



Exodus

Twenty-five Pharaoh Hounds were in a desperate situation.

What would it take to save them? By Mara Bovsun

Her name is Soleil, French for *sun*. The 10-week-old Pharaoh Hound showed up at an AKC rally trial in New Jersey, during the summer. She looked like an ordinary pup—full of energy, sass, and curiosity—as she nestled in the arms of her owner, Lizbeth Molloy.

From her appearance, you would never guess that she had taken a journey of thousands of miles—coast to coast twice—to get here. Along the way, she was aided by dozens of people who dropped everything and spared no expense to save her life.

Some trial participants knew of

the extraordinary circumstances that brought Soleil and Molloy together.

“Is this one of *the* rescues?” a friend asked. Molloy smiled and nodded as the sleek chestnut-colored creature in her arms squirmed, chomped on her wrist, and tried to escape over her shoulder.

Craigslist Mystery

It all started in late June when Hannah Pemberton, a member of the Pharaoh Hound Club of America (PHCA) rescue committee, noticed an odd social media post. It concerned a Craigslist ad for a pair of 7-month-old Pharaoh Hound pups. These dogs are very rare, and their

breeders are a tightknit community. It was unlikely a new litter could have fallen so far under their radar.

Pemberton emailed and was told that it wasn't two pups needing homes, but six.

Without delay, Dominic Carota, who has been showing and breeding Pharaoh Hounds for 30 years, coordinated with Pemberton and then contacted the seller to learn more.

He discovered that the owner had once been involved in dog shows but a mental health crisis forced him to give it up. When it became clear the man couldn't care for his dogs, his family jumped in.

The owner's sister then revealed to



Confined to cages for the first weeks of their lives, the pups had limited contact with people. A lack of early socialization—especially for sighthounds, who tend to be aloof—could have hindered their chances of landing well.

It was the July 4th weekend. Carota, a member of the AKC Board of Directors, was in New York, about a thousand miles from the South Carolina location. But he wasted no time and jumped into his Sprinter, a van large enough for a passel of puppies, and headed south. Five other club members met him there.

The caretakers signed over the dogs, and the rescue group quickly moved to a nearby park for intake and assessment.

Now What?

The youngest pups—4 to 5 weeks old—were in horrible condition—malnourished nearly to starvation, bellies swollen with worms, and covered in their own feces.

“Had we been another week or two later, they would not have survived,” Carota says.

Club members rushed in to do whatever they could. Darci Kunard, for example, a member of the PHCA board and rescue committee, flew in from Denver. She then rented a car and drove back to Colorado, four pups in tow. Harper later traveled from California to Kunard’s home and picked up two.

Carota reached out to an old friend, Stacy Threlfall, a top professional handler who has guided Carota’s show Pharaohs to victory for a quarter of a century.

Carota that it wasn’t one litter, but three—22 pups—and the parents, one male and two females.

“We were in shock. We’ve never had more than three rescues a year,” says Theresa Harper, PHCA vice president and member of the rescue committee.

The rescue had limited funds. A strain like this could break it.

“We were all kind of terrified,” she says.

Taking Charge

“I was like, *oh my God*,” Carota told FD of his reaction during his phone conversation with the dogs’ caretaker. But he kept his cool when he spoke to the woman.

“We’re here to help you,” Carota told her. “What can we do?”

She said her family could no longer manage the dogs.



Onion was the skinniest of the pups, but all were alarmingly malnourished. It was touch and go, but with a lot of TLC, everyone survived. Even Onion, now Walter, filled out nicely and is comfortable and well-loved by his new family in Boston.

TOP: COURTESY DOMINIC CAROTA; BOTTOM LEFT: COURTESY STACY THRELFALL; INSET: COURTESY OWNERS



Pepper, soon to be Soleil, on the first day as volunteers sorted, cleaned, and assessed their new charges



Magnolia (Maggie) and Rosie, two of the older pups, show their appreciation to PHCA rescue volunteer Kendra Williams for fostering and giving them lessons in good manners. It paid off. Both have homes, and Maggie, now Ellie, lives with AKC Executive Director Gina M. DiNardo.

With her husband, Evan, also a leading handler, she runs a boarding kennel for show dogs in North Carolina.

Carota called her from New York before he started the trip, explained the situation, and asked if she would foster. She agreed.

Three days later, he showed up with a bunch of sick puppies. Threlfall took 12 of the young ones and two adults. Carota took the third adult—a female with severe eye problems requiring intensive daily treatment—back to New York with him.

“They were the size of Chihuahuas,” she recalls. The pups were about three pounds, less than half of what they should have weighed at that age.

Food passed through them because of worms and Giardia infections. What they didn’t throw up came out the other end in diarrhea. Their bones were clearly visible.

“Dominic would call me every morning and go, ‘OK, so how many did we lose?’” Threlfall says. Day after day she gave him the happy news that they were all holding on.

Threlfall, a second-generation dog fancier, had never dealt with so many sick pups before. But she drew on decades of experience, specifically saving runts. “You try to do everything you can,” she says.

Veterinary care had to start immediately, even though the dogs were too frail to visit a clinic. The vets told her to bring in stool samples so they could begin treating the digestive parasites. Miraculously, after weeks of medication and incremental increases in meal size, the pups started gaining weight, strength, and vitality.

Within three weeks, it looked like they would all survive.

Operation Pharaohs

Now, the PHCA had another challenge, finding suitable homes for 25 hounds. Luckily, Harper’s career skills were a perfect match for this job.

As senior director of operations for a firm that produces analytical and robotic equipment for pharmaceutical companies, she possesses tremendous

organizational abilities, detail orientation, and a knack for spreadsheets.

“That’s what I do for a living, is coordinate stuff,” she says. Harper, with the aid of the PHCA rescue committee, had to plan fundraising strategies, identify short-term fosters, find permanent homes, and arrange transport.

The PHCA turned to social media to raise funds to cover the enormous veterinary bills. For the first time, the club set up a rescue page on Facebook. With so few rescues in the past, such outreach had never been needed.

“I was stunned at how many people donated for these puppies,” says Harper. Many long-term PHCA members donated up to \$1,000 each. Other breed clubs, such as the Ibizan Hound Club of America, also sent in donations. All told, the club raised \$22,000 from individuals. Then, they received a \$23,000 AKC rescue grant.

The older pups were farmed out immediately to experienced fosters within the club. Growing up, they had little

Life With Pharaohs

It was Wednesday night, and the weekly Zoom support group for Pharaoh Hound rescue puppy owners was starting. “Ways to wear out the crazy” was the topic for the day. The pups had been in their new homes for about a month.

“The honeymoon period is over,” lamented one of the six participants. “She’s mouthy and chewing.”

The once sedate creatures were destroying their leashes *during* walks, lunging after squirrels and other dogs, barking, shredding, upending, and climbing on their owners’ heads during Zoom meetings. In other words, they were being typical young Pharaoh Hounds.

Moderators Theresa Harper, Bonnie Folz of the PHCA rescue committee, PHCA Corresponding Secretary Lynne Tatarowicz, and trainer Lizbeth Molloy, herself a rescue pup owner, commiserated, offered advice, and helped puppy people connect with Pharaoh Hound owners in their neighborhoods. “I expect for the rest of these rescues’ lives to be available to these people should they ever need help,” Harper told FD.

This is just one of the supports from the PHCA. Some others include:

- Waiving fees for PHCA membership for the first year
- Helping owners get their PAL registrations (all the pups will be spayed or neutered) so they can participate in AKC sports
- Offering guidance for behavior issues
- Helping owners find events and programs to keep their hounds engaged and active, in body and mind
- Maintaining open lines of communication through social media and online meetings, such as the private Facebook pages for owners of Pharaoh Hound rescues ([Pharaoh Hound Club of America Rescue](#)).



Pharaoh Hounds have strong streaks of goofy and crazy, amplified by off-the-charts hunting dog energy. These traits added an extra challenge in placing them.

human contact. It was imperative that they start a crash course in being a pet.

Then, the club again turned to social media, posting a plea for fosters and potential owners. PHCA recording secretary Annie Hammer created an electronic form of the application that circulated around the web. Other breed clubs pitched in to spread the word.

PHCA soon had 65 applications to foster or adopt.

“I created an Excel template where I summarized the information from those applications into one spreadsheet,” Harper says. Candidates with previous Pharaoh Hound or sighthound experience went to the top of the list. The rescue committee met weekly to review.

“We wanted to make sure they knew what they were getting into,” Harper says. Cute as they are, Pharaoh Hound puppies

are a handful. “By the time they have teeth, we just call them velociraptors.”

For a month, the rescue committee vetted homes, interviewed candidates, checked references, and worked through transportation logistics.

Boys Will Be Trainers

While the home search was underway, foster families concentrated on the important tasks of socialization and training.

The pups were no longer sick, but they had issues that could undermine placement. They were accustomed to using their crates to potty and sleeping in the mess.

These pups had not learned a basic lesson—to use separate areas to eat, sleep, play, and relieve themselves, says Threlfall. Usually, the mother teaches them. But in this case, she was malnourished and fighting for her own life, so that step was

skipped. Potty boot camp quickly fixed that problem.

The other major issue: Some of them avoided contact with people.

For this, Threlfall brought in her socialization special forces team—her sons, William, 8, and Kenneth, 9.

“That’s when the fun started,” she says.

Every day after school, the boys put down their Nintendos and played for hours with the pups. If one started to wander away from the kids, Threlfall would bring the puppy back and offer a treat for settling down.

It wasn’t long before the pups had absorbed two lessons that would make them welcome in new homes—that it’s important to be clean and that people are the greatest things on earth.

They were ready for their next chapter. Threlfall started preparing folders for



Left: Socialization Special Forces: William (seen here), along with his brother, Kenneth, are the official puppy play pals at the boarding facility run by his parents, both professional dog handlers. Their mission was to show these wild things that people are gentle and fun.

Above: At its national specialty, the PHCA recognized members of the rescue committee: Sheila Hoffman, Hannah Pemberton, Robert Newman, Darci Kunard, Bonnie Folz, Meredith Wille, Marie Henke, Alex Wood, and Theresa Harper. The PHCA also recognized the Threlfall family for their heroic fostering efforts. Many other volunteers gave generously of time, effort, money, and heart to save these dogs.

each pup with health records, a picture, and a number for identification.

That didn't sit well with William.

"They can't just be numbers, Mom," he said.

So he gave them funny names, like Onion, Garlic, Asparagus, Corn, Dragonfruit, and Kale, to send them off with a smile to their new lives.

Exercise Finished

In California, Harper was becoming attached to one pup—a girl named Pepper. She was worried about finding the "right" home until two East Coast friends saw videos of Pepper playing during training classes. Separately, they told Harper the puppy would be a good fit with one of

their friends, Lizbeth Molloy.

Coincidentally, Molloy, a professional trainer specializing in dogs with quirks and who previously owned Pharaoh Hounds, had sent in an application to foster.

A dedicated dog sport competitor, Molloy had seen a video of Pepper at a Barn Hunt class, the pup's first time going after a rat in a quarry box.

Ten days later, Molloy and Pepper, now named Soleil, were on a flight from California to New York City. Impressed by her energy and enthusiasm, Molloy decided she had to have this dog.

"She looked just like a happy little ray of sunshine," Molloy says, adding, "I can't wait to do all the things with her."

By the end of July, all the puppies—

including Onion, the skinniest and sickest one—were thriving in new homes.

Two of the adults had spots waiting for them. In many cases, PHCA arranged transport—through relays, hired drivers, or just by getting in the car and taking the dogs where they needed to go.

"This was a success," Carota says, "because dog people came together from all over the country to make this happen." **FD**

For more information or to find a Pharaoh Hound breeder, visit ph-club.org.