes he will never be a good house dog. He is smart as a whip, always into mischief and has an independent spirit. He is happiest when he is outdoors. Being indoors induces some anxiety in him, which only perpetuates his behavioral challenges, deeming him unadoptable. He isn't a bad dog; he is just really good at being a cattle dog.

When Heath Smith heard about this dog, named Max, he knew he had to meet him. Max was being cared for by a cattle dog rescue organization in Everett, Washington and Heath was about an hour away. As soon as Heath met Max, he knew Max was destined to be a Rogue Dog.

A Rogue Dog is a Conservation K9 who sniffs out scat of endangered species and other animals to help biologists and other scientists study, and hopefully, help save them. The dogs are trained and employed by Rogue Detection Teams, which is headquartered in eastern Washington.

Max's resume is truly impressive. He has worked on research boats in Puget Sound sniffing out floating orca scat. He has worked on projects in Washington State that include wolf, cougar and lynx surveys. He has traveled to New York to work on a moose project. He has been to Cambodia to work on a tiger project. He has also been to Alberta, Canada to work on a caribou and wolf project in three feet of snow. Additionally, Max was trained to detect Northern Spotted Owl pellets, as well as fisher and martin scat.

When out in the field, Max and his bouncer are early to rise. Odor dispersal is at its strongest in the early hours of the morning. After a hearty breakfast, Max's bouncer puts Max in his "working clothes" which consist of a GPS collar, a work-

ing vest and a safety vest. His bouncer says "Let's go find it!" and they start their day. Spending six to seven hours in the field, Max and his bouncer will search for the scat they've been assigned to find. Upon finding the quarry, Max will alert his bouncer with a delicate, but precise "down". His reward for his hard work is his ball, which he loves to squeeze out the side of his mouth.

After about 10-15 km, Max's day is done. He will eat his dinner while his bouncer downloads the data and processes all of the samples they found. Afterwards, Max receives a full body inspection. His bouncer will check his paws, look for ticks, and check for scratches or sore spots. These intimate moments really help Max bond with his bouncer.

All of those characteristics that would make Max a terrible house dog, make him an excellent Rogue Dog. And he's not the only one! Rogue Detection teams purposely adopt dogs like Max who would not thrive in a home setting. The higher the ball drive, the more successful he/she can be in the field. Because the dogs work for their reward, which in most cases is a ball, they respond well to positive reinforcement scent training.

Pip is another example of a dog that just needed to be placed in the right environment. Pip, another cattle dog, is a mustelidae master. What is a mustelidae? It's the scientific name for a group of carnivorous mammals, including weasels, badgers, otters, ferrets, martens, wolverines, minks and others. Pip has worked on projects involving mink in New York, badgers in California, ermine in British Columbia, marten in Oregon and California, Washington and Oregon as well as wolverine studies in Michigan. He has also learned to detect viruses in cherry and grape plants, which is a fairly new skill for him.

Along with Pip and Max are about a dozen other Rogue Dogs whose intense ball drive and high intelligence have deemed them Wonder Dogs of the conservation world.

See WONDERDOG pg 37 ▶

JAMES COLASANTI JR.

# The Minutes *of the* Day

*Growing up with a dad who was an animal advocate left a mark on my existence that would continue to grow as I did.*

He always taught me to make all of my decisions with my heart and not my brain. “Sometimes,” he would say, “your thoughts are in left field where your heart usually grounds you for a stable decision. Open your heart, and your answer will appear.”

When my other half passed away after 46 years together, more than half of my lifetime, the feeling of loneliness became overwhelming. No one to talk to; no one to eat with; and no one to be with during the minutes of the day. During our life together, we rescued and housed over 53 dogs and 5 cats, and not because we had to. It was just something we both wanted to do. We loved crowds. But then when our last 2 dogs, Natalie at 17, and Mr. Neville, at 19, passed away, I was left really alone.

Everyone told me to take it day by day, and it would get better. But the loneliness doesn't subside. It is never better, and it never goes away. I really needed another go-round; another reason to keep going; and a reason to get up every morning.

A Facebook post about a special needs dog crossed my desk. “Buttons,” named by his foster home because he was as cute as one, was a small, mostly blind dog available for adoption.

It seemed no one wanted him. No one wanted to deal with the disability, and the extra work it would entail to keep him as a pet, or even more, as a family member. But I had dealt with disabled dogs, several three-legged dogs, and a deaf dog that required hand signals. I asked the shelter, “Are there any additional requirements that this dog would need?” They, being diplomatic, said I would really need to visit the shelter and spend time with the dog.

Immediately after meeting Buttons, I decided that I wanted to take the chance. All dogs matter. There had been other difficult situations, and I felt that I could overcome a little blindness if the dog liked me. He did, and I signed the papers.

Was it divine intervention? Who knows. But 5 months later, I've gotten my second chance, and he came in a small package with a big bark, 4 big paws, and a whole lot of love! ■

JUDITH AYN

## DOG

**M**Y FIRST DAY as a volunteer at the local rescue center. Animals of every description bark, meow, howl at jet engine decibels. I'm the one who needs rescuing. What am I doing here? The person assigned to train me, Casey, is late. Half an hour passes as I loiter in the lobby, observing a steady stream of people with mostly dogs and cats, dropping off, picking up, discussing their creatures. Although every sound echoes, I start to drift off.

Then he arrives. Mr. Wonderful. Six feet tall, dark hair, chiseled jaw, blinding smile. Yum? Or not. Just a leftover dream scene from the romance novel I read this morning, while eating a cold cereal breakfast. Despite a late start, I managed to race from home and catch an express bus to be here on time. Tardy is unforgivable in my book.

My trainer finally shows up. He's short and squat, like me. Definitely male, but bald as a cue-ball. Five o'clock shadow, blue eyes. "Sorry I'm late. Name's Casey." He offers a calloused hand. "Diane, right?"

I nod. He answers a call on his cell. So rude.

"I'll feed Dog again at noon, I promise, honey. Stop worrying. She'll be fine." A pause. "Yeah, love you, too."

Nice smile. "Where were we, Diane? Oh, training. Let's dish out the food for the dogs. Just follow me."

Down the hall to a kitchen set up. Big bins of dry kibble and massive size cans of the wet stuff. We prepare endless bowls of mixed slop. Just how many dogs are there in this small place? And we get to deliver all the food, too.

"We slide the bowls in nice and easy. Like this." Casey shows me how to accomplish the task, cage by cage, then works away from me down at the other end of the hallway. We finish serving breakfast in what seems like hours later.

"If you stay all day, we do this again around five at night. What made you decide to volunteer?"

Good question. No husband, kids or pets. New in town and currently unemployed. A mess really, barely hanging on after a bad break-up. "I needed to get out of the house." Lame much?

"Yeah, I know how it is." Another nice smile, eyes crinkling. "My wife passed a couple years ago, and my grown daughter suggested this. I've been at it six months and have met some great beings, human and otherwise." He steers me in a different direction to a smaller building.

A small room labeled Clinic, smelling of disinfectant is filled to the ceiling with shipping boxes. "Our mission, if we decide to accept it, is to unpack the inventory and put it in the right spots. Okie dokie?"

I roll my eyes when his back's turned but dutifully follow his lead. "So, you have a dog?" I ask, inanely.

"Nah. Cat person." He opens a tall cabinet and fills the top shelf.

"I thought you have to go home and feed Dog?"

Casey laughs. "Dog's a kitten. My granddaughter is three years old and hell on wheels. Her speech was delayed. The kids got her a pet and she named it Dog, her first word." He opens his phone and scrolls through endless photos. "Check out the feline terror."

Dog is probably the ugliest creature I've ever seen. One eye, a droopy ear, ratty long hair in a shade that is struggling to be white. Black marks on her face.

"Cute, huh? She was probably the runt of the litter, and the mother dropped her off in some bushes and bailed. We actually had to hand-feed her bottles, every 2-3 hours to keep her alive. Exhausting but she's a princess."

Sure. I mutter something about her cuteness, but Casey's head is in the cabinet.

"What about you? Do you have a pet?" He moves boxes so we can take a break and sit.

See DOG pg 37 ▶



LYNNE ROBINSON

## Once *a* Therapy Dog, Always *a* Therapy Dog



TORY IS A HANDSOME, well-mannered, loving 8-year-old golden retriever who was born to provide love and comfort. When he was only 4 ½ months old, I took him with me to a PAWS for People training and certification, just to see how he would react to other dogs and to distractions he had never experienced in his short little life. When we were there, he was relaxed, interested, and had no difficulty with this new environment at all. His demeanor and behavior were so good that I decided to have him STEXED (PAWS' version of certification) and he aced it, right there on the spot.

From there, his public life was all about visiting. Tory is comfortable in any environment with anyone, so he became my top therapy dog, and we put in many hours of visitation. At that time, I was the Executive Director of PAWS for People, and Tory was by my side visiting new sites, doing demonstrations as part of my presentations, and helping me introduce new programs. We answered the Kennel Club of Philadelphia's call to PAWS asking for therapy teams to become National Dog Show Therapy Dog Ambassadors and took shifts at the show for several years. As part of the Ambassador jobs, we also attended, by invitation, several Blessing of the Animals and became Valley Forge National Historic Park "BARK Rangers."

Tory was happy as a showpiece for PAWS, and as part of the PR campaign through his role as Ambassador for the National Dog Show.

Then, last July, came a ripple in our lives. I had to have ankle surgery, which put me out

of the running as Lead Human in our therapy team. When that happened, I thought Tory would retire out of his role as well.

Silly me—once a therapy dog, always a therapy dog. Overnight, my loving golden became MY therapy dog. He's not a service dog. He doesn't do tasks like laundry or pull my wheelchair around, but he is 100% with me, of his own choosing, and has shifted his pet therapy focus from others to his handler—me.

Now, the dog who used to reap all the benefits of being a visiting pet therapy dog spends his days and nights by my side. Sometimes he encourages me to get up and walk when I really don't want to. Sometimes he reminds me when it's time for my meds with a nudge or a gentle, yet insistent paw on my arm. Most importantly, he stays close, providing warmth, companionship, and consistent love.

Tory has repurposed himself from being a darn good therapy dog for other people to being exactly what I need to slow down to manage my pain and heal. His purpose has shifted, and I can attest to the fact that it's a positive shift for us both. ■

▲  
Lynne Robinson  
and Tory at home.  
Photo courtesy of  
Lynne Robinson.

DR. JOEL GAVRIELE-GOLD

## FOUR DAYS *in the* LIFE...



AS A CLINICAL Psychologist and Psychoanalyst in private practice for more than four decades, I was a pioneer in the unheard-of practice of using dogs in therapy. All of my dogs intuitively knew what patients needed. None of them received any training from me, although it was evident they

passed on their knowledge to each other providing whatever was needed to attend to patients.

These past few years, I had two Bouvier des Flandres, Argos and Lulu. Argos was older by five years. They were a team in the office, meeting and greeting patients and taking turns attending to them. It appeared they each had their favorites. When Lulu was seven years old, she suddenly died from heart failure. No one was more shocked than Argos, who could not believe she was gone.

Argos grieved; he stopped eating and quickly lost 12 pounds. He frequently would make crying sounds and then lie down and sleep. His energy was draining and I was despairing. I phoned Bouvier Rescue over and over. Asking for an older female, I was told they almost never had females for adoption.

Finally, I got a call from Rescue saying they had a young female in Wisconsin. She was rescued from an abusive breeder. I received short videos of a young female running around in her foster family's backyard. I agreed to take her and hoped for the best. They had a volunteer who would meet me halfway outside of Cleveland. I left New York wondering what I was getting myself into. My vet said not to take Argos with me so that I would have time alone with Penny, whom I had already renamed to the French nickname of Trixie from Beatrix (one who brings joy).

At the arranged motel, I hardly slept. In the morning I received a phone call from the transport

driver a few miles from the motel. They arrived and Trixie got out, she pulled him, peed, and was ready to meet me. She sniffed me with no wish to know me better. The driver said she was very sweet, easy going and enjoyed the ride. We walked her together for quite a while. I paid and thanked him. He still writes to ask about her.

So Trixie headed to NY, another new home. She was very quiet sitting in the front seat, leaning as far away as possible against the window. We stopped at Burger King. I offered Trixie two plain burgers, which she gratefully accepted. About 8 hours into the trip, she lay down comfortably in the passenger seat, and by the time we hit the George Washington Bridge, her head was in my lap. We were making nice progress.

We got out of the car at my cabin. My neighbor, John, who was taking care of Argos, was waiting in the fenced-in backyard to meet Trixie. It was a beautiful moment. They instantly got along. I went into the house for a moment and returned to the yard to see the unlatched gate and Trixie running down the driveway by herself.

The horror of the moment was staggering. I felt like vomiting. I could not catch my breath due to my overpowering feeling of fear. I was stunned and horrified at what was happening. I jumped into my Toyota and raced down the 800-foot driveway only to spot her crossing the road and running, running, running.

I parked my car in the middle of the road, and as other cars stopped, I implored them to help me look for her. Many people got out, and some drove very slowly in the direction she had been running. I couldn't tell if she had chosen the road going up the mountain or continued straight to the highway toward the small village four miles away. All to no avail.

She was gone. I was devastated, so I tried to keep myself together. I found out there was a

town dog controller, Steve Budofsky. Luckily, he answered and came right over. He turned out to be an amazing guy who placed an all-points lookout alert.

He told me that even though the dog had been with me a short time, I should put the clothing I recently wore out along the driveway entrance and more clothes along the driveway going up to the house. (I'm still not sure if he was telling me this as a recovery possibility or, seeing the state I was in, he was giving me something to do to keep me occupied).

Steve told me to create a lost dog notice without mentioning a reward. The rescue shelter had sent videos of Trixie frolicking with other dogs in her foster home. I managed two shots off the video for the missing notice and had 200 printed. Neighbors helped put the notices in police and fire stations, post offices in surrounding towns, convenience stores, and every mailbox in town. I received two phone calls from nearby neighbors saying they had seen Trixie but could not get near her.

It was August, and it was unbearably hot on the third day she was missing. All I could think of was a dog getting hit by a car, starving, dying from heat stroke, without water. I kept bursting into tears of fear and worry. All this time thinking how stupid I was in those split seconds between feeling total joy and now followed by self-hatred, guilt, and despair. The pain was overwhelming.

It was now four days since Trixie was gone, and I had given up hope. Then, the phone rang, and a man said he found my dog. I asked him what color and he said brown. I said it's not my dog, she is black. He said, "Yes, yes, Wisconsin, Wisconsin." I knew it must be her because she was wearing Wisconsin tags. I asked for his address. He gave me his address, and I couldn't believe it. He was calling from a town twenty miles north of me. How could that be?

I called Steve and told him. He was not far from the caller. I was immediately on my way, wondering how she could have traveled so far and what kind of terrible shape she must be in. Steve called me - the dog was indeed Trixie. I arrived and met Luis, whose sister had found Trixie in their backyard. She was too exhausted to run from the kids and family. They were lovely people. I left with an exhausted dog but full of joy.

Trixie came back to Argos, and he stayed by her side. In the following days, I watched Trixie fall in love with Argos. While she was not connecting very much with me, not responding when I called her by name, not interested in eating without Argos by her side, barely interested in joining Argos and me at night. However, Argos was totally involved with her. He was ready for a new companion.

Trixie accompanied Argos and me to the office. Watching Argos attend to the patients, she learned to develop her own style of making contact with patients, and like all my other therapy dogs, she instinctively knew exactly what each patient needed.

When Argos was diagnosed with cancer, he was given three months to live. I didn't want him to suffer through treatment. He would live out what was left of his time with dignity. He managed to live eleven months and then failed rapidly.

Trixie was bereft. I had her by my side as we buried Argos in the backyard along with LuLu's ashes. Once again, a best friend was lost, and now I had to be concerned about Trixie.

For many months, after burying Argos, Trixie refused to look at me. If I held her head in my hands, she would turn her eyes completely away from me. She said, "Why did you do this to me? He was my joy, and now I am alone with just you. You could never replace Argos." I ached for her. The only time she was herself and active was with patients.

One day, needing real contact from Trixie, I sat on the floor with her, held her head in my hands, and spoke to her. "Listen," I said, "we both miss him terribly, but we are together, and we will get through this together, and it will be OK." I couldn't stop crying, still holding her head she turned and looked directly in my eyes and licked my face. We were crying together for the first time.

I realized whatever abuse Trixie received as a puppy was compounded by having never had an opportunity to socialize and connect with humans. There is a critical developmental period in a dog's life when it learns to bond with humans and allows itself to become loving and domesticated in all the ways that bring dogs and people together.

Trixie had come home. ■

KATHY MANDELL

## Petey's Second Chance

WHEN MY CLOSE FRIEND adopted a little Chihuahua Dachshund mix from that well-known classified ad website, I wanted to scold her for doing so, but I didn't. She told me she saw the listing and felt bad for the cute little dog. She and her husband just wanted to host the dog at their home for a trial weekend, to see if the dog would be a good fit for their household. He was not a good fit, but the person who listed the dog disappeared. So, my friends were stuck with him.

They wanted to name the dog Peanut, but they agreed that Petey sounded better. None of us knew what his name was before.

I went over to their house to meet Petey. He was so cute with his "flying nun" ears and his little sparkly personality. He loved to chase their cat and eat the cat's food. He was immediately drawn to me and jumped up on my lap. My friends were surprised because he had been so shy with everyone else. I touched his ears, and they warned me, "He doesn't like his ears touched!" But Petey let me play with his ears and didn't seem bothered at all.

In the following months, I went over to their house many times, and every time Petey would hop in my lap and let me play with his ears. He was my little buddy from the moment we met.

Several months went by. My friends tried to see if Petey would be a good fit for their home, but he was anxiety-ridden and impossible to housebreak. He would even go outside and come back indoors and do his business inside. He was just so confused.

Around Thanksgiving of that year, Petey was soiling their house everywhere he could, at every opportunity. He had horrific separation anxiety, and when my friend got home from

work, Petey bugged her relentlessly to pay attention to him. Pawing at her, and begging and begging, even though Petey spent all day, every day, with her husband who was battling cancer at the time. My friend called me in a panic that week and said that she was at a loss as to how to handle Petey. They had tried everything, and with their own medical issues, it was just too stressful to keep cleaning up after the dog every time he soiled inside the house.

As a temporary solution, I offered to foster and train Petey for the holiday season to reduce their stress and to try to housebreak him. We agreed I would pick him up that day and keep him until January 2nd. I knew if he spent time with my pack, the other dogs could show him how things were done.

The month went by quickly. On December 28, my friend called to inform me that there was absolutely no way she could take Petey back to her house. She asked, "Will you help me surrender him to the shelter?" I replied, "Hell no! Will you allow me to keep him?" To which she gratefully agreed.

So, Petey stayed with me and my pack.

Based on some information I had found in his belongings, Petey apparently lived in several homes. Therefore, I wasn't Petey's second chance, but probably his third or fourth chance.

It took a long, long time, but we finally resolved his house-soiling issue. He still has his moments, but he's basically 100% free of accidents.

Petey is my comfort dog, and I am his, and we both have separation anxiety from each other.

Petey comforted me through a very serious medical situation, as well as many other life changes, including moving 850 miles away

See PETEY pg 36 ▶

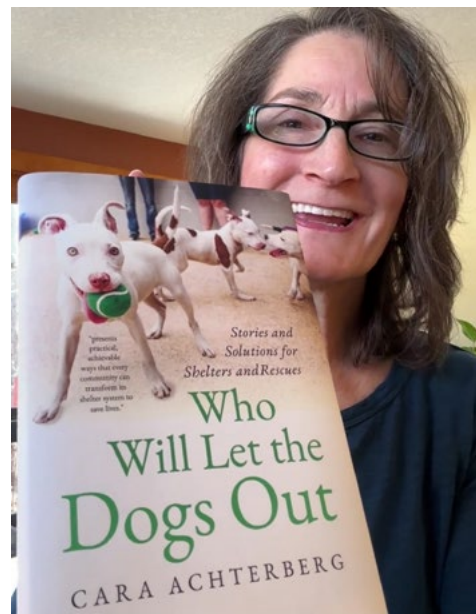


## MEMBER NEWS



## CINDY OJCZYK

DWAA member, Cindy Ojczyk, began volunteering with the non-profit Who Will Let The Dogs Out (WWLDO) during their Fall 2024 online auction. She now serves as a member of the WWLDO Advisory Board, crafting strategies to advance their mission to raise awareness and resources for homeless dogs and the heroes who fight for them. Co-founder Cara Achterberg recently wrote a book of the same name to share stories and solutions she discovered while touring 150 shelters, rescues and impounds in rural communities. Cindy served as a final reviewer and was deeply moved by the content. She believes the book can truly help end suffering and save lives. It is free to shelters, rescues and impounds in the U.S. If you volunteer or serve on a board, please let WWLDO know you'd like a book for your organization. Supporters can purchase a book through the website or Amazon.



▲  
Cindy Ojczyk  
with her copy  
of Who Will Let  
The Dogs Out.

## Xylo

► Continued from pg 12

together neither talked about their former lives from the war or from the foster system. Xylo was going to fit right in!

On the day of Xylo's return, Jason carefully gathered all of Xylo's doggie toys in a basket. Jason was tightly holding the basket when his grandfather pulled into the driveway with Xylo riding in the back seat. When the car door opened a grey muzzled Xylo immediately recognized Jason. Jason was so excited, he dropped the basket of toys and ran towards Xylo who was barking and running towards him. Both embraced and fell into a tumble of hugs on the front lawn. Xylo emitted happy barks while licking Jason's face. Huge joyful tears streamed down Jason's cheeks.

That night, Jason caressed Xylo's soft head and cuddled his muzzle as Xylo lay on Jason's bed. Jason's night time prayers included a heartfelt thanks to God for Xylo's safe return. Jason tightly held Xylo and promised him a loving forever home. Both drifted off to sleep dreaming about their renewed life together. ■

Barbara E. Magera MD, PharmD, MMM is a Cavalier breeder (Caracaleeb), exhibitor, writer and photographer who lives and practices medicine in Charleston, South Carolina.

# Agility Champ

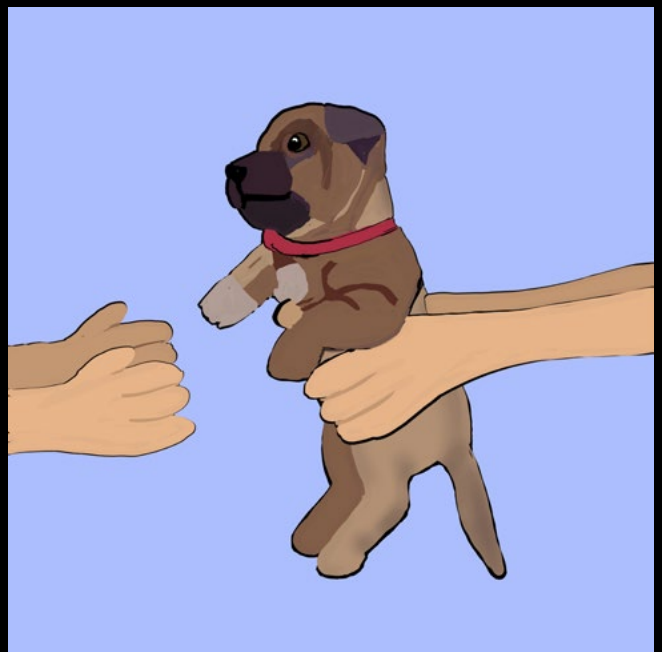


Right where I belong

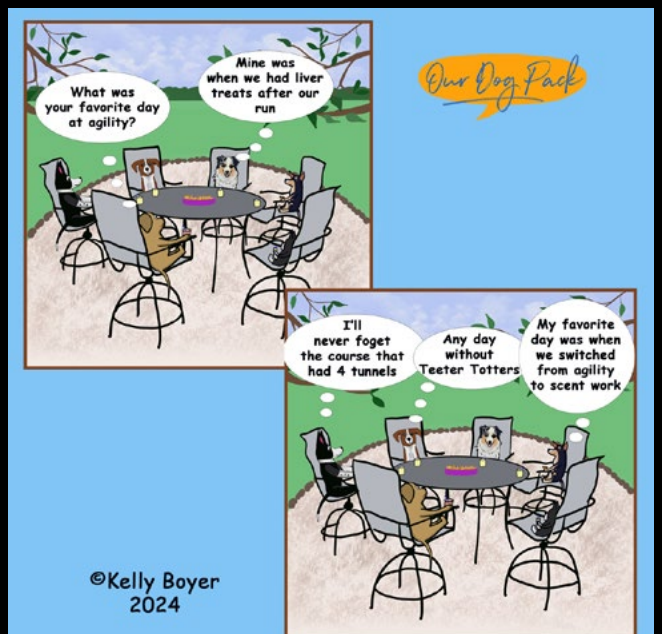
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1

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Liza loves all the shiny things. Me? It's all about the carrot



LAURIE LEACH AND KELLY BOYER

# You Just Never Know

— An excerpt of —

## “THE TRUTH ABOUT AGILITY”

ONCE UPON A TIME, on a farm in Half Moon Bay, California, there were four puppies born under a house. Although their den was dark and dirty, the mama dog was attentive to her small family, but she did have to leave for short periods of time to find food and water. One day when the puppies were about four weeks old, a man blocked the entry to the crawl space while the mama dog was away.

Quickly, the puppies grew hungry and anxious. Their whimpers escalated to a loud puppy chorus. Fortunately, the puppies' cries got the attention of a neighbor. After a long negotiation, the neighbor got permission to rescue the puppies. The pups, a bit worse for wear after their ordeal, landed in good hands and were nursed back to health.

After a few weeks, it was time for the pups to go to their forever homes. This is where a little brown meatball of a pup, tagged Mazatlan, won the lottery. A few hours north in Sonoma County wine country, an avid agility competitor and teacher, Liza Buckner, decided that, as a teacher, she needed experience training a little dog. Having heard about this lucky littler of pups, she decided there would be one who would be a fit.

Liza could tell from the beginning that the male pup she chose was a confident guy, although he was the size of a peanut compared to Monty, Liza's resident Aussie. Liza renamed the little guy Jefe, which means boss or chief. It proved to be the perfect choice. Quickly, Jefe who proved to be 49% rat terrier, organized the other residents into gopher patrol to rid the property of varmints.

While growing up, Jefe tried out several sports. He attended training for bite work at the famed Michael Ellis School for Dog Trainers. Jefe bit with gusto. He dabbled in disc sports and showed talent, but Liza did not.

But Jefe was always destined to learn and compete in agility. At the same time Jefe was growing up, Liza was studying the One Mind agility system with the goal of becoming a One

Mind Dog coach. When Jefe was two years old, he and Liza boarded a plane to Finland to learn from elite agility trainers. Jefe took his sixteen hours on the airplane in stride. He proved to be the perfect partner for learning a new agility handling system. He was thoughtful enough for Liza to think, but fast enough to be highly competitive. At the end of their time in Finland, Liza and Jefe were invited to join Team USA to compete in the World Agility Open.

The next few years Jefe and Liza became a top-notch team and competed in many high-level events including the US Open, Cynosports, World Agility Open, Westminster, West Coast Cup, and AKC National Agility Championship. The team has been a regular on the podium at agility competitions for many years.

Then their career was paused. First Liza broke her ankle. Her recovery was followed by the Covid pandemic. But once agility trials started up again, Liza and Jefe went right back to their winning ways. At 63 and 8 years respectively, Liza and Jefe were tapped again for a spot on the World Agility Organization's International team. Back in his travel bag, they traveled to Amsterdam to compete.

Now, while his international days are likely done, Jefe continues to compete successfully closer to home in UKI, USDAA, and AKC trials.

With more time at home, Jefe stays busy. He has broken in two new pack mates. He has taken to scent work with the same confidence and skill he brought to every activity. At home, he assists Liza with chores around the property and relaxes with his beloved stuffy, the sacred carrot.

We'll never know if Jefe remembers the dark days with his litter mates under the house. Or does he only dream about the accolades he deserved and came to expect?

You can guess at the moral here, eh? You just never know where a star will come from. ■



MALENA DEMARTINI AND FANNA EASTER

# Unlocking Hidden Potential

REX'S REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION



**D**OGS FIND THEMSELVES in shelters for many reasons, behavioral challenges among the most common. Many well-intentioned guardians, hoping to improve chances for adoption after relinquishment, sometimes downplay or omit mentioning behavior issues. Yet, over time, these issues can surface and sometimes worsen. While physical injuries and illnesses can usually be addressed somewhat quickly in the shelter environment, deep-seated behavioral concerns may trap a dog in a cycle of rehoming, with each new bounce-back likely exacerbating their issues. However, with the right support, expert guidance, and some extra love, many troubled dogs can blossom into cherished companions. I hope you find Rex's success story a testament to hope and a beautiful example of what's possible.

▲  
Rex at rest

## The Hidden Battle with Anxiety

Now a gentle seven-year-old, this American Pit Bull mix was first found wandering the streets of South Florida. Before turning one, Rex had already experienced more upheaval and instability than many dogs do in a lifetime—cycling in and out of Animal Control and foster homes, with two euthanasia calls. Despite this traumatic beginning, Rex's inherent kindness shone through. He displayed immediate warmth towards women and children, hinting at the loving companion he could be if given the chance.

Behind that friendly exterior, Rex was silently fighting a series of inner battles. One battle that became more obvious in his first foster home was his crippling separation anxiety. Left alone, Rex would bark and howl relentlessly, and his distress



often escalated into the destruction of household items. Solitude was not the only trigger for his anxiety; thunderstorms sent him cowering in closets for days, and the presence of unfamiliar men or other dogs could provoke trembling and growling. Each new home seemed to compound his stress, with his behavior worsening as his world continued to change.

For many shelters and fosters, Rex's behavior was a puzzle—a series of unpredictable outbursts and fearful reactions that made him seem unmanageable. Yet, there was hope.

### The Turning Point

The breakthrough came when his fourth foster welcomed Rex home. They saw beyond his troubled past and were determined to address the root causes of his behavior. This family, in collaboration with the rescue, sought professional help to treat Rex's complex issues. The journey began with an appointment with a veterinary behaviorist who could untangle the web of Rex's anxieties. The diagnosis was comprehensive: Rex was dealing with separation anxiety, general anxiety disorder, storm phobia, and reactivity toward men and other dogs.

Despite this list of challenges, Rex's team was not discouraged. His veterinary behaviorist, foster family, and rescue - all working together on his behalf - believed he had the capacity to thrive with the right support.

### The Road to Recovery

Rex's treatment plan was multi-faceted and compassionate. It began with behavior medications to alleviate his acute anxiety that offered Rex immediate relief, calming him around his foster dad and during Florida's frequent thunderstorms. This was a critical first step—stabilizing him and reducing the frequency of his panic-driven reactions.

As Rex's general anxiety and storm phobia subsided, his team introduced him to a Certified Separation Anxiety Trainer (CSAT). This expert worked closely with Rex to address his fear of being alone. The training involved gradual desensitization techniques, creating a safe and reassuring environment where Rex could learn that solitude did not equate to danger. Over time, what once felt like an insurmountable obstacle slowly began to diminish.

His transformation was nothing short of remarkable. Where Rex once panicked within minutes of being left alone, he now settled into a calm, quiet state for multiple hours. Even during thunderstorms, Rex learned to remain relaxed, a true testament to the effectiveness of patience, expert care, and unyielding compassion.

### A New Beginning

After months of intensive behavior modification and gradual progress, his foster family decided to adopt him, and Rex finally found his forever home. This family celebrated his newfound ability to cope with his anxieties and embraced his unique personality with open arms. They also continued to provide daily support toward his progress,

Rex's transformation from a frightened stray to a confident, loving companion continues to inspire and is now shared with the world through his Instagram profile, [@rexaronithescue](#). Through his online presence, Rex's family champions the belief that dogs from shelters and rescues struggling with behavior challenges deserve kindness and a chance to thrive.

### A Future Full of Possibilities

Rex's story is more than a tale of overcoming fear—it's a powerful reminder that many behavioral hurdles are surmountable when met with professional guidance and an abundance of care. His journey highlights several key lessons:

**PATIENCE IS PARAMOUNT.** Behavioral transformations take time, and every small step forward is a victory.

**EXPERT GUIDANCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE.** Working with a veterinary behaviorist and a CSAT provided Rex with the structured support he needed to thrive.

**COMPASSION IS POWERFUL.** Rex's fourth foster family exemplifies how love and determination can unlock hidden potential, transforming a life filled with fear into one of hope and happiness.

Today, Rex is a shining example of what can happen when dogs from shelters and rescues are given an opportunity to heal. His transformation both brings joy to his own life and serves as an inspiration to others. Rex's remarkable transformation is a celebration of resilience and second chances, urging us to focus on the potential for change and the power of compassion. His story reminds us that dogs have stories worth saving, a potential waiting to be unlocked, and hearts that, when nurtured, can bring light and hope into the world. ■

Please view Rex's journey if you want to enjoy it further and celebrate his story.

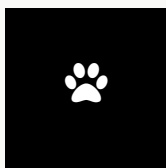


Rex's Journey

MEAGHAN CAVANAUGH

# A TAIL *of* RESILIENCE

“We were throwing his ball like we usually do. I threw it one last time before heading inside the house. He took off after it, and out of nowhere he just started shrieking and his back legs went completely limp.” In the blink of an eye, in Jake and Ryan’s Arizona backyard in late December 2024, their beloved rescue dog Grog suffered a serious injury, leaving him without movement from the waist down. They gently lifted him into their car and drove to the nearest emergency vet, who met them outside with a gurney.



▲  
Grog after the  
accident

“WE WERE SCARED AND SAD,” said Jake. “I was just holding him in the back seat, trying to keep him still, and thinking about how we tried to give him the best possible option for a good life, and now we might be faced with saying goodbye.”

Grog needed a second chance. But this wasn’t the first time.

Two years earlier, Grog had been placed on the kill list at the Maricopa County Shelter, labeled as “aggressive.” The shelter environment was negatively affecting him, and he wasn’t doing well. In a Hail Mary, someone posted his picture and information on an online group for dogs in danger of euthanasia, catching Jake’s attention.

Jake and Ryan went to the shelter to meet him. “They gave quite a few warnings about how aggressive he was, so we were both a little nervous,” said Ryan. He chuckled, “Even the burly, tatted guy who worked there was nervous getting him out of the kennel.”

But Grog was anything but aggressive. A few neck scratches and some ball tosses later, and Grog, Jake and Ryan became fast friends. They decided to foster him.



After some decompression time, Grog settled in, and a month and a half later, Jake and Ryan realized they were the perfect home for him, and he became an official part of their family in January 2023, which included three furry sisters.

“He just got so comfortable so fast, it was a no brainer,” said Ryan.

On a whim they gave Grog a new chance and refused to let an unfair label seal his fate. And now, two years later, they were faced with a different, but equally serious chance of losing him.

Back at the vet, Grog was stabilized with pain medication and then referred to a veterinary neurological center. An MRI the next morning revealed a torn disc had caused trauma to his spinal cord, leading to his loss of mobility. Thankfully, Grog’s prognosis was positive.

“The good news was that it was not going to require surgery and he would recover in time,” said Jake.

But recovery wasn’t easy. For weeks, Grog required round-the-clock care. Jake and Ryan teamed up to lift and ‘walk’ him outside. Since Grog had no control over his lower body, he also



◀  
Grog and Jake

▼  
Grog and Ryan



needed assistance with going to the bathroom. The journey was taxing but true to Grog's personality, he at least made it interesting.

"I had his bed in the home office with me and he would be snoring like an 80-year-old while I was on work calls," said Ryan, sharing some levity. "And the girls were worried about him too, so we were all crammed in this tiny room because everyone insisted on being together."

The stress and sleepless nights paid off. Grog slowly began to regain feeling and strength in his right hind leg, and by early February, he started to put weight on and walk with his left hind leg as well.

"This dog deserves to be part of this world, and he has so much love to give," said Jake. "We knew that if there was anything we could do to help him get better, we would absolutely do it."

Society often glorifies firsts—first steps, first kiss, first place—while downplaying seconds. Terms like "sloppy seconds," "second-rate," and "second fiddle" imply inferiority, but this is a misconception. There's immense value in second chances, in the lessons learned from setbacks,

and in the resilience built through adversity. The notion that rescue dogs are "less than" does them a serious disservice.

"There are countless dogs that deserve a second chance, and we have to address the stigma that they have problems and require a lot of work," said Jake.

Often, it's their strength and resilience forged through a turbulent past that makes them more relatable and endearing.

"I feel a deep connection with rescue dogs because they are the underdog," said Ryan. "They sometimes come from difficult backgrounds, and I can relate to that because of struggles I've faced in my own life."

Some stories aren't finished the first time around. Sometimes the start to our story is just the first draft. Not every dog gets a second chance — some are lucky enough to get two. ■

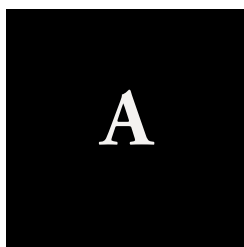


MIKE DEVINE

## RUFUS

## Rufus

## RUFUS



laid-back gentleman with a muscular build and a magnetic personality could easily apply to a number of celebrities — Sylvester Stallone and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson come to mind. But in

the dog show world, it applies to Rufus, a happy, well-behaved male Bullmastiff who was invited to The National Dog Show’s annual photoshoot in Manhattan this past September. A cascade of great experiences followed.

In the show ring, Rufus is Grand Champion Gold T-Boldt’s Read All About It. Outside of his work in the show ring, he’s also a therapy dog with a heart of gold. So, the intersection between The National Dog Show and the opportunity to become a member of The National Dog Show Therapy Dog Ambassador Team was perfect for him. David Frei, the co-host of NBC’s annual Thanksgiving Day broadcast, is a strong advocate of Therapy Dog service, and meeting him enhanced my experience and perspective of our efforts. David took a personal interest in Rufus and his move from the show ring towards his new career.

We were part of a successful Therapy Dog Ambassador event in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania and participated in The National Dog Show Therapy Dog Symposium at Rowan University in December. The scientific proof for dog-assisted therapy was on full display at the Symposium, and I knew I’d chosen the right path for Rufus.

The photo shoot in Manhattan launched our journey with The National Dog Show and was much grander than we anticipated. Rufus’ handler, Dennis Collins, brought him to the shoot. What we thought would be a simple “team photo” grew to include photos and videos with Frei and John O’Hurley (Frei’s co-host of The National Dog Show) as well as a “Rocky” impersonator representing the Sylvester Stallone character. Those special photos are now being used to promote the newly minted Philadelphia tourism program based on the movie and include the Bullmastiff “Butkus” character. Through it all, Rufus was perfectly behaved, meeting new people and letting his personality shine through.

Dennis Collins showed Rufus at The National Dog Show, but they did not advance to the Group Ring. However, the big wins for us were the experiences leading up to the show and interacting with the hundreds of people who wanted to learn about dogs like Rufus. We enjoyed some great moments at the RockyFest booth, telling the “Butkus” story and getting loads of attention from people Rufus had never met before. The Therapy Dog Ambassador Team booth was also special. It gave us a chance to watch several other team members work with the people who dropped by.

Rufus has a magnetic personality. People wanted to touch him, ask questions, and take pictures. One of the benefits of a benched show like The National Dog Show is all the people you meet. One little girl wanted to kiss Rufus goodbye. She leaned in toward his face, and to her delight, Rufus gently touched her nose with his. Somehow,

he knew to be gentle with all the people with disabilities who stopped by to say hello.

The momentum that began with the photoshoot will continue with Rufus' therapy dog visits. We have learned how popular The National Dog Show program is in retirement communities, schools, and with the general public. Wherever we go, Rufus makes quite an enthusiastic entrance. Rufus is a champion, a great companion, and an ambassador for Bullmastiffs. Recent experiences have brought us closer than ever.

The Simon Bruty/National Dog Show photos are beautiful. Rufus had four pictures in The National Dog Show program book, including an appearance on the cover and a solo headshot. At Frei's suggestion, we made some photo business cards to hand out at the sessions. The re-creation of Butkus in an Eagles jersey is a big hit these days as the RockyFest photo staff had the foresight to dress Rufus in #26.

As a Bullmastiff, Rufus already has a big head, but it doesn't seem that the extra attention has spoiled him in any way. ■



Rufus relaxing at the photoshoot. Photo courtesy of the National Dog Show.



David Frei (left) and John O'Hurley (right) mix it up with Rocky impersonator and Rufus at the National Dog Show photoshoot in New York City last year. Photo by Simon Bruty of the National Dog Show.



TED SLUPIK

# SECOND CHANCES

*It is not very often that one gets the opportunity for a “do over”; a chance at a new and rewarding life.*



# T

HAT IS exactly what some retired show dogs do after their careers in the ring ends; they pursue a gratifying and fulfilling job as a therapy dog. Jazzy LuLu, formerly known as Mill Creek's Jazzed Up at

Reyem's, is a beautiful Australian Shepard that has done exactly that.

In her former “life”, Jazzy's birthright seemed to be one of shows and creating a legacy of pure breed offspring; a noble endeavor. She participated in shows; she produced multiple litters until the ripe old age of eight at which time her former owner decided to retire her. One would look at her life as a successful one. After all, her life was a productive one, right? However, as fate would have it, while one door was closing, another window opened. In 2017, Jazzy was sold to her new family who simply wanted their new family member to be a companion to their beloved Aussie, Pepper. In love with the breed and their characteristics, Jazzy's new family, Wendy and Ron, desired to provide a loving home for another Aussie. They had no aspirations of anything other than to add a family member to their home. Little did Jazzy know, her new “second chance” was about to become a second career for her and she would not only become a valued family member but would change the lives of many people.

In 2018, and only a year after adding Jazzy to their family, they realized that she had something special to share with people other than her immediate family. Jazzy's temperament was gentle, quiet and very loving. It was then that Wendy decided to enter the world of animal assisted therapy work. Wendy and Jazzy took the training classes to become a certified handler and therapy dog team



and they never looked back. When Jazzy met people in need of support or consolation, she immediately connected with them for as long as it took to make them feel better. She excelled at visiting not only at nursing homes but also at schools; providing supportive care wherever or whenever needed. Jazzy is a regular visitor to a local college at exam time.

Jazzy also does very well at working in a group setting with other handlers and teams. She thrives at taking turns to visit everyone who wants to visit with this amazing therapy dog. She does well with other therapy dogs in a group setting and is a valued member of the team. She participates not only in individual visits, but also during events for residents at nursing homes. Her repertoire extends to dress up events, music sing-alongs, and has even won a doggie whipped cream eating contest two years in a row, all to the delight of her many fans!

At 16 years old, Jazzy has slowed down a bit, but she continues to add joy and happiness to all that she visits. Her quiet and exceptionally loving demeanor provides solace to so many. Her second chance career, now in its seventh year, has shown that it is never too late to make a difference. We should all be so lucky. ■



▶ Show winner, as Mill Creek's Jazzy at Reyem's, now known as Jazzy Lulu.



▶ Jazzy Lulu on a therapy visit.

◀ Jazzy Lulu, winner of the doggie whipped cream eating contest. Photos courtesy of Ted Slupik.

# NEW WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

In case you missed our most recent announcement, we have three new writing opportunities in our Blog.

First, we've started an **AGILITY** section. Curated by Ohio-based writer, editor, public relations pro and DWAA member, Betty Weibel, the section offers writers the opportunity to explore the sport and its stories, whether it focuses on competition from various leagues, or the benefits of the sport for canines and their handlers. All contributions are welcome. Submissions can be text (500-750 words), pictures or illustrations. At the top of your story, put down your name with titles, email and phone for the editor's use only. At the bottom of your story, put down any contact information you wish for the public.

Please send your Agility submissions to Betty Weibel at [bw@yp-pr.com](mailto:bw@yp-pr.com) and put DWAA Blog in the subject line.

Second, we are once again accepting **FLASH FICTION** stories. Last year's popular additions to our DWAA blog were so popular that we are asking for more! Flash (very short) fiction is a popular genre, known for the ability to tell a STORY with a true beginning, middle, and end in just a few short words or paragraphs. This is a great way to get your fiction published for both your resumé and as a piece to enter in next year's writing contest. Entries can be any length but must be a firm 200 words max. You may include a photo,

but the WORDS, not the photo, must tell the story. All photos MUST have credits.

Send entries to Anne Marie Duquette at [AMDQ1@yahoo.com](mailto:AMDQ1@yahoo.com). For security reasons, please put FLASH FICTION in the title of your email or it will not be opened.

Finally, we want your worst writing, ever! The **BAD, BAD WRITING CHALLENGE** requires you to compose an opening sentence to the WORST of all possible novels using the word "dog(s)" in it. THE SENTENCE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE A STORY!

This idea is a spin-off of the "The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest." Professor Scott Rice started it in 1982 at San Jose State University. His novel, "Paul Clifford," began with the famous opener often used by the cartoon beagle, Snoopy. This line later morphed into:

"It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents—except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the house-tops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness."

We want the worst of the worst that would cause any editor to shiver with distaste. Send entries to Anne Marie Duquette at [AMDQ1@yahoo.com](mailto:AMDQ1@yahoo.com). For security reasons, please put BAD WRITING in the title of your email or it will not be opened.

## Petey

► Continued from pg 24

from my home state, the loss of three members of our pack (two cats and a dog who was Petey's best friend), a marriage, and two more moves!

During Covid times and beyond, Petey traveled around the southeast with me and my new husband. We went to Florida twice, Maryland, Virginia and all over North and South Carolina with Petey in tow. He's was a great traveler. We often asked him, "Petey? Wanna go to FLORIDA?!" and he got very excited.

A few years ago, Petey developed IVDD and was temporarily paralyzed in all four limbs. I had

money put aside for pet emergencies (which I recommend everyone should do) and I didn't hesitate to get my buddy the lifesaving surgery he needed. After surgery, hospitalization, helping him learn to walk again, and physical therapy, Petey can now run, jump and play just like nothing ever happened. I'm grateful for every extra day we got with our little buddy.

On December 28, 2024, we celebrated Petey's 7th "Gotcha Day" with our family. Petey is around 10 years old now (we aren't sure of his exact age). He's my best pal. I love him to the moon and back. ■

## Ruby

► Continued from pg 13

own way. She always traveled with us when we went to retriever hunt tests, and once a good buddy from Louisiana commented about our Catahoula when he saw me walking her on the grounds. I was surprised, since most people had no idea what she was, but he pointed out the leopard markings on her ears and said he knew what she was right away. Ruby's brilliant red color and brindle markings combined with her leopard spotted ears were so striking, so unique, that I always felt a master painter must have decorated her silky fur to show just how special she was.

My beautiful girl did her best to heal me, and did a good job. There is no complete healing from a terrible loss, but she brought me to the best place possible. Until she couldn't anymore. She grew old, with sugar on her muzzle and slowness in her step, and she couldn't hear me when I called. So I was prepared, in that I knew I couldn't keep her much longer, but how can a heart prepare for another loss like this? She took her final breath with my hand on her, in her home, on her bed. But for me, I thought I might die too. Still, Ruby was no longer here to help me through her loss. I had to rely on the love and strength she had brought me over time. Thank you my beautiful Southern girl, even though that doesn't stop the tears from coming, even now, even though I am so grateful to you. ■

## Wonderdog

► Continued from pg 18

One of this collective of dogs is Beckett, who works mostly on pollinator projects. Beckett can sniff out caterpillar scat, which is the size of a pepper flake! He has even worked with the US Forest Service surveying Taylor Checkerspot and Silverspot Butterflies in Oregon, which were thought to be nearly extinct. Beckett found them and his work is helping to preserve them.

Collectively, the dogs have traveled the world on their surveys. From the west coast of the United States, to the Pyrenees Mountains in Spain and France, surveys and projects keep the dogs and their bounders very busy.

Their projects and surveys include bird and bat mortalities at wind facilities, marten, grizzly bear, bobcat, brown bear, lynx, wolf, cougar, moose, wolverine, among others including pangolin and tiger surveys and predator studies in Washington State and Banff, Alberta, Canada.

The Rogue Dog way has always been to find the dogs who need the chance to become conservation K9 wonder dogs, and, their approach is catching on in the conservation K9 world, with more and more organizations seeking their perfect working companions in shelters and rescues. ■

## Dog

► Continued from pg 20

"Not now. My boyfriend took our dog, Danny Boy, with him when he left last year. I went to court to get him back but lost. DB chose him in front of the judge. I'm not convinced it's time for another dog." I move across the room to a coffee station. "Would you like a cup?"

"Yes, please, just black." Another wide smile. "I think you'll find one of the animals here will choose you. Seems like most of us can't resist. I adopted an old tomcat, Tom. He's a toothless boy, just wants to sleep. Smart as a whip, though. He'll stare at the bird feeder in between naps and chirp at whoever visits."

We finally finish the unpacking. My four-hour shift is up. I register the sound of heavy rain against the window and groan.

"You okay?"

"Sure. I took the bus today and now it's pouring. Thanks for all your help. I'm due back on Friday." We can walk.

Casey waits while I get my coat. "I can drive you home. You'll get drenched waiting out there."

"Thanks, but I'll be fine." I do get thoroughly drenched and am in a foul mood when I eventually arrive at my apartment. But it was an interesting day. Maybe I will be back on Friday. And maybe one of these days one of the dogs will choose me. My second chance. ■

Judith Ayn is a retired attorney residing in Southern California and a new member of DWAA. She is the author of MURDER AT THE NO-KILL ANIMAL SHELTER, DEAD LAWYERS and DEAD MERCHANDISE.





To view the  
2024 Writing Competition  
Finalists and Winners,  
please visit our website:

 [dogwriters.org/winners](https://dogwriters.org/winners)



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