

Celebrating Greyhounds

Fall 2016 Online Magazine

MSGAO Celebrates 25 Years

ALSO INSIDE:

Dealing with Reactive Hounds
Greyhounds Speak, She Listens



Celebrating Greyhounds

Fall 2016

Departments

3 From the Editor

5 Greyhound Bytes

11, 35 Greyhound Humor

10 Book Review: "Why Did They Name a Dog After a Bus?" By Stacy Pigott

12 Ask the Expert: From Yawn to Yikes!
By Deb Levasseur, CTB

52 You're Invited

53 In Memoriam

54 Marketplace

Features

17 Baker the Greyhound

From the cold streets to a warm sofa.
By Linda Weber

22 MSGAO Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Track-based program serves adopters in multiple states. By Barbara Williams

27 GHI Opens Blood Bank

Veterinarians nationwide have a new resource for transfusion products, courtesy of the Greyhounds who donate blood through the Greyhound Health Initiative Blood Bank.

30 It's Only a Limp, or Is It?

When Wagner started limping, his owners feared the worst. By Shannon Forrest

38 Talking to Animals

Animal communicator Sandra Larson talks about the Greyhounds she has met in her unique line of work. By Sandra Larson

46 In Their Own Words

Readers share their stories of connecting with their Greyhounds. By Jan Brinegar & Deanna Buell



Cover Photo: The annual MSGAO reunion takes place at Southland Park, and celebrated the group's 25th anniversary this year.

From the Editor

By Stacy Pigott, Editor-In-Chief

A couple of issues ago, I mentioned that I had won a session with an animal communicator in a silent auction at Remember the Greyhound. (I was disappointed to hear that Texas-based event is being cancelled this year due to lack of interest. I loved that Greyhound get-together!) But back to my story...

Shortly after that issue was released, I made an appointment for my three dogs — Greyhounds Gypsy and Greta, and Australian Cattle Dog mix Jewel — to visit Sandra Larson. Sandra lives on the other side of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, so on the day of our appointment, we all piled into the car and made the 90-minute drive to Sandra's house. Sandra welcomed us into her home and directed us to her office, where soothing music and

plush dog beds awaited my road-weary hounds.

I wasn't sure what to expect from the session, so Sandra took the lead. Gypsy was her usual shy self, and opted to hide behind my chair while Greta and Jewel checked everything out. Sandra started with Greta and invited her to talk. My biggest questions, of course, were whether Greta felt good and was happy. She indicated she was, so I had Sandra ask her if she remembered any of what happened before she came to me, when she was a stray running loose. Greta didn't say much, and then asked a relatively vague question — "Why am I like this?"

Without any indicator of what Greta was referring to, I was left to guess. Perhaps she meant the slight neurological issues she experiences from

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time to time? I asked Sandra to explain to Greta that she was bitten by a tick that gave her a disease called ehrlichiosis, which had attacked her central nervous system.

Looking back, I remember Sandra commenting how she was drawn to Greta's head, and though she rarely kissed dogs on the top of the head, that's what she felt compelled to do with Greta. In hindsight, Greta's question probably had to do with the scar on the top of her head, which is why Sandra was drawn to it. Greta's inability to recall details of her previous life and her question to me suddenly made sense — whatever trauma had split the top of her head down to the bone had probably left her with a concussion and maybe even some memory loss!

With three dogs to talk to in a short amount of time, we moved on to Jewel, who is always happy, as confirmed by Sandra, and Gypsy, who finally came out from behind the couch to settle on a dog bed. Interestingly enough, Gypsy, who avoids people as often as possible, looked directly at Sandra when she would talk to her. This was

definitely not usual behavior for my spooky girl! I learned she likes my current foster, Eliot, but definitely does not like one of my former fosters, a big, brindle girl I board from time to time when her owners travel. (The next time that Greyhound came to visit, I made sure Gypsy wasn't forced to interact with her if she didn't want to.)

In the end, it was Greta's session that proved to be the most insightful. Having gone through one session with Sandra, there are a few things I would do differently next time, including being prepared with more questions or even requests of my canine friends. It would be nice to get a little more cooperation when it comes time to trim nails and brush teeth, and maybe one of these days, Sandra can even convince Greta it's OK to use the dog door!

Until then, I'll continue to communicate with them the best way I know how — with my heart and soul. I hope they're listening!

Stacy

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Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine is published quarterly by The Greyhound Project, Inc., a nonprofit Massachusetts corporation.

The magazine's purpose is to provide information about Greyhounds as a breed. Recognizing that there are differing points of view on issues such as racing, breeding, and adoption policies, to mention a few, the magazine does not advocate a position on these issues. It will publish articles and reader letters regarding these issues if deemed appropriate. Unless otherwise stated, The Greyhound Project, Inc. does not necessarily agree with materials published herein. Ideas and opinions are those of the writers. No authentication or approval is implied by the editors or publishers, who assume no liability for information contained herein. *Celebrating Greyhounds* Magazine reserves the right to refuse publication, to edit or modify any material, and to hold such material for an indeterminate period. If your Greyhound is ill, please see a veterinarian.

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Greyhound Bytes:

News you can sink your teeth into

Greyhound Racing to Return to Texas

LA MARQUE, Texas — Dog racing will resume in Texas following an agreement between track owners and breeders that will result in an abbreviated series of events over the next two years. The first slate of races will be held at Valley Race Park in the South Texas city of Harlingen from November through February, [The Galveston County Daily News](#) reported. There will be a total of 360 races and the total purse — the amount distributed to dog owners — will come to about \$2.2 million. Races then will move to Gulf Greyhound Park in La Marque, near Galveston, from November 2017 through the following February. Read more at [The Courier of Montgomery County](#).



*Diana (Sakkara Diana), adopted by Janis Brown through Greyhounds Unlimited.
Photo by Dan Hayes/Shot On Sight.*

Greyhound Bytes

South Australia Greyhound Industry Releases Euthanasia Numbers

SOUTH AUSTRALIA — More than 500 Greyhounds were euthanized in South Australia in the past year, with the figure revealed as the industry finally succumbed to pressure to release details on the number of deaths ahead of a possible parliamentary inquiry. Read more at 9News.com.

Australian Owners Hope to Rehome Greyhounds

CURLEWIS, VICTORIA, Australia — There is nothing Steve Lanesbury wants more than the best future for his dogs. That's why the Curlewis owner, breeder and trainer was rehoming one, sending others off to be trained elsewhere and looking to sell



Ryder (brindle) and Cos, adopted by Heather Ambrose and John Robbins of Layton, Utah, through 2nd Chance Greyhounds in Draper, Utah.

another. Regulations dictate he must seek written permission from authorities before transferring the dogs' care to another party,

in this case adoption agency [Greyhounds as Pets \(GAP\)](#). Read more at the [Naomi Valley Independent](#).

Greyhound Bytes

More Than 500 People Support Clark Farm Greyhound Rescue

ESSEX, England — More than 500 people turned out to support a dog rescue center's charity fun day. Clarks Farm Greyhound Rescue, based on Wash Lane, Little Totham, held a charity dog show and family fun day on September 18. The charity works to help re-home and improve the lives of Greyhounds who have retired from racing as young as 3 years old. Read more at the [Maldon Standard](#).

Greyhound Industry Challenges Ban in Federal Court

NEW SOUTH WALES, Australia — The New South Wales (NSW) Greyhound industry has launched a fresh legal bid to overturn the Baird Government's controversial Greyhound ban, arguing it breaches the constitutional right to free trade across state borders. Read more [7News.com](#).

7 Celebrating Greyhounds Fall 2016

Giving Racing Dogs New Lives

SAN DIEGO, California — Last year, Darren Rigg was named by *Dog Fancy* magazine as one of "45 People Who Have Changed the Dog World" because of the Greyhound Adoption Center he and his wife run in El Cajon. He was noted by the magazine (which was canceled last year and re-branded as *Dogster*) for his changes in the way people care for dogs. What does he do differently? Read more at the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#).

Animal Cruelty in China: What Can Be Done?

UNITED KINGDOM — The infamous Yulin dog meat festival takes place around the summer solstice, but the practice of eating dog meat continues year-round in China. In September, online tabloid newspapers widely shared a video of a Greyhound-type dog being forced into a large barrel of boiling

water. Sadly, the cruelty is an inherent part of the dog meat trade: there's a traditional belief that the meat tastes better if the animal suffers as it dies, with adrenaline coursing through the body. The truth is that a large majority of the Chinese population also deplore what's going on, with polls showing that around 90 percent support anti-cruelty legislation. Read more at [The Telegraph](#).

Committee Report Says Evidence Doesn't Warrant Racing Ban

TASMANIA, Australia — Tasmania's leading Greyhound trainer Anthony Bullock says he and the rest of the state's trainers are ready to clean up the Greyhound racing industry after a parliamentary committee report spared their livelihoods. However, the State Government has been called on to stop funding the industry if it doesn't improve its animal welfare outcomes. Read more at [News.com](#).

Greyhound Bytes

Retired Racing Greyhounds are Guests at Couple's Wedding

ESSEX, England — Pedro and Poppy, two retired racing Greyhounds waiting for their forever homes, were guests of honor at a wedding. Dog-loving couple Alice and Phil Sutcliffe tied the knot at Parklands, Quendon Hall, with the two surprise attendees on their guest list. Alice and Phil wanted to celebrate their vows a little differently by inviting two retired racing Greyhounds from the Retired Greyhound Trust (RGT) to be part of their special day. Read more at the [Herts and Essex Observer](#).

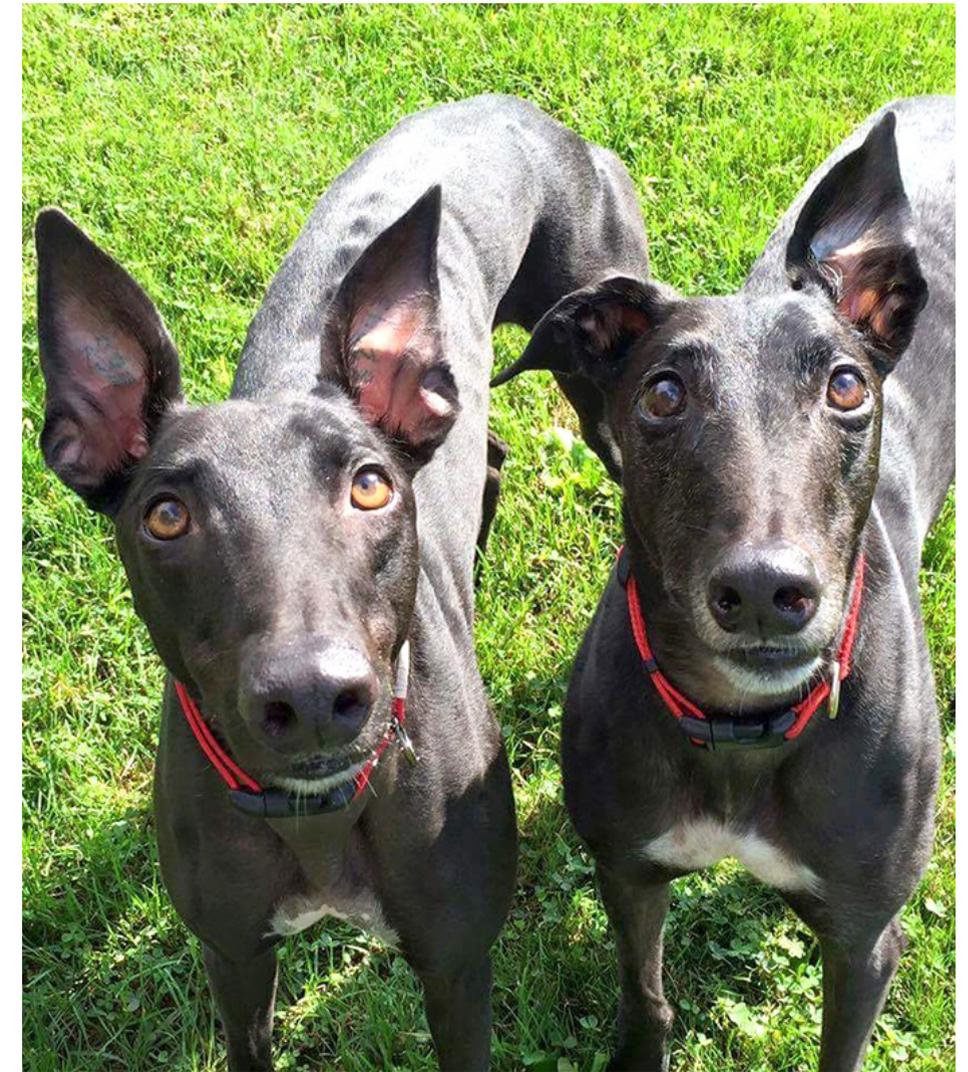
Greyhound Recovers After Attack; Hundreds Follow Progress Through Facebook

SOUTHGATE, Michigan — Kathy Johnson and her husband were minding their own business and walking their dogs in a

residential area of Lincoln Park when they were attacked by a pair of pit bulls that got loose. A few minutes later Johnson was holding one of her dogs, pressing a t-shirt against a gushing wound and headed toward an emergency veterinary hospital in the bed of a pick-up truck. Read more at [The News Herald](#).

Let Them Have Safe Tracks, Then Loving Homes

ORLANDO, Florida — The Florida Greyhound Association (FGA), a group of racing-dog owners and trainers, takes seriously the need to protect these majestic animals while allowing them to do what they do best — run. The FGA strongly supports state legislation that would better protect the racing Greyhounds from injury or death. Read more at the [Orlando Sentinel](#).



Fleet (left) and Slate (right), adopted by Rita Wulke through Greyhound Adoption League of Texas.

Greyhound Bytes

Greyhound Track in China Ordered to Relocate or Close

MACAU, China — The Macau gaming regulator has ordered Macao (Yut Yuen) Canidrome Co Ltd to relocate its Greyhound racing track or shut down operations within two years. The firm's current stadium — known as the Macau Canidrome — is located in the northern area of the Macau peninsula, in a densely populated district. Gross gaming revenue from Greyhound racing betting in Macau declined 13.8 percent year-on-year in 2015. The annual tally was MOP125 million (US\$15.6 million), compared to MOP145 million in 2014. Yut Yuen is the sole operator of Greyhound racing betting in Macau. Read more at [GGRAsia](#).



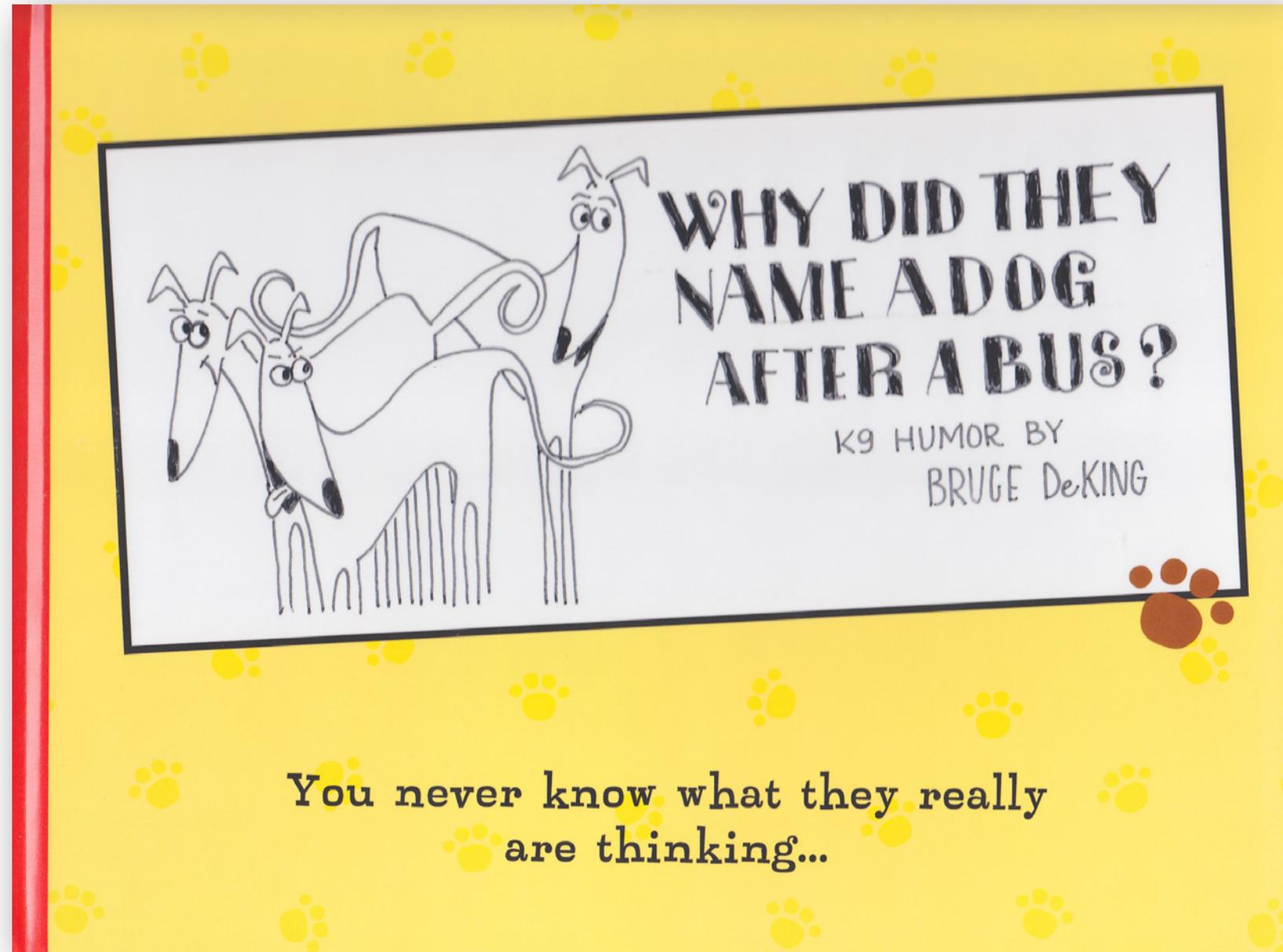
Birdie (left) and Willie (right), adopted by Katharine Ellis-Copen through Greyhound Adoption League of Texas.

Seminole Leaders OK Greyhound Track Reporting Measure

SANFORD, Florida — Seminole County Commissioners adopted an ordinance on August 9 that will require the county's

dog-racing track to license all Greyhounds and report any injuries. The decision came following a public hearing in which people for and against the regulations spoke to commissioners. Read more at [News13.com](#).

Pages and Pages of K9 Humor!



Celebrating Greyhounds contributing artist Bruce DeKing publishes an illustrated book to support Greyhound adoption efforts.

By Stacy Pigott

“Why Did They Name a Dog After a Bus?”

By Bruce DeKing
Shutterfly, 40 pp.

Whether you’ve been a fan of *Celebrating Greyhounds* for several years or you’re currently enjoying your first issue, you’ve probably noticed the original and funny cartoons that often grace the pages. Bruce DeKing provides *Celebrating Greyhounds* with his unique brand of Greyhound humor, and now, he’s compiled some of his favorite illustrations into a book.

“Why Did They Name a Dog After a Bus,” a collection

of “K9 humor” gives readers a glimpse of what’s inside with one leading phrase on the cover: “You never know what they really are thinking...”

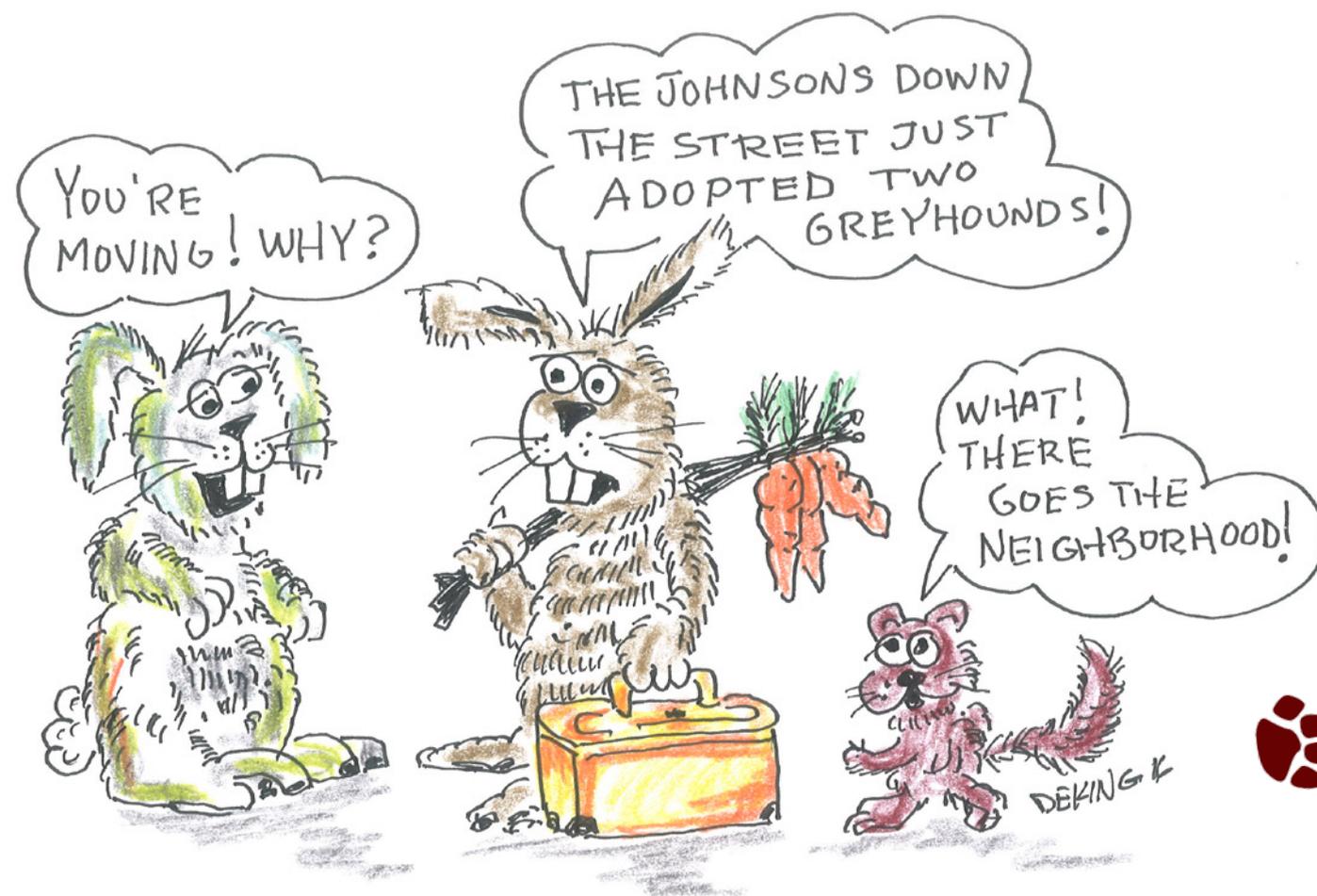
From there, the 40-page, full-color book lets readers imagine what Greyhounds might really be thinking as they transition from retired racer to adopted pet. DeKing’s comical sketches are featured throughout the book, which also contains a few of DeKing’s original stories about the hounds he and his wife, Adrienne, have shared their lives with.

DeKing’s sketches, often in black and white, are set off by beautiful, colorful and fun backgrounds, making each page a pleasure to view. The oversized book is suitable for prominent display on a coffee table, where it is sure to entertain your guests.

Self published in November 2015 through Shutterfly, DeKing said “Why Did They Name a Dog After a Bus” was prepared and edited by Midwest Greyhound volunteers to support [Midwest Greyhound Adoption](#) in its mission to find homes for retired racing Greyhounds. He has pledged to donate all of the proceeds from the book to the Sugar Grove, Illinois, adoption group.

DeKing, who has many years’ worth of illustrations in his files, said plans are already underway for a second book. ■

About the author: Stacy Pigott is Celebrating Greyhounds’ Editor-In-Chief. She lives in Fort Worth, Texas, with Greyhounds Gypsy and Greta, Cattle Dog mix Jewel, and Greyhound-cross foster Eliot.





Ask the Expert:

From Yawn to *Yikes!*

Knowing the progression and signs of stress in your Greyhound can help prevent unwanted behaviors such as bites.

By Deb Levasseur, CTB

As a certified dog trainer and behavior therapist who works with many breeds, I hear the phrase “it happened right out of the blue” quite often, especially when it comes to aggression. Do events normally happen out of the blue? Just

like people, dogs have emotions and feelings and ways to communicate them. Also, just like people, canine behavior never actually happens out of

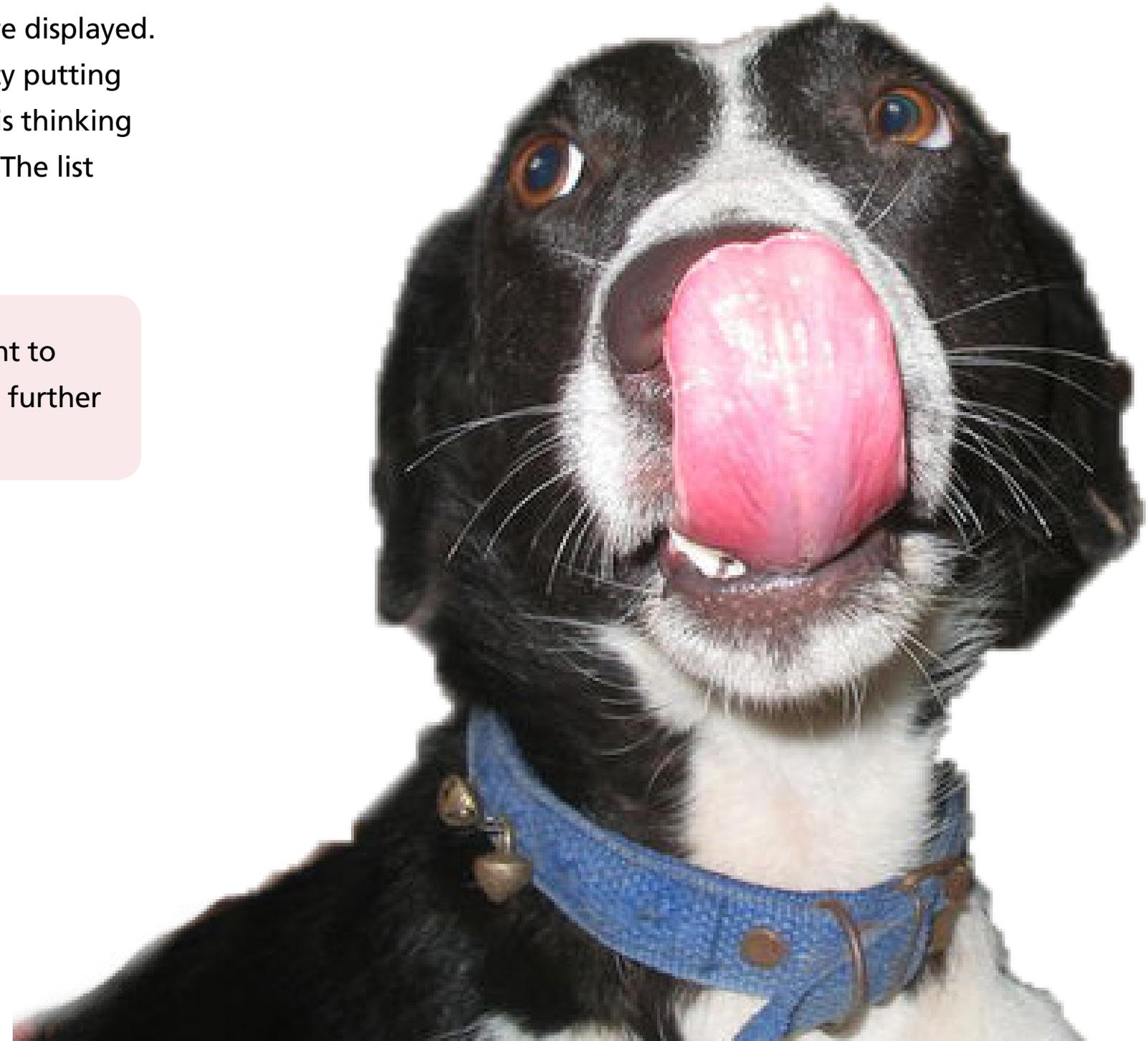
the blue. To prevent dog aggression and other unwanted behaviors, it is important not only to be able to recognize the signs of stress in dogs, but also to understand the escalation of behavior that precedes a bite. Here are ways to recognize the progression of stress in dogs in order to prevent unwanted behaviors.

A happy dog does not jump up off his bed to run over and growl at someone, and dogs do not go from mild yawns directly to bites. When a stressful situation for your dog is not defused, then uncomfortable feelings escalate and may lead to aggression. The only exception would be if your dog

is suffering from a medical condition, such as a brain tumor, that can alter his behavior, making it more unpredictable. Most dog owners are weak in recognizing signs of stress and knowing the order in which they are displayed. Many people can distinguish some of these signs but have difficulty putting them in the proper succession to truly understand what their dog is thinking and what will happen next if the stressful incident is not resolved. The list below outlines the progression of stress signs from mild to severe.

Milder Signals: These signals are the first signs of stress. We want to recognize these right away and intervene immediately to stop any further progression.

- Yawning
- Head turns
- Eye turns
- Lip and nose licks
- Licking your hand
- Eye blinks
- Nose dripping
- Sudden dandruff and shedding
- Excessive drinking
- Elimination avoidance
- Tucked or lowered tail
- Shaking off



Moderate Signals: These signs indicate a dog is greatly stressed and the incident has surpassed his or her tolerance threshold. Ideally, your dog would not get to this point, so you need to act fast to prevent further escalation.

- Refusal to eat treats
- Frequent or absence of urination
- Stretching
- Sniffing
- Penis crowning
- Ears pinned back
- Sweaty paws
- Stiff and excessive posture
- Pacing
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Excessive salivation
- Shallow or fast breathing
- Holding breath

Severe Signals: These are signals of extreme stress. Our goal is to never see these signs in our dogs as they can lead to dangerous situations. Any dog can bite given the right circumstances.

- Slow or little movement and/or lack of behavior
- Trembling
- Muscle ridges around eyes and mouth
- Acute diarrhea or vomiting
- Rolling over and exposing belly
- Submissive urination
- Cheek puffing
- Raised hackles
- Dilated pupils
- Barking with an intense stare
- Whale eye (showing the whites of the eye)
- Freezing
- Growling
- Snapping
- Biting

When particular sequences start from the above lists, the dog's stress level is rising. For example, if your dog repeatedly yawns and licks his lips, then it can indicate escalating stress levels. However, we must also be able to read these signals in context, e.g., it is perfectly normal if a dog shakes off after a bath or licks his lips after eating. Rolling over during play while relaxed can be normal, but when it's done during a stressful time or with new people, the action may indicate severe stress. What could be normal behavior for a particular dog in a comfortable setting may indicate stress in a new and uncomfortable situation. Did you know that dogs rarely yawn because they are tired, but they often yawn to cope with an unpleasant situation? With a lot of practice, we are better able to read the

signs of stress for our particular hound. Just like learning any new skill, this takes time. A local dog park can be a great place to observe and work on these skills. Brenda Aloff's book *Canine Body Language — A Photographic Guide* is a fantastic source for learning and developing this skill even further.

Keeping our dogs from going over their thresholds is vital to preventing unwanted behavior and maintaining as stress-free lives as possible. The threshold is the point just before your dog's behavior changes. Imagine you are walking your dog, who is calm and relaxed until another dog gets within 25 feet. At that point you feel tension in the leash, his ears go up, and his tail becomes stiffer and drops a little. He is now over his threshold. As the distance between your hound and the other dog is reduced, he becomes more stressed. His breathing changes, his ears are pinned back, and he urinates. As the other dog comes even closer, your Greyhound progresses to pulling,

lunging, barking, and growling. He may even bite, if given the chance.

To prevent these unwanted behaviors, it is vital to keep your dog under his threshold at all times. To accomplish this, we must begin training at a point that causes no discomfort to the dog so you can move very gradually closer to the object or situation of concern. By intervening at the very first signs of stress, providing a comfortable distance for the dog, and making it a more positive experience by providing a tasty treat, we can desensitize our dogs to virtually any previously stressful situation.

The opposite of desensitization is sensitization. A highly ineffective example of sensitization is flooding, which is forced exposure to a stimulus that is frightening for your dog, such as taking your dog to a school playground when he or she fears children. Unfortunately flooding very rarely has a positive effect in terms of training,

and the experience is extremely stressful and unpleasant for your dog.

Desensitization is applied to reduce the dog's anxiety through gradual exposure to the object. The desensitization program can work faster when paired up with counter-conditioning, which works to create a positive association with a previously stressful experience. You can feed the dog treats at a comfortable distance when children arrive at the playground. By pairing the scary situation with food, we also create a pleasant association. The food can also distract the dog, allowing an opportunity to change his brain to seeking and hunting mode (the TREAT!) and out of a place of fear.

Becoming fluent in dog body language must include more than knowing some of the severe signs of stress, such as growling and biting. Your vocabulary should include the milder signals and the progression in which they occur for your dog. Also, being able to read

our dogs' body language within context will help us to better understand what they are thinking and how they are feeling. This will lead to a much better relationship and a more fulfilling life with our best friends.

Just imagine being able to actually understand when your Greyhound is uncomfortable and stressed and being able to help your dog. Potentially, your dog would never need to growl again as we would be able to remove him or her from uncomfortable situations before the tolerance threshold is exceeded. As a result, you will be the proud owner of a stress-free and more confident dog. This is truly a win-win situation for everyone.

For details on stress in dogs as well as threshold and triggers, view my [free video online courses](#). ■



PowerPoint Presentation



What is a good life for a dog?

- The basics are: Food, water, shelter, bathroom needs and enough sleep.
- What is fun or good for us is not always fun for our dogs.
- Next, think about the stress your dog has in his life and how you can reduce it.
- But first we must know how to recognize stress in our dogs & how it effects them. As well as what is naturel for dogs & what dogs enjoy.

About the author: Deb Levasseur, CTB, Canine Behavior Therapist and trainer, is the president and founder of [Maritime Greyhound Adoption Program](#), based in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Baker the Greyhound

From the cold streets to a warm sofa

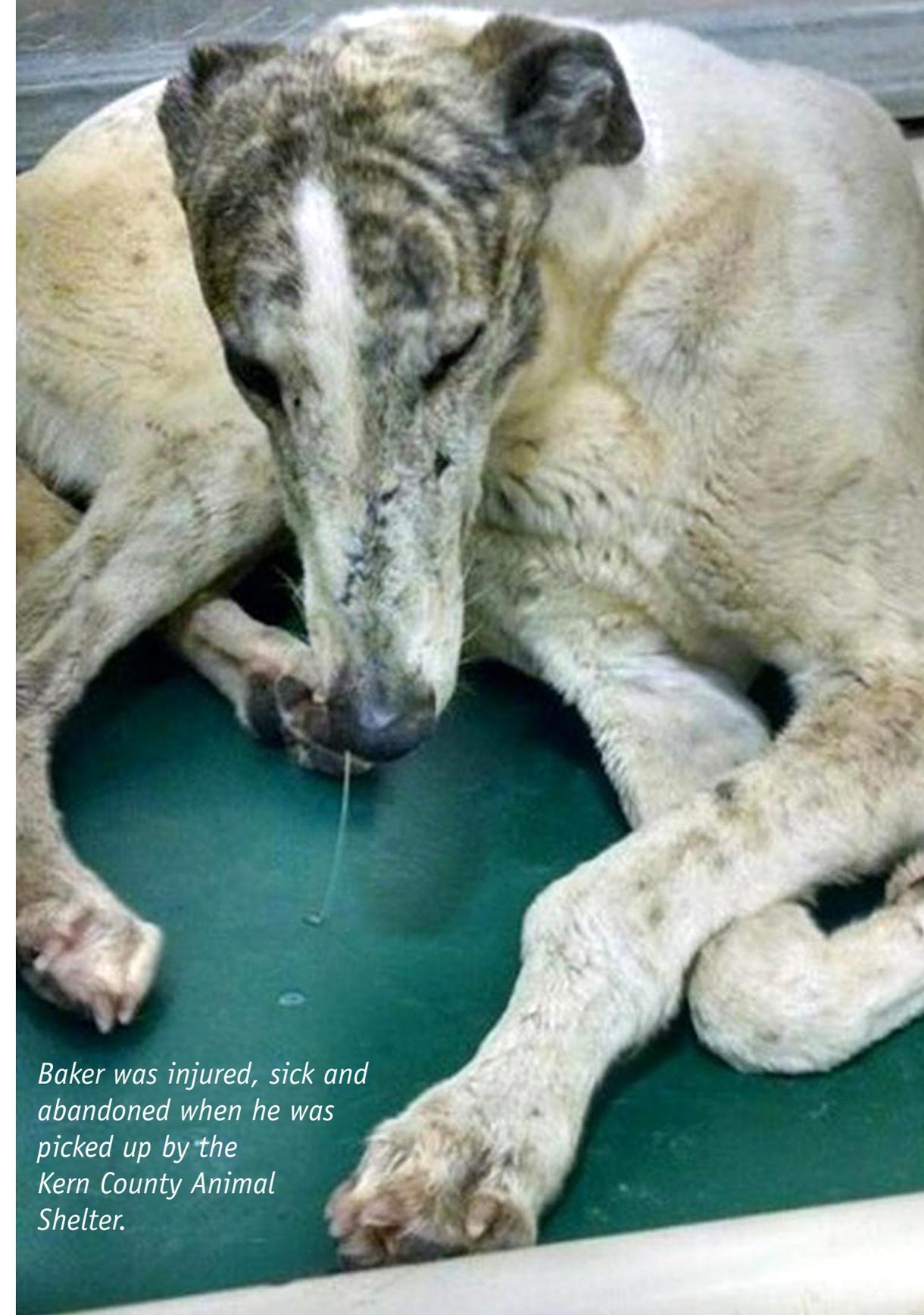
By Linda Weber

Injured, alone, foraging the streets for food; a Greyhound was in need. Before you despair, however, this Greyhound has a name, food, and a loving forever home. The Greyhound, now named Baker, in remembrance of his start on the streets of Bakersfield, California, had a rather dismal start.

How long Baker had been wandering the streets is unknown, but it was clear no one was looking for him or tried to help him. At one point, a teacher at

a Bakersfield school called the animal shelter when she saw him begging for food from some of the school children. In March 2015, Baker was picked up by the Kern County Animal Shelter, where he was placed on a 10-day hold. [FastFriends Greyhound Adoption](#) in La Habra, California, stepped in and accepted custody of Baker.

A cursory examination identified an infected, broken jaw; an untreated, self-healed break of his front leg; thickened,



Baker was injured, sick and abandoned when he was picked up by the Kern County Animal Shelter.

dirty, yellowed, matted hair; and lack of neutering. His ear tattoos were so faded that no information could be gleaned as to any racing history. They did determine he was 10 years old.

When initially placed in a foster home, Baker was wary of the love and attention he received. He would walk out of the house and lay in the backyard, not realizing he was allowed to stay indoors and be comfortable. His foster mom continually lavished attention and tried to undo all the distress he encountered on the streets.

In anticipation of future adoption, Baker was given a more comprehensive examination and additional trauma was identified that made everyone's heart ache even more for him. A canine tooth had pierced his nasal cavity in conjunction with the broken jaw. The tooth was removed, along with 11 other unhealthy teeth, and his nasal cavity was

stitched. Due to the high cost of treating this particular injury (approximately \$3,500), a funding plea was issued to assist with covering the cost of the extensive surgery. Greyhound and animal lovers came to the rescue, raising even more than was needed initially to help Baker. A medical decision was made not to re-break his hock, so he walks with a permanent limp but is not in pain from it.

All through this, [FastFriends](#) had been updating his story on its website. Greyhounds released to FastFriends undergo a comprehensive medical examination and receive necessary vaccinations, treatment for broken hocks, spaying/neutering, and many more services before being placed in foster homes prior to adoption consideration. The FastFriends website gives access to pictures and information on personalities



Baker, in his favorite chair, uses his adopted dad's shoe for comfort.



(Left to right) Afghan Hound Lola, Bart Rowe, and Baker, out for a walk in Northern Nevada.

as discovered through the foster parents or the many volunteers who assist the group. Baker was a favorite of many people who followed his progress.

One couple who had closely followed Baker's story said they "knew that he was meant to be with them." A long-time adopter of senior Greyhounds, Sharon Haugen was not deterred by his heart-rending past and medical history. Where others saw Baker as a Greyhound with long-term issues, she looked past the physical and saw into his heart. Sharon and her husband, Bart Rowe, have always opened their hearts and home to senior dogs, knowing the time they have with them might be short. For them, knowing the Greyhounds were in a loving home when they finally passed is reward enough. Sharon and Bart have worked tirelessly to place Greyhounds in loving homes as placement representatives



Pumpkin showing love to Baker.

for **Nevada Greyhounds Unlimited** in northern Nevada.

Sharon and Bart worked with FastFriends to get Baker to his new home in Reno, Nevada. But his ordeal was not over yet. Shortly after arriving in Reno, Baker started

sneezing and was taken to a trusted veterinarian. Baker's nasal cavity suture had reopened, requiring surgery to repair it. Resting comfortably after his surgery, he has learned the meaning of love and has a comfy bed to call his own.

Baker has blossomed in the year since he was adopted. He has been embraced by his Afghan Hound sister, Lola, and loves his rescue cat siblings, Pumpkin and Rusty. Mariah, a retired Greyhound, spent some time showing her new brother the ropes until she passed in late 2015 at 14.5 years old.

Baker went from having to forage and steal food to stealing shoes to take to his living room. His cold days and nights are replaced with a warm sofa and his favorite chair. His loneliness is replaced with family, both the four-footed and two-footed variety.

Baker celebrated his first "Gotcha Day" in April 2016 and, for those who followed and donated to Baker, this is the hope of every Greyhound lover.

Although Baker has settled in nicely to home life with his adopted family, he continues to have health concerns. In July, Baker began sneezing again and it was feared he



Baker relaxing peacefully in his backyard.

might have a foxtail in his nose or the dreaded diagnosis of a nasal tumor. A nasal scope identified nose mites contracted from another infected dog. Highly contagious, Lola and Baker both received shots. Baker was glad to get back to the comfort of his home.

To counteract the damage to his spine as he hobbled with his broken hock on the streets, Baker gets regular chiropractic/acupuncture treatments from a holistic veterinarian. This helps align his spine and allows him to walk in a straight line, rather than sideways from favoring his weakened leg.

Taking care of Baker and the other senior hounds who came before him is a joy to Sharon and Bart. Watching Baker blossom as he embraces his new life is a reward no amount of money could ever provide. ■

About the author: Linda Weber began writing about Greyhounds after adopting a retired racer named Foxy from FastFriends in La Habra, California. When she is not traveling the world with her husband, Stan, they split their time between Southern California and southern Utah, where they lavish attention on Foxy and rescued Smooth Fox Terrier mix, Jack.



Baker relaxing in the warmth of a blanket on a comfortable chair.

MSGAO Celebrating 25th Anniversary

The track-based program serves adopters in multiple states.

By Barbara Williams

Mid-South Greyhound Adoption Option (MSGAO), based at Southland Park Gaming and Racing in West Memphis, Arkansas, observed its 25th anniversary placing retired racers in loving homes this fall. Since beginning online tracking of adoptions in 2006, the program has placed nearly 1,000 Greyhounds in homes, as well as supplying innumerable hounds to other foster-based adoption programs in a multi-state area.

The anniversary was celebrated at MSGAO's annual reunion, a dinner and

fundraising event held at the track on October 8, 2016. It was MSGAO's biggest fundraiser to date, and included a cocktail hour, parade of hounds, costume contest reflecting the theme of the event, buffet dinner, and live and silent auctions. More than 200 people and 150 hounds were estimated to have attended.

"The hounds are so well-behaved during the reunion. You hardly hear a bark the whole time," says Director Vicki Cohen, who leads the program.

The excitement level rises, however,

when trainers and kennel owners in attendance are spotted by their former athletes. Then joyous mayhem breaks out. "Our adopters love these mini-reunions within the reunion," Cohen said.

In the Beginning

A subchapter of Greyhound Pets of America operated in nearby Memphis, Tennessee for about a year before MSGAO was founded. Greyhounds were also supplied by the Southland track across the Mississippi River in Arkansas, for about





MSGAO's annual reunion begins with a cocktail hour on the track apron. A Parade of Hounds on the track is a highlight of the hour, for the dogs and their humans.

a year before MSGAO was founded, but its history has been lost to time. A newspaper article in The Commercial Appeal in Memphis, published February 11, 1991, announced the

GPA subchapter's formation, citing the pet-ability of retired racers. A \$50 donation was suggested, which apparently did not include spaying and neutering, as the new owners

were noted as being responsible for fulfilling those adoption requirements.

Then, in late 1991, MSGAO was founded and officially announced on January 9, 1992, following its incorporation as a non-profit, charitable entity. The ensuing news story on the program's commencement noted that it planned to operate locally, instead of using GPA's approach, which was reportedly national in scope. MSGAO was formed solely to assist the owners of racing Greyhounds at the West Memphis track, which opened in 1956 and is considered the premier venue in the country for Greyhound racing. MSGAO's adoption fee was \$75 and included spaying/neutering and shots.

The news article on MSGAO's formation noted that the goal was to rehome about 100 retired racers annually. That number has been achieved steadily in the tri-state area of Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas. In addition, MSGAO has supplied hundreds of



Nary a bark is heard as 200 people and about 100 hounds gather for dinner, contests and bidding on live- and silent-auction items.

hounds to foster-based programs such as GPA Nashville, Music City Greyhound Adoption, Shamrock Greyhound Placement, Rescued Racers, ReGAP of Illinois, Greyhound Rescue Foundation of Tennessee, and GPA Lexington.

Successful Track Record

Under the 10-year leadership of Cohen, who has been involved with Greyhounds most of her life both on the breeding farm and as a trainer along with her husband, Paul Cohen.

The MSGAO kennel on the Southland grounds maintains a staff comprised of an adoption manager, Patty Burrell, and three kennel assistants. Paul also serves as Vicki's prime volunteer in his retirement. She counts on Paul's support of the program in myriad ways, from maintenance of the adoption kennel yard, shaving rehomed racers at the annual dog wash fundraiser, and smoking turkeys and pork shoulders for event lunches, to shuttling dogs near and far to facilitate adoptions.

MSGAO's facilities can accommodate more than 100 Greyhounds, which includes adoptable hounds and boarders. The boarding service supplements MSGAO's income as well as providing Greyhound owners a flexible and cost-effective amenity.

"We are blessed to have kennel facilities and a full-time staff," Cohen notes, in comparison to foster-based programs, whose challenges and dedication she appreciates.

Also invaluable to MSGAO is the support of Southland Park Gaming and Racing, Arkansas Greyhound Kennel Association, and Greyhound Breeders of Arkansas, which provide significant contributions to MSGAO's operations.

MSGAO promotes adoption of retired racing Greyhounds through regularly scheduled Meet and Greet events at pet stores in Tennessee and northern Mississippi, as well as specially scheduled Meet and Greets in Jonesboro and Little Rock, Arkansas. MSGAO also appears at numerous multi-breed adoption and community events, including some visits to schools, where the Greyhounds become a veritable petting zoo for the students.

In the past year, MSGAO joined forces with two other adoption organizations — Music City Greyhound Adoption and All About Hounds Greyhound Adoption — to support a prison program that can accommodate up to eight Greyhounds for each of its 10-week training sessions. In addition to supplying dogs for the

prison program, a MSGAO adopter provided the fee for the first two, 10-week training sessions. This fee provided for the trainer who works with the hounds and inmates who have earned the privilege of participating in the program. The Greyhound graduates are placed through MSGAO's foster-based partners in Nashville and Knoxville.

Trivia competitions and Bark in the Park events also have been conducted to raise funds to support the adoption program.

"The adoption fee doesn't cover all the cost of vetting each dog, so we have to get creative in ways to raise funds," Cohen said.

Spreading the Greyhound Word

MSGAO spreads the word on the pet-ability of retired racing Greyhounds through its [website](#) and Facebook. There is an [official page](#) and a [friends page](#) where adopters can share pictures and advice. MSGAO's name and mission have traveled far and wide as



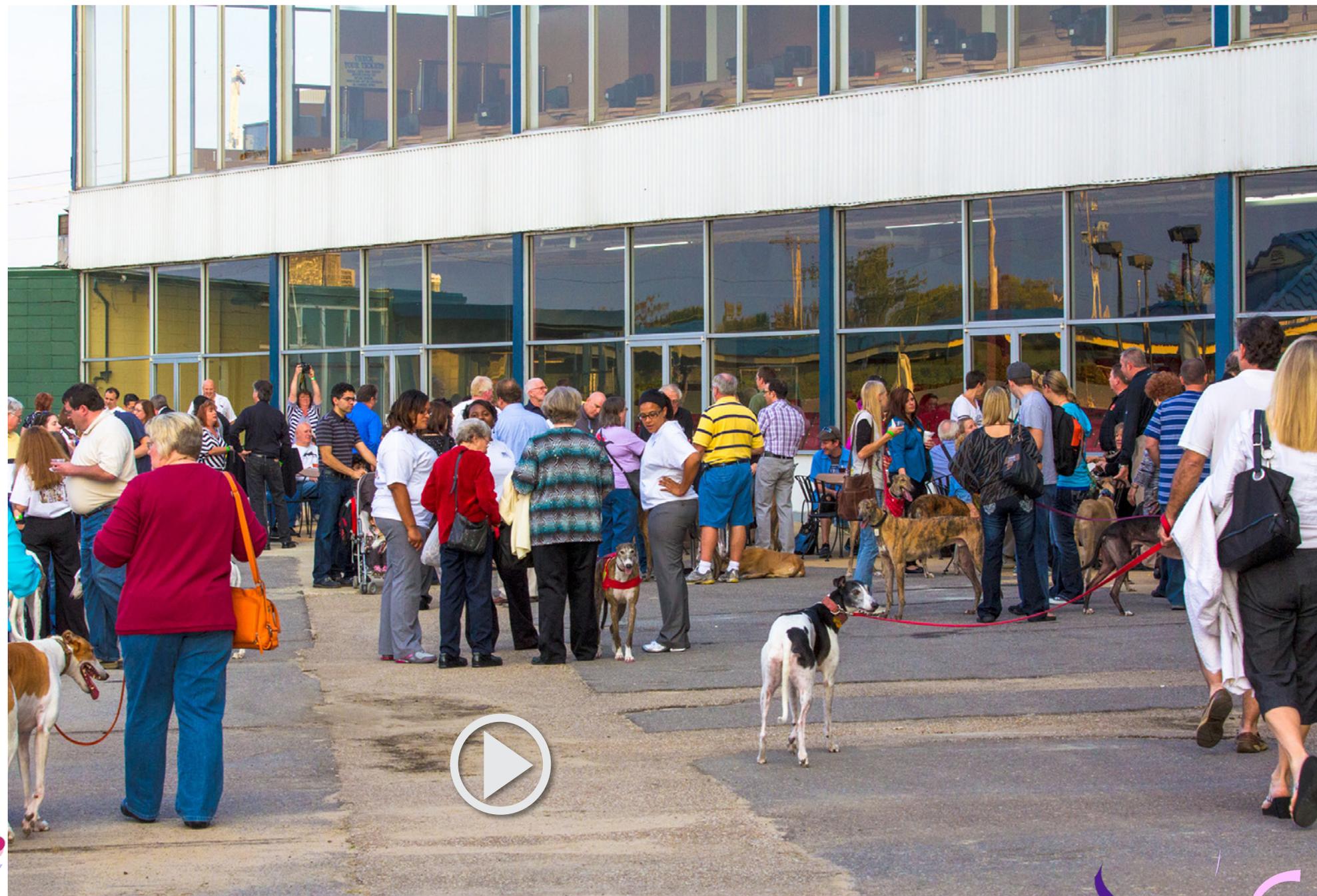
Vicki Cohen, executive director of MSGAO and a veteran of the racing industry, puts the dogs first and foremost.



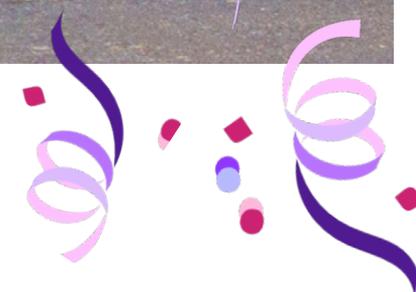
adopters have relocated to Alaska, Guam, California, North Carolina, and Oregon.

MSGAO has achieved an enviable track record of success for its program, due in large part to the adopters who have given homes to hounds, as well as the volunteers who help spread the word about the program. “Even though we have the luxury of on-track facilities and a full-time staff, we still depend on volunteers to support our efforts,” said Cohen. “Their dedication to our mission is essential and greatly appreciated.” ■

About the author: Barbara Williams, a section editor for Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine, is a volunteer at MSGAO. She is happily retired.



View a slideshow of the reunion.



GHI Opens Blood Bank

Veterinarians nationwide have a new resource for transfusion products, courtesy of the Greyhounds who donate blood through the Greyhound Health Initiative (GHI) Blood Bank that opened recently at the Riverside Animal Care Center in Dublin, Ohio.

The non-profit organization facilitated its first distribution of blood products in June.

The GHI Blood Bank will serve a dual purpose. “While

providing an important service to the veterinary community, it also will create a library of Greyhound blood samples for use in future studies as well as to offset costs associated with running other GHI programs,” said GHI President Guillermo Couto, DVM. GHI is committed to improving the “health of sighthounds worldwide through education, research, and accessibility to accurate diagnosis and treatment,” according to its mission statement.

The Blood Bank is seeking Greyhound donors to supply the blood needed by veterinarians to respond to emergency situations and illnesses where blood

products can make the difference between life and death, says Couto, a recognized authority on Greyhound health.

Up to 70 percent of Greyhounds have a blood type that is similar to that of human universal donors, meaning their blood can be used in all other dogs. Greyhound blood is also rich in red blood cells, along with having lower than average white blood cells and platelets — unique attributes that make their blood especially desirable.

GHI will collect blood six times a year from its donor hounds, much less frequently than the three-week interval recommended between donations.



Greyhound donors living a “comfortable” distance from the Dublin clinic will receive the following free at each donation visit:

- Physical exam
- Complete blood count
- Chemistry profile
- Serological tests for heartworm disease and tick-borne diseases
- Flea and tick preventatives

In addition, donor hounds will receive free blood products for life, even after ceasing to be a donor, as well as a tag with Blood Bank name and dog’s blood type (serving as another form of identification at the

Couto



also cited “the knowledge that you are saving another dog’s life” as a significant benefit of participation.

“The proceeds from these sales will help pay the administrative costs associated with running The Greyhound Health Initiative. That means a larger percentage of donations we receive will go straight to research and other programs. Ultimately we’re projecting the blood bank will cover 100 percent of our administrative costs, allowing 100 percent of donated funds to go to the dogs,” said Brian Collins, GHI executive director.

Blood samples from each donor will be used for future research and to keep blood value reference intervals up to date. “It seems that every time a new blood test comes out, Greyhounds like to fall outside of the normal reference intervals. So we’re partnering with

Idexx Laboratories to establish those norms before the tests are available commercially, preventing additional testing, expenses and possibly an incorrect diagnosis resulting in unnecessary treatment”, Couto said.

Donation is simple and relatively painless for the hounds.

“The Greyhound’s large veins and calm demeanor make them perfect for this procedure, which only takes about 10 minutes, and they can either stand or lie down while a pint of blood is drawn from their neck — occasionally one will even fall asleep and maybe even roach while donating. Afterward the only sign they gave blood is a small shaved patch on their neck. These hounds can safely donate every three weeks, but we won’t collect their blood more than six times per year,” Couto said.

To be eligible to donate, the Greyhound must be:

- Between 1 and 6 years old
- Weigh at least 55 pounds
- Healthy, friendly, and not unusually nervous in the veterinarian's office
- On heartworm and flea/tick preventatives year round
- Available to donate once every two months (six times per year)
- Live within a comfortable driving distance to Dublin, Ohio. (GHI cannot do remote blood donations.)

To sign up or obtain details, call 1-800-416-5156, extension 1. Details also are available for donors and veterinarians at [http://www.](http://www.greyhoundhealthinitiative.org/blood-bank/)

[greyhoundhealthinitiative.org/blood-bank/](http://www.greyhoundhealthinitiative.org/blood-bank/). ■



Five-year-old Harper, adopted by Karen Shea of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, through James River Greyhounds in Richmond, Virginia.



It's Only a Limp, or *Is It?*

By Shannon Forrest

Of all the medical issues that can befall your Greyhound, a limp is one of the most mysterious. The precise cause depends on a myriad of variables. When lameness can be traced to a specific event or activity, like running into or stepping on an object, veterinarians have a solid foundation to develop a hypothesis. It can be as simple as a dislocated toe or broken toenail. If there is not a known event that transpired prior to the limp, finding an accurate diagnosis can be challenging and time consuming.

When Wagner started limping, his owners feared the worst.





Wagner's x-rays didn't show any complications from a prior surgery to repair a broken hock.

Soft tissue injuries rank less serious in the overall spectrum of Greyhound health and are generally treated with rest and medications to reduce inflammation and mitigate the pain. Owners who have experience with the breed, either in terms of longevity or with multiple Greyhounds, tend to refrain from immediately rushing to the veterinarian when they suspect a soft tissue problem.

It goes without saying that when unleashed and provided with enough space, the innate nature of a Greyhound is to run. Marathoners and sprinters can attest to the fact that with any running activity, minor injuries are common and come and go as a matter of course. The same is true for the Greyhound. However, a sustained period of limping without an easily identifiable cause is not normal and requires medical attention.

In early April of 2016, Wagner, an 8-year-old adopted former racer, began to exhibit signs of lameness originating from his right rear leg. Context is important, and in Wagner's case, he has free reign of a half-acre fenced-in yard, two highly active pack mates, and an obstruction free, grassy surface to provide the perfect conditions for spontaneous sprinting. He is also quite fond of a molded rubber squeaky toy that he's willing to chase and retrieve for extended lengths of time. It's not uncommon for him to overexert himself every now and then, but this time his gait was definitely abnormal.

Humans maintain a myriad of psychological biases and as a result, sometimes jump to inaccurate and perhaps farfetched conclusions based on prior experiences, symptoms, or events. The concept can manifest itself in a



Several stitches mark the area where veterinarians surgically fixed Wagner's AV fistula.

phenomenon called “medical school syndrome,” a condition in which a medical student reads something in a textbook and suddenly feels he or she is afflicted with it regardless of how exotic it is. It’s a classic fallacy of twisting facts to suit theory rather than the other way around. In the 1940s, Dr. Theodore Woodward, a professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, urged his students that when searching for the origin of a problem, “Don’t look for Zebras on Greene Street.” (Greene Street is located outside of the medical school in Baltimore.) The saying has morphed into many forms over the years, but the modern proverb is, “When you hear hoof beats, think of horses, not zebras,” meaning the simplest and most common answer is usually the right one when it comes to diagnostics. The

admonition is to not think the worst or delve into remote possibilities until there is a legitimate reason to do so. Due to Wagner’s owners’ prior experience with two Greyhounds who developed limps that led to untimely deaths, they thought the worst — he has osteosarcoma.

Fortunately, a physical examination of Wagner by Dr. Christy Soileau of the Preston Park Animal Hospital, in Dallas, Texas, showed no clinical signs of osteosarcoma. Wagner also had not developed a corn on the lame leg. This was a legitimate concern because he has a history of a single recurring corn on another foot. To combat the issue, Wagner was put on a regimen of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory carprofen and prescribed antibiotics to combat infection, as it was possible a foreign object had become embedded somewhere in the



Wagner relaxes on a dog bed following surgery to correct a rare AV fistula.

leg, which showed signs of swelling. Two weeks after the cycle of medication was complete, the symptoms subsided. Seven days later, the condition reappeared. It was possible the carprofen had been masking the pain all along, making it a chronic rather than acute problem. With no definitive answer in sight, the next logical course of action was to x-ray the area and examine the radiograph for abnormalities. Although Greyhounds as a breed are generally well-behaved when placed into awkward positions necessary for radiographs, some need to be sedated. As it turned out, Wagner was a pretty good patient. His history may have had something to do with that. Six years earlier he fractured his hock, which ended his racing career and sent him off to early retirement. It occurred on the same leg as the limp. After enduring a surgery that

included two permanent screws, bandage changes, and rehabilitation, he was used to having the leg handled. A benefit of the prior surgery was that images existed denoting the condition of the leg six years prior; in essence, providing a baseline for comparison. Because the break represented an existing weak point in his leg, it warranted a close look.

When the radiographs failed to detect anything unusual and showed the tarsus repair to be in good shape, it was ruled out. Just when the investigation seemed back at square one, Soileau noticed an unusual symptom. The vein below Wagner's hock seemed to be pulsing or throbbing. Based on the vascular irregularity, Wagner was referred to Dr. Robert Radasch at the Dallas Veterinary Surgical Center (DVSC) for follow up. Radasch had a suspected culprit in

mind, but took an additional radiograph to confirm his conclusions. He also withdrew a sample from an enlarged area on Wagner's metatarsals, below the hock and above the foot. The spot always appeared swollen, but was actually a concentration of fluid that could be moved around when pressure was applied. The new radiograph in combination with the fact that the fluid turned out to be the pooling of arterial blood solved the puzzle. Wagner had an arteriovenous (AV) fistula.

According to the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, "An arteriovenous fistula is an abnormal communicating channel between the arterial and venous systems that bypasses normal capillary circulation." The normal circulatory system functions by sending blood from arteries into capillaries that oxygenate the cells and tissues of the body. Blood from capillaries flows into veins to complete the cycle. With an AV fistula, the capillaries are bypassed as the artery connects directly to the vein. The junction of the two avenues of blood creates an enlargement. It's rare in dogs, so much so that Radasch mentioned the last



A boot protects Wagner's leg as it heals following surgery.

time he encountered it was during teaching veterinary school two decades ago. He opined that in Wagner's case, trauma to the area likely caused the anomaly. It is possible it had something to do with the broken leg years earlier, but it is equally probable it was induced by rough play or a collision.

An AV fistula is an abnormal condition if it develops by itself, but is a normal medical procedure performed by surgeons to help treat kidney disease and kidney failure in humans. In these cases, it is normally an outpatient procedure performed under local anesthetic that begins with an incision in the forearm. An artery and vein are surgically attached and, over time, the union will grow into the fistula and along with it the vein thickens and blood flow increases. The purpose is to provide the access point for hemodialysis — a place to insert the needle. As described by the Encyclopedia of Surgery, "a fistula is more advantageous than

catheters and grafts for dialysis because it lasts longer, is less likely to become infected, and resists clots. It has no beneficial purpose in canines and when it appears in the legs requires surgery to correct it. It can also appear in the liver; a much more difficult situation to correct."

Approximately a month after Wagner began to limp he underwent a procedure to have his fistula removed. Radasch cautioned that it would be about four to six weeks before a normal gait returned. The prediction proved accurate and a month after surgery Wagner was pain free and running normally again. The beat of his paws serves as a reminder that although one hopes for horses, sometimes there is a zebra in the pack. ■

About the author: Shannon Forrest is a professional pilot and freelance writer. He volunteers for the Greyhound Adoption League of Texas, and currently has two adopted Greyhounds.



The Name Game

A family searches for the perfect pet name for a new Greyhound.

By Bruce DeKing

We all know that Greyhounds come in 18 different colors, and there are even more options when it comes to naming them. Greyhound names can be silly, goofy, funny, or even downright dumb. This is the story about a Greyhound named "Secret Pines," and how he got his name changed.

It all started a few weeks before Christmas. My wife and I, along with daughters Jennifer and Julie, were at a family dog show. Both daughters had dogs in the show. While the show was going on, my wife and I wandered around looking

at the vendors and the rescue groups with dogs available for adoption.

That's when we came across the Greyhound group. We liked what we saw, and came back two or three times, checking out the Greyhounds.

After the show, I told my daughters about how much their mother really liked the Greyhounds. That's when we decided to adopt a Greyhound as a Christmas present for Mom.

Finally, the big day for adoption came, about a week before Christmas. Mom was surprised, and fell in love with him at first



sight. He was a big, 85-pound, light and dark brown brindle boy with a big smile on his face.

Here's the unusual thing about him, his name. Yes, his name was "Secret Pines". When they told us, we all looked at each other and said, "Secret Pines? What the heck kind of a name is that? What do we call him? Secret? Piney? Maybe S.P.? How will we call him? People will look at us and say, 'What a goofy name for a dog!' " Well, that was his name for the time being, so we had to live with it.

As time went on, he fit in just great with the other dogs and the family, but we were still having a hard time with that darn name.

About three weeks into his new-home adjustment, we were all sitting around the family room watching TV one afternoon and having snacks. Julie opened a big bag of mixed miniature candy bars (you know, the ones with Kit Kat, Milky Way, and Snickers,

etc.), and asked, "Would anyone like a candy bar?"

Jennifer, my other daughter, responded, "Yes, give me a Snickers." I said, "Hey, that sounds good, give me a Snickers, too!"

Just then, at the sound of the word "Snickers," Secret Pines' ears perked up and he looked at us both. We looked at each other and said it again. "Snickers!"

Secret Pines jumped up and ran over to both of us. We all looked at each other and said, "That's it! That has to be his new name



— Snickers!" He responded to it like it had always been his name. Funny enough, he did

look like a Snickers candy bar with his light and dark brown coloring.

Over time, we shortened "Snickers" to "Snick," and Snick it was forever. Any time you called, "Snick!" he would come running to you with that big, goofy smile of his.

That's how a Greyhound with the name "Secret Pines," which was a goofy, silly name, got a fun-loving name of "Snick". That's how we played "The Name Game." ■

About the author: Bruce Gordon DeKing is a talented artist and regular contributor to Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine. His funny illustrative cartoons are often inspired by Greyhounds such as Snick.

Talking to Animals

Animal communicator Sandra Larson talks about the Greyhounds she has met in her unique line of work.

When Nedra first walked into the Animal Communication Gallery with her new human guardian, Kate Howell, my heart stood still. She was rail thin, had sores everywhere and was so afraid that shivers ran up and down her body. She stood quietly shaking in the room with all the strange people and other animals. Even though they had both been there before and knew she was in a safe place, her new adoptive Greyhound brother Ruger and sister Delta formed a protective inverted V in front of her. Nedra hadn't been with her new family for very long,



Delta, Nedra and Ruger have all visited Sandra's communication gallery.

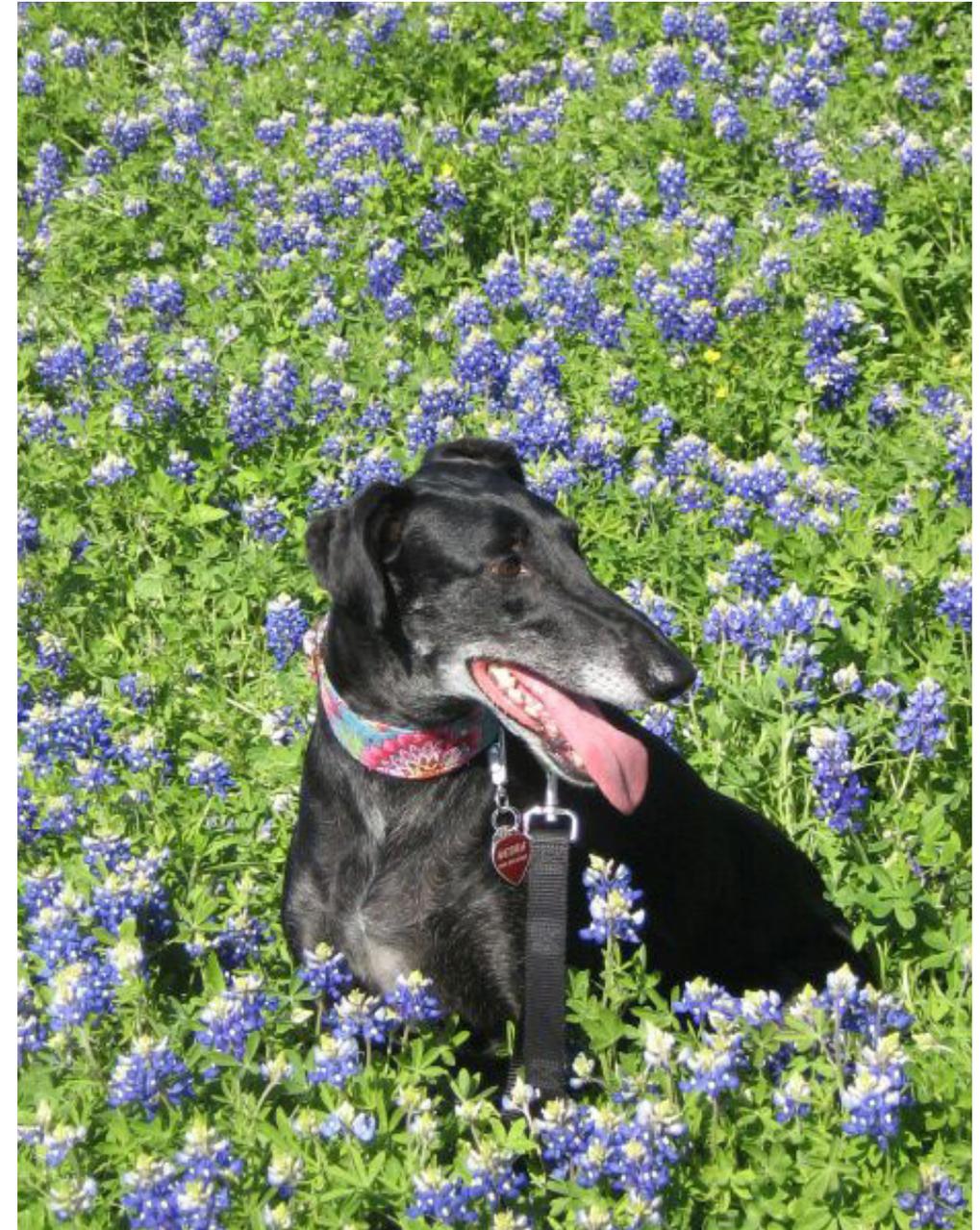
Kate explained to the group. She had come from a terrible mass rescue situation where almost 30 Greyhounds had lived their entire lives in dirty cages, nearly starving, with no medical treatments or socialization of any kind. (Nedra was rescued in July of 2010 and was a part of what came to be called the “Fort Worth 28.” The man was not a professional Greyhound trainer or owner. He was acquiring Greyhounds and breeding them for illegal match racing.) With Kate’s care and the support of everyone in the Gallery, Nedra made huge improvements physically, mentally, and emotionally.

“Out of all the animal communication experiences we’ve had, Nedra has given the most profound messages,” Kate said. “First, just a few weeks after being rescued from her horrible life, she told us through you that she had forgiven the man who treated her and her mates so horribly. We humans should be so readily forgiving. Then, some months later,

when several of us were trying to talk to her she asked us, ‘Is this the new way of the world?’” We all found this profound statement amazing and in that moment we had hope for a better world. Nedra has continued to improve so much that she has actually become quite the diva. She has told us her secret name, Nefertiti, but says, ‘You can call me Queen!’”

People often ask me how I became an **animal communicator**. To be honest, I’d never heard the phrase until about 14 years ago, when I was working on my Master’s degree in counseling. I mentioned to another student how much I loved being around animals, and she suggested I take some classes in animal communication. I was surprised at how easy and natural it seemed to me until I realized I’d been around an animal communicator my entire life — my dad.

We didn’t call him that, but that was



Nedra blossomed into a healthy and beautiful Greyhound with animal communicator Sandra Larson’s help and owner Kate Howell’s care.



Nedra was in poor condition when she was saved from a situation of neglect in Fort Worth, Texas.

exactly what my dad was doing every time he told us what the birds were saying at the breakfast table and with every loving encounter he had with animals. He insisted that animals were master teachers of unconditional love. He told us we should love, respect, and honor them, which is my approach in all of my communication sessions. He was a wonderful role model for me and, even though he's transitioned, I feel he's with me in spirit as I get to live my passion now as an animal communicator.

In my career, I've developed the **CLARAC Approach**, which I use in my practice and teach to others. Within the CLARAC Approach is something I call the SKATESS, which are the seven ways animals and people can send and receive intuitive messages.

Being an animal communicator is not the same as being an animal trainer or behaviorist; I actually have a conversation with them. Think of me as a translator and/or negotiator. Animals reveal their unique perspectives to me, and I explain that point of view to their human guardians. We can then negotiate positive future changes in behaviors in the animals and their human companions. Because of that understanding, we've been able to see miraculous changes and improvements in human and animal relationships.

All behavior is motivated behavior, and animals have reasons for why and how they behave. Sometimes, their human guardians think the animal's behavior is strange or even retaliatory, but, through communication, they discover why the animal was doing the behavior. And, more often than not, the animal's actions were either a call for help or an attempt to help their human friend.

In my years as a trained animal communicator, I've spoken with thousands of animals of various species, both domestic and wild. Our conversations have been in person, over the phone, and in group settings. Prior to meeting my first Greyhounds, the only thing I knew about was that they were racing dogs. I didn't know what wonderful animal friends they could be.

I was privileged to meet my first Greyhounds and their wonderful human companions at one of my gallery events. Many

of the retired racing Greyhounds that I've known have unique issues and challenges that dogs of other breeds do not. I've asked some of my Greyhound clients and friends to share their perspectives on these special problems and the animal communication solutions.

1. Griffen's fears of being alone.

A Greyhound raised to race has a different upbringing than other dogs, because, literally, they are always with or near another Greyhound, which means they don't know how to truly be alone. They may be alone in their own kennels, but, for the most part, they have other Greyhounds around them.

This is what Cortney Dickmann had to say about her Greyhound, Griffen: "Griffen suffered from severe separation anxiety. Sandra came into our lives and has helped us work through this. At our first meeting with Sandra, Griffen disclosed, 'I feel like when I am alone I am going to die.' This was

heartbreaking! He went to day care every day while I was at work. On weekends, I could barely make it through an hour yoga class without him panicking and having an accident. It made me think about what his life was like prior to adoption and how we could overcome this feeling. We visited Sandra at every opportunity and he slowly learned what we kept telling him, 'That I will come back.' He now stays home alone and is such an incredibly devoted companion! He has said that he and I are a 'bonded pair.' It is incredible to see the turnaround in him in just 10 months. Sandra definitely helped me understand him and build such an amazing relationship. Griffen is always ready to chat when she is near!"

2. Dolce Gambino's fears and socializing issues.

Don and Christine Pan Beisert fell deeply in love with their Greyhound, Dolce Gambino,



Sandra calls Dolce Gambino an expressive Greyhound who often voices his opinions quite vocally.

who has become a confident, amazing dog with great barn-hunting abilities. In addition to being intelligent, he is also expressive. He makes me laugh when we're together or even on the phone, because when he hears my voice, he talks out loud to me, making all kinds of yips, barks, and moans!

Christine says, "From one of our earlier sessions I remember us telling you how Dolce would mark on my designer sectional whenever we left the house without him. We thought it was a retaliatory response. But you communicated with Dolce and let us know he was suffering from separation anxiety. You gave us the extremely helpful suggestion of telling him how long we would be away before leaving him. It has truly made a difference.

"The first time we ever met you was at a doggie swim event. It was very crowded, with dogs and people of all shapes and sizes running, swimming, playing, etc. We had adopted Dolce a few months before. He was clearly stressed out at the event and showed a lot of anxiety. I asked you to ask him what was wrong. His answer surprised me. You

told me he told you that these dogs are so different from Greyhounds – almost like these non-Greyhound dogs are a different species entirely. The answer caught me off guard. Dolce was an ex-racer, he raced for six months, and we adopted him at age 2.5. Throughout his life, he was socialized with others, but no one pointed out to us that he was socialized with Greyhounds exclusively. So it completely made sense that he felt uneasy suddenly being around so many of these non-Greyhounds. Thanks to what you told us, we made a point to slowly introduce him to non-Greyhound dogs. As he became more comfortable, we even began to let him play with some of them. These days, it's no longer an issue. We are always taking classes (nose work, agility, barn hunt) and going to dog shows, where it's rare to see another Greyhound. We are grateful to have been given that insight.

“The memory that always brings a smile to our faces is from the time we asked you to

tell Dolce that us brushing his teeth nightly is for his own good. He's always uncooperative when it comes to getting his teeth brushed. But, after that session with you, at least that night, Dolce was 100-percent cooperative for his teeth brushing.”

3. Never say goodbye.

I've been invited to do animal communication at several Greyhound events. At one event, I had a lovely tent with outside netting set up, so we had quiet and privacy. Earlier in the day, a family came in with their large Greyhound to have a session with me. Just like humans, dogs can be introverted or extroverted. This particular big boy didn't enjoy being around all the strange people and dogs. He complained bitterly to me in our talk that he just wanted to go home. His family must have been having a better time than he was because toward the end of the day, he waltzed into my tent, plunked down and wouldn't budge an inch. His human dad was

frantically searching everywhere for him and found him lying comfortably on the huge dog bed. Maybe he had more complaining to do, or maybe he just wanted to find a peaceful place to take a nap!

4. Greyhound togetherness.

It may not be true all the time, but have you ever noticed how so many Greyhounds can be together without any confrontations? That is actually quite strange for most breeds of dogs. Greyhounds seem to easily share small spaces well.

At one Greyhound event, I was doing animal communication in a small room with no door. Kate was sitting at the doorway so I could talk individually with each dog and their human family. There were 20 or so Greyhounds in attendance. Suddenly, one of the Greyhounds slipped out the front door. Everyone except me went running out to find the runaway dog.

Now, this home had some beautiful acreage

for running and playing in the back, where Greyhounds could come and go as they pleased. I had been sitting on the floor in the small room when the dog got loose, and the next thing I knew, I was surrounded by 19 Greyhounds! All of us were as happy and content as could be. I had to smile and say, "Wow, it's a good thing I'm comfortable around a lot of Greyhounds!"

Later, Kate confessed to me that at any given time during the day, at least five Greyhounds were laying in the hallway waiting to have their turn to talk! Knowing this made my heart sing!

5. Fearful and shy dogs.

I remember the first time I met Delta at our Animal Communication Gallery. She was so shy, and I wanted to be especially gentle with her. It took a little while, but she came to trust her mom, Kate, and then to trust me.

Delta had such a sweet, empathic nature. Even though she continued to be shy, we



Delta was able to overcome her own shyness to help other dogs during group sessions with Sandra.

could see her overcome her shyness to welcome new, fearful animals to our gallery. It's amazing what love will cause one to do and be.

I've enjoyed communicating with many

different animals, but some become dear friends and that's how I learned to love Delta — as an equal, with a mission to love and comfort both humans and other animals. She left us this year back in May and, even as I write this, tears fill my eyes because her presence is so missed among us.

Kate said, "First of all, sessions with you, whether singly or in a group session, have a wonderful calming effect on dogs. I've seen the most fearful dogs relax when they are with you. As you know, seeking that comfort for Delta, so brave but so shy, was what started me coming to you regularly. Discovering her need to comfort other dogs who were shy or fearful not only showed me part of what made her tick, but also enabled me to support her in both the shyness and the need to comfort."

6. Grieving Greyhound.

As humans, we go through several stages of grief when we lose someone we love,

including our animal companions. But did you know that animals grieve the loss of their animal friends and family, too? And, sometimes, they even blame themselves for their friend's physical departure.

Diana (Sakkara Diana) needed some reassurance in the loss of her dear friend Regal-Cano (Regal). Janis said, "After having gone to several animal communication events, I lost Regal. Diana could not seem to get past her grief. We came for a session with Sandra, during which Diana told Sandra she thought she had killed Regal because when he fell in the SUV, she fell on him. She thought she had pushed him and he fell, breaking his leg. But you told her it was just the osteosarcoma that killed him."

As time went on, Diana seem to improve and move through her loss and grief.

7. Human healing.

So many times, when we experience a death in our family, whether human or animal, in

hindsight, we develop 20/20 vision and question every aspect of our behavior on the day or the time that led up to that most difficult event. Many times I've found my clients feeling guilty or blaming themselves for events that were usually beyond their control. Because I believe we can also talk with animals after they have left their physical bodies, I've found many of my clients experiencing a flood of relief after completing a conversation with their beloved departed animal companion.

Kate said, "Talking with Takoda was perhaps the most healing for me. I carried a huge amount of grief for him because I felt that I had failed him in not finding out what was making him ill before it was untreatable and fatal. Finding out that my love for him sustained him in his short time here healed my broken heart."

Even though many Greyhounds are born into the track lifestyle and do have unique, unusual challenges when transitioning into pet homes, the ability of this beautiful breed to transform

themselves into wonderful companions is truly amazing. Generally, they are very intuitive and sensitive to the needs of the other humans and animals in their pack.

If you are feeling perplexed or curious about some of your Greyhound's behaviors or perhaps you are experiencing the loss of your beloved friend, feel free to reach out to me, even internationally. ■

About the author: Sandra Larson works out of her Comfort Studio Office in Frisco, Texas, where she offers various galleries and events with opportunities to practice animal communication in a group setting. In addition to her animal communication services, she is also an Intuitive Life Coach with a Master's in Human Relations Counseling. You can reach her through her [website](http://sandra@sandralarson.com) via email at sandra@sandralarson.com or by phone at 972-955-2756. Sandra thanks each of the following for giving permission to share their comments and kind words in this article: Kate Howell, Cortney Dickmann, Don and Christine Pan Beisert, Janis Brown and, of course, all of the beloved Greyhounds.

In Their Own Words: Animal Communicators

Readers share their stories of connecting with their Greyhounds.

Penelope Smith is credited with founding the practice of animal communications in the early 1970s and has since trained many others in methods to link telepathically with pets and other animals. Smith even developed a code of ethics in 1990 for those whom she has trained to offer this unique service, one which admittedly can spark skepticism. More than 130 practitioners worldwide appear in an [online directory](#) that Smith maintains.

In the Spring 2016 issue of Celebrating Greyhounds, we asked readers to share their experiences using animal communicators. Here are their stories.

Jan's Story

I have used pet communicators for my Greyhounds and they have been most helpful, especially when my 13-year-old brood Momma Peace was diagnosed with osteosarcoma in her right wrist.

My first experience with communicators was at the Mountain Hounds event (held annually in Gatlinburg, Tennessee). It is funny, but the three times my Luka had a session with a woman named Jean, as we sat down to begin our talk, Luka threw up. Every time. I wonder if he was freaked out a bit by someone who could talk to him like that.

The bits from the sessions that stick out are that Luka, who is a small male, was

always being mistaken for a girl. He told us it hurts his feelings. He said, "I am small, but mighty." I think of that every time someone says what a pretty girl I have.

Luka also said the trips to Gatlinburg with the winding highways made his tummy queasy. He asked for a few more stops, and asked to get out of my Jeep and to have the window open a bit so he can get some fresh air.

The other communicator I have seen at Mountain Hounds is also a minister. I don't recall her name, but she is there every year. The first time she laid her hands on him, she said, "Oh my, I have never heard of this in a dog. Luka is a generous hound, isn't he? How

is he generous?”

I told her that Luka — every day, all day, without fail — will take mouthfuls of his dog food and drop it on the floor for my wirehaired terrier, Scout. Scout was on a prescription diet and Luka’s food was much more flavorful than Scout’s. Luka would also drop cookies for Scout, knowing that Momma would give Luka another cookie. The woman said dogs are not typically generous, especially with their food. Luka replied, “A generous heart is a happy heart.”

The last time I was at Mountain Hounds, when the minister laid her hands on Luka, she said, “Luka is very sad. You lost someone in your household, didn’t you?”

“Yes, his buddy Scout had passed,” I said. Luka asked for another friend or two. At the time I still had Peace. But his relationship with Peace was more mother and son, not friends.

The animal communicator we saw at Beach Bound Hounds in 2010 told me that

Luka did not like the sand or the water and he wanted to know what we were doing here. I explained that for my 50th birthday I wanted to see the ocean for the first time and I wanted him to share that experience. He asked, “When are we going home?” I asked him about his new sister Peace, and he said that he was trying to tell Peace the rules of the house, but she would not listen.

The best experience I have had with animal communicators was with Latifa from Animals Can Talk. I met her at a Greyhound festival by Shamrock Greyhounds in Louisville, Kentucky. Two of my friends have used her a lot and have been happy with her sessions. Latifa was extremely helpful when Peace got sick.

Peace started limping while I was at Mountain Hounds. I had left her at home with my family as she had just turned 13 years old. I told my brother to give her some pain medications and that I would take her to my veterinarian when I got home.

My regular veterinarian was out of town (he has hundreds of Greyhounds in his practice), so his other veterinarian took X-rays. She said she saw something on the X-rays, but couldn’t say for sure it was cancer. She would show the X-rays to Dr. Wahl and let me know what he said.

I called Latifa and had a session with Peace. Peace said she had cancer. I said, “Wait a minute, Dr. Wahl hasn’t said that yet.”

Her reply: “Does he know what he is doing?”

I said, “Yes, he has seen many hounds with cancer.” I said until he says for sure, I am not making any decisions. We chatted a bit and I said I would call Latifa when we got the diagnosis.

Dr. Wahl eventually thought it was a tendon issue. He reduced her pain meds, told me to avoid stairs and give her a few weeks rest and she would be fine. We were thrilled.

A week or so later, in the time span of a

few hours a large, hard knot appeared on her wrist. She screamed when I touched it. Off to the veterinarian we went. Another set of X-rays was taken and they still did not clearly show cancer, so Dr. Wahl said that since Luka was coming in for a dental in a couple of days, bring Peace and he will do a biopsy.

The biopsy was done and it was cancer. I called Latifa. Peace said, "I told you it was cancer." I said I wanted her to be wrong. She asked if I was going to take her leg off. I said, "No, I would not do that to you." Peace said, "Good, I am ready to go."

By now my brother and I were sobbing. I asked her about the pain and she said it was bad. I asked her if she could stay for a few more days so we could wrap our head around this. Peace asked when she was going to veterinarian. I said I have an appointment for Friday for more X-rays. She said, "Good."

Luka asked if he was going to go, too,

meaning the Bridge. I said, "No, you can't leave me, are you hurting, too?" He said no. I told him he could never leave me. Luka told me that he never will and that we have been together for thousands of years in many forms and we will always be together in one form or another.

I asked Peace what we could do for her, what did she want? I suggested having her aunties come over to say goodbye. She said no. I asked if she wanted Luka in the room when she passed and she said no, but he could come see her after she was gone. She wanted a roasted chicken, so she had that, along with biscuits and gravy, a piece of cherry pie, a piece of pumpkin pie, a hamburger — she ate well that last week.

Peace did request a specific veterinarian technician to be in the room when she passed — the same blonde girl who helped Scout pass.

Peace asked if I was looking at other hounds. When I said yes, both she and Luka said, "Yippee!" She said, "Do it now. Luka can't be alone." She said she had a great life but she was excited to see all her friends from her past life. She said on Friday she will seem



better, but don't cancel the appointment. She is just excited and ready to go.

When we walked her around the house one last time, you would never have known that in less than an hour she would be gone.

The veterinarian technician she requested was already in the room waiting for us. When she offered to give us time alone, I told her Peace wanted her to stay. The technician was so touched.

One of my friends was there at the veterinarian for me and another one came, but was late and disorganized, as usual. Peace had a very peaceful passing. We felt better knowing she was good with this and ready to go.

We called Latifa about a week later. Peace was very busy at the Bridge. She said she would be back to visit and not to move her beds. She also said Scout was back in my room a lot. I asked her how her passing was and she said, "It wasn't great, and you know what

happened," meaning my friend who was late. She said, "It was what it was," and that she had a great life.

Latifa gave my family so much comfort in this awful time. I have used her on my new Greyhound Carter, who would scream every time he was approached with his collar. He told Latifa that his neck and shoulder hurt. Latifa said it felt like a pinched nerve in his neck and recommended we take him to a chiropractor. She was spot on. The veterinarian found stiffness in his back, shoulder, neck, and jaw. He goes for treatments a few times a year.

She also told me that Luka was having back pain and she was right again. He was actually having back spasms at the time of his first visit. Since he turned 11 in May, he goes now to the chiropractor every couple of months or so.

Oh, one last story. The last night at Beach Bound Hounds (an event in South Carolina), Luka was exhausted, so I left him in the hotel

room with the television and lights on. He didn't move when I went to the door. A couple of hours later, I got off the elevator and I could hear Luka screaming. My room was at the very end of the hall. When I went inside, he screamed at me for about 10 seconds, and then jumped on the bed and fell asleep. I promised Luka I would never leave him alone in a hotel room by himself again. I thought it was because he was scared.

I found out from Latifa that he wasn't scared for himself, he was scared for me. If he isn't with me, he can't protect me. I asked Luka about the trips we were taking this year to GEM (Greyhound Event of Michigan) and Mountain Hounds. He will be 11 and I think they are getting to be a little too much for him. He asked if we could stay in the hotel room more and do less walking, as the trips were interrupting his naps. I said, "No, we go to do things, not stay in the room." He asked

if he stayed home, who would take care of him? I told him my mom and brother. He said to ask him again closer to the time we go.

I will be talking to Latifa soon, and most likely leaving Luka at home and taking Carter, who is 4 and still sees everything as fun, his words. And Carter told me that he plays with Scout a lot, and that Scout brings a little boy with him. Sometimes Carter is barking when he plays, and we say Scout must be playing with Carter again.

Sorry to ramble, but I have had such good experiences with pet communicators, and they have helped me make my bond stronger with my hounds.

Deanna's Story

I wanted to share my experiences with having a pet communicator read my dogs. I, too, was somewhat skeptical, but I've had three different readings with two different women over two and one-half years, and found true commonalities among them. This has made me and my husband true believers.

The most interesting thing for me was that my 8-year-old male, Jax, is always the one who can't wait to start sharing. He's ready and waiting for the opportunity. It's a stark contrast to his more reserved personality in public; he likes to be at our side, taking his time and taking things slow. Our sessions revealed he prefers shorter walks and likes a change in routine when we walk. He also "needs to run like he needs to breathe," affirming the smile we see in his eyes after a run is because it's so much fun

for him. He also considers himself a "daddy's boy," something we can easily see.

Our female, Bella, doesn't share information as readily, which is a contrast to her outgoing personality in public. She likes to be the leader of the pack, especially when we walk with other dogs, investigate, and move on to the next thing to investigate. She's the one who would take the same route on a walk every day if we let her. What we found out from her is that she is really proud of how Jax turned out, and has taken on the role of a "mother" to him.

We had Bella first, and Jax was our second hound. Bella's personality changed after we added Jax to our family. She initially played with toys and would zip around the back yard. We would play tag, and she would finish a zoomie by digging a hole.

That all changed after we got Jax, and it's rare to see her play or run anymore. She

considers herself a “momma’s girl” and really enjoys the understated clothes and accessories that distinguish her as a female.

Both of my dogs are therapy dogs through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. We learned they both really enjoy that work, but have also learned where we can make adjustments to make them happier while doing it. Jax doesn’t like lingering in hospital rooms very long because of the strange smells, but has no worries about his safety around wheel chairs, etc., because he trusts we will watch out for him. Bella would really like to be around kids more, so long as they aren’t always “buzzing around like bees.”

So far, our communications have been used to affirm our hounds are happy; we’ve been told they know we love them and they love us.



Jax and Bella have visited two different animal communicators over the years, with the resulting information turning their owners into true believers.

I have used two communicators to help with my cats when they became ill, and one was transitioning to the end of her life. Those were moving sessions that

bring me to tears every time I think of them.

Thank you for asking us to share our stories!



You're Invited

October 6-8, 2016

Greyhounds Reach the Beach

Dewey Beach, Delaware

Greyhounds Reach the Beach completed its 21st year of celebrating Greyhounds and Greyhound adoption in October 2015. The event brings friends together with their hounds in the seaside communities of Dewey Beach and Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, on Columbus Day weekend every year. The event features top speakers from the Greyhound and sighthound world, including behaviorists, veterinarians, counselors, adoption professionals, and international breed experts. It also features small group seminars on everything from dealing with

the grief of losing a pet or the importance of Greyhound blood donations to the work of the volunteers at Scooby in Spain. The event features more than 50 vendors in many locations in the Dewey Beach and Rehoboth Beach area along with food, special events, an ice cream social for the hounds, and more.

www.grtb.org

admin@grtb.org

April 27-30, 2017

Greyhounds In Gettysburg

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Greyhounds in Gettysburg, or GiG as it is affectionately called, started in 1998. In 2003, [Triangle Greyhound Society](#) took over and created the event we know today.

In 2013, the event was handed over to a local Pennsylvania adoption group, [Nittany Greyhounds](#), where the event moved indoors and has become the largest Greyhound reunion in the country! All of the proceeds from GiG benefit Greyhound adoption and education efforts. No member of the planning committee or Nittany Greyhounds organization receives any compensation. Online registration for Greyhounds in Gettysburg 2017 begins on January 15, 2017.

www.greyhoundsingettysburg.org

gig@nittanygreys.org

IN MEMORIAM



Poppy (Most Popular)

Poppy passed away Sept. 13, 2016, at age 12. Poppy was a high-prey-drive Greyhound who eventually mellowed (as recounted in *Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine* in 2013), leading to a long career as a Meet and Greet ambassador

for Mid-South Greyhound Adoption Option. He was known for his extraordinarily expressive ears, sweet disposition, and atypical ability to shed. He ran more than 100 races in his career, which began in Iowa and culminated in Arkansas. Poppy will be missed by owners David and Barb Williams of Memphis, Tennessee. ■



Salisbury

Salisbury was born on Dec. 27, 2001, and was adopted by Henry Townsend and family on Nov. 22, 2003. He died on June 14, 2016. He was, of course, quite old, but the proximate cause

of his death was inoperable bladder cancer. Salisbury was featured on page 40 of the Spring 2011 issue of *Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine*. He was also featured in the article "Gigi and Salisbury Star with the Washington Ballet" in the Winter 2013 issue. Salisbury was the Townsends' first and probably only dog, and they said they will miss him terribly. ■



The Greyhound Health Initiative is uniquely dedicated to improving the health of sighthounds through education, research, and accessibility to proper diagnosis and treatment.

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- FREE flea, tick and heartworm preventatives;
- The knowledge that you are saving another dog's life!

We are happy to announce that we opened our **Canine Blood Bank** in Dublin, OH in June to provide a lifesaving service to veterinarians all across the country. And because our donors are mostly Greyhounds,



Dr. Guillermo Couto, DVM, President

it also allows us to keep a library of blood samples for both current and future research projects.

We are very excited to bring this service to the veterinary community, to be able to assist all breeds while focusing on our mission to improve sighthound health.

Veterinarians looking for canine blood products can go to www.GreyhoundHealthInitiative.org/nonprofit-blood-bank/ or call 800-416-5156 Ext. 1.

People who live within driving distance to Dublin, OH and are interested in signing up their dog(s) as **blood donors** can go to www.GreyhoundHealthInitiative.org/blood-bank/ or call 800-416-5156 Ext. 1.

Find out more at GreyhoundHealthInitiative.org and Like us on Facebook for regular updates.

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