

# VGSR *Tails*

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**C**an you believe it—the long awaited and long overdue Virginia German Shepherd Rescue newsletter has finally arrived! It amazes me to think that we have just celebrated our fourth birthday. In those four years we have come a long way and we have been busy, busy, busy! To date, we have adopted out

approximately 800 dogs. Just stop and think about that for a minute and try to visualize 800 dogs. Pretty mind boggling, eh?

Last year we took in a little mixed shepherd puppy named Gator, along with his mom, Allie (who recently got adopted!) and soon after he arrived at VGSR, Gator became critically ill.

He needed surgery and ended up having one of his kidneys removed. We ran a special fund raising campaign, named very appropriately “Gator-Aid” and we would like to thank all of the folks who responded to our request for donations to help this very special little guy. He is adopted, happy, healthy and doing quite well these days.



Our reunion last fall was well attended and for the first time we encouraged folks to step up the microphone and introduce themselves, along with their adopted dog (or in some cases, dogs). The reunion enables the volunteers who are kind enough to open their hearts and homes to a foster dog to be reunited with many of their previous house-guests. It does our hearts good to see these beautiful dogs with their loving families. Our first rescued dog, Sable (who you see as our logo on our website, brochures, business cards, etc.) came all the way from her new home in NC to attend the reunion. Sable has made an appearance at all three reunions so far. I will always fondly remember the words that Sable's new dad said when they adopted her from

us: “The only way she will ever leave us is when God decides to take her” That brings a tear to my eye every time I think about it. Thanks, Sandra and Emmett, for giving our very first rescue dog such a special home. We would love to have your input about demonstrations, games, contests, anything at all, that you would like to see us include at the next reunion in October.

Our first annual Bow Wow Boogie was a tremendous success. We wore our blue jeans and cowboy hats, danced with our dogs to tunes spun by a DJ, ate lots of delicious food and scrumptious desserts and bid on some fabulous items that were donated to the silent auction. Everyone who came had such a good time and they are all asking when we are going to hold another BWB. Our second annual Bow Wow Boogie is scheduled for September 17th.

We also held our first Bowl-A-Thon in Annandale in March. Many thanks go out to Glenda DaCosta and her entire family for who helped pull off this fun and successful event. I had not been bowling since 1991, so you can just imagine just how well I bowled. In spite of my pitiful scores, I still had a great time.

You may have noticed that we have a new feature on our web site – Willy the wicked web weasel and Glenda combined their efforts and made it possible for us to receive donations via

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Paypal on our web site. Using Paypal to donate to VGSR or to sponsor a dog is very easy to do and a terrific way to help out our organization. Please visit the web site for detailed information regarding Paypal donations.

Also, please join me in congratulating our newly elected Vice-President, Barbara Dodge. Our new board of directors includes Beth Kilmer, Glenda DaCosta and Eckard Holdorf. We are privileged and delighted to have these fine folks lend their support to our organization.

Lastly, to those of you that stay in touch with cards, letters, photos and emails, thank you all SO very much. When you are having a rough day in rescue, and then all of the sudden you receive a beautiful photo of a dog that you placed, or kind words from someone who is thrilled with their rescue dog, it is such boost for the morale. We very much appreciate you taking the trouble to stay in touch with us.

Yours in GSDs and rescue,

*Lea*

### Upcoming Events.

**The Second Annual Bow Wow Boogie will be held in Sterling at Patton Hall at the Cascades Volunteer Fire Department on 9/17/05 from 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. This is a western dance to which you can come and bring your dog! So dust off your cowboy hat and boots, grab your dog, and come on out for an evening of fun. There will be a buffet dinner, cash bar, silent auction, raffles and, of course, dancing. For tickets or information, please email [maryanne@shepherdrescue.org](mailto:maryanne@shepherdrescue.org) or call 703-435-2840 and press 8.**

**The fourth annual VGSR reunion will be held on Saturday, October 22nd. If anyone who adopted a dog from us does not receive a reunion invitation by 10/8/05, please let us know.**

## THE DAY I ALMOST RESIGNED FROM RESCUE . . .

. . . and Georgy, the Dog that Almost Caused it to Happen!

Please note: There is some graphic, but humorous content in this article. Those with queasy stomachs have been forewarned!

Several months ago we were contacted by the Prince Georges County, MD, animal control about a dog they had impounded from what was certainly a neglectful and most likely an abusive home. They told us that she was very sweet and got along well with other dogs in spite of her poor physical condition. Her new foster parents, Bob and Alice decided to name her Georgy Girl since she came from PG County. Georgy came to us looking pretty rough—her coat was dull, thin and felt like straw. Her poor tail had very little hair on it, her ribs were sunken in and her backbone protruded out horribly. One of her ears was half missing, and the other one did not look so great either. She walked funny too. Later, an x-ray revealed that her right rear leg and been broken and never fixed, so it healed on its own and ended up being slightly shorter than her left rear leg. She was quite a pitiful sight indeed. She had been staying with Bob and Alice for a couple of days when she decided it would be fun to try dismantling their cat, so we decided that Georgy would come to Sterling to stay here as my foster dog.

When we arrived at my house, I did not take any extra precautions introducing her to the rest of the pack since we were told that she got along fine with other dogs. Well, Georgy's first order of business was to open a big gash on the forehead of my sweet foster boy, Tacoma, who had done absolutely nothing to deserve the injury that Georgy inflicted upon his handsome head. So, we decided to isolate Queen George in our aquarium room, away from all of the other dogs. Now Georgy's second order of busi-

ness was to lay waste to the aquarium room, starting with the curtains and Venetian blinds. She went quite berserk when she could not get to us. This called for Plan B, which was to put a soft muzzle on her and bring her back out of solitary and back into the general population. After trying (unsuccessfully, thank goodness) to remove the muzzle (the only thing that kept her from shredding the other dogs into tasty, bite-sized morsels), she finally resigned herself to wearing the muzzle and settled down for a nap. Since there had been so much commotion going on I had neglected (bad, bad Lea) to get a VGSR tag attached to her collar before I went to bed that night.

It was around 5:30 the following morning when we woke up to discover that at some point during the night our sliding glass door had been pushed open and Georgy had vanished. Hoping against hope that I would find her curled up in the aquarium room, (yeah, I know, fat chance) I entered the room to look for her. What I found instead (and here is the point where things get rather graphic and those of you with queasy stomachs or delicate systems should stop reading right now!) was a puddle of completely liquid diarrhea about the size of a very large turkey platter. And here's the even better news...that was the smaller of the two puddles. So, here I am, sick with worry about a dog who is running loose, wearing a muzzle, with no ID tags (bad, bad Lea) and heading back into the living room with two large garbage bags filled with the foul stench of watery poo, only to walk directly into the middle of a large pile of still warm dog vomit that was now squished between the toes of my bare feet. At this point, things were seemingly too much for me to bear. I had flashbacks of the six weeks that it took

*(continued on page 5)*

## DAKOTA'S CONTINUING ADVENTURES

From the beginning, we knew we had an exceptionally good pup, but the first few weeks were still difficult for everyone. Dakota had to adjust to new rules, figure out house training and work out a relationship with the cats. Our independence was just a memory as we experienced a transition period that we'd smugly discounted. Our beloved cats went into exile on the other side of the baby gate and we missed them. We were on-edge and the root of our problems was jumping up on us again and trying to gnaw on the couch.

Being the smart German Shepherd that he is, Dakota learned the house rules very quickly; the rest of us took a little longer to adjust to our new life. Nonetheless, we worked hard to be good parents and within a few weeks our lives started to level out. We tried to be consistent with discipline and always find the fun in every day. We spent a lot of time socializing him and praised good behavior whenever we saw it. About a month after we adopted him, our cats re-emerged and in the coming weeks they gradually rejoined the newly expanded family. They even began to share the back yard during playtime, much to our shock. Dakota had become part of the family.

After a few months, we began to joke that we were living with a "Rock Star." Initially shunned at the dog park, he quickly learned to play with the other dogs and was soon the life of the party. At the pet stores we were frequently surrounded by people raving about our beautiful dog and complimenting his good nature. Dakota breezed through his tests to earn his AKC Canine Good Citizenship Certificate and become a TDI Certified Therapy Dog. We couldn't believe our good fortune to have found such a perfect dog (Thank you, Brenda!).

Then one cold and blustery Monday morning in December, we received a heart-stopping phone call. Dakota was injured and missing. Hoping to prepare him for the week we would be gone for Christmas, we had left him at the kennel that morning to give him a one night "trial run" at the place he'd be boarding over the holiday. An hour after being dropped off, Dakota hopped their six-foot fence and headed for home. He was hit by a car when he crossed a busy street, and ran away at top speed. We immediately left our jobs and began a search that would stretch on for days. The dog we didn't know what to do with a few months before had become one we couldn't imagine living without.

Word spread quickly and in no time, volunteers from VGSR, the local dog parks, and our Hampton Roads Pet Therapy group had joined us, searching late into the night. The response was amazing. Brenda, Dakota's foster mom, called local clinics and shelters for us. Gail, VGSR volunteer and our Therapy dog mentor, rallied the troops and had people out searching within an hour of hearing the news. Natalie logged almost as many hours as we did and Arlene, who had done our home visit, joined us as soon as she got

off work. Countless others called or emailed with encouragement and advice. Wednesday, a local television station even picked up his story for the evening news.

After four miserable days with only two reported sightings, our prayers were finally answered on Friday morning when Natalie spotted him inside the fence of a local country club. Her call was followed by one from a country club staffer who recognized Dakota from the hundreds of flyers we had posted. Twenty nerve-racking minutes (and countless broken traffic laws) later, we had our boy. Dakota was tired and disoriented, with a large wound on his front paw that went to the bone, but he was alive. After a few teary minutes he was loaded into Gail's van for the drive to the vet. The worst was finally over.




As we reflect on the time since Dakota joined our family, it's hard to comprehend how much our lives have changed. If adjusting to a 70 pound, six month old "pupster" was more difficult than we'd expected, the devotion of the VGSR family was more than we could have believed. When you adopt a German Shepherd through VGSR, a new best friend is just the beginning. You also enter a community of the most genuine, caring and generous beings on the planet. Dakota will soon be back to work as a therapy dog, working with people of all ages.

It's impossible to know how many lives he has touched with his special joy, but we realize that every day is a gift and we look forward to a long, happy and *uneventful* future as our adventure together continues.

*Bradd and Deidre Anderson*



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KATHY MINNICK, OWNER

## THANK YOU!

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations—

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 Bronco, from Paul and Laura Simon  
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***Our sincerest thanks to all!***

## The Day I Almost Resigned-continued

us to capture Moochie when he had escaped years ago. So, I just had a complete sobbing breakdown right while in the midst of standing in the puke puddle. This, I thought, was my sign from God that it was time to resign from this rescue nonsense and get my regular life back.

So, after finally finding two shoes that had not been eaten by dogs, two mismatched gloves and a very warm winter coat, I trudged out into the cold (12 degrees) darkness to look for Georgy. The icy rain falling down in sheets made it all that more pleasant too. I started walking toward the school that is at the end of our street and, lo and behold, I saw what I *thought* was a dog jumping over our fence and back *into* our yard. Could it be? Running back home, I found Georgy (still wearing the muzzle) waiting by our sun porch. She was soaked to the skin, cold, very scared and only too happy to come back inside to the warmth of our house. The poor thing looked so pitiful that we decided to

give her another chance and have her around the other dogs without the muzzle. She must have had a revelation when she was out in the cold, dark rain, because she has been fine with the other dogs ever since.

Now Georgy's coat is thick, shiny and oh so soft. The hair on her tail has come back and is lush and full. She has probably gained around twenty pounds and she is quite beautiful—at least to us anyway. She will still open the sliding glass door and jump the fence to get to her beloved, my partner John, so we have all gotten into the habit of putting a stick in the door track to keep her from any unauthorized walk-about.

Guess how this story ends...we are going to formally adopt this crazy, beautiful, devoted dog. Who would have thunk it? And I guess that I won't resign from rescue just yet.

Lea

## ON GOOD BEHAVIOR . . .

[The following is a response to an owner whose dog was having issues at dog parks. The suggestions are relevant to anyone who frequents these parks.]

Your problem is VERY common and there are three relevant issues: breed, age and the problems with dog parks.

Every dog owner needs to consider the tasks for which their dog's breed was developed. Though we are capable of training our dogs to do many things, most are driven by an instinct that can override their training. Hounds were bred to chase game. Herding dogs were bred to nip at the heels of sheep. "Pit bull" type dogs were bred to fight one another. As well trained as Pit Bulls can be, the owner needs to keep them out of situations in which they might lose self-control and give in to instinct. If attacked or otherwise provoked, your dog could well retreat into a "best defense is a good offense" mindset and tear another dog apart. I've seen my very, very sweet Akita do it on a number of occasions and it is frightening. He is momentarily altered—a snarling, spitting nasty animal who I don't recognize. Moments later, he is calm and a bit confused about what happened, and he becomes much more reactive to all other dogs. Any onlooker would testify that my dog (or yours) was the aggressor, even if he didn't start the altercation. And yes, you will have to pay and the dog may be euthanized. BTW—your dog's seemingly sudden onset is actually quite normal: Pit Bulls tend to reach their full aggressive maturity around three years of age.

All aggressive breed dogs (my favorites, BTW) tend to be concerned with pack order and dominance. They read body language, they challenge one another, they scuffle for top position. Even their playing style reflects this—they get

on their hind legs, they box, they hump—and while they 'can' do these things without becoming violent, the owner needs to recognize that this is a dominance game. If the playmate makes a defensively aggressive move, a fight could start quickly. That's *not* to say that aggressive dogs can't play together well, but they need a strong human leader and strict rules. At the dog park, I don't let my dogs get on their hind legs, box or hump, and I stay close and maintain verbal contact. Also, I only let them play one-on-one so there is much less of a chance of misreading body language or a dog getting overwhelmed. They are not allowed to greet other dogs at the gate—they come to me and I hold their collars until the new dog is integrated into the pack. And my dogs are called to me immediately when a fight breaks out among anyone in the park, and they stay with me until there is peace again. We work on "come" a lot at the park (with bacon treats).

Dog parks are tough places for many dogs to understand, but most especially aggressive breeds. There is an ever-changing pack so there are constant struggles for dominance. Many people let their dogs storm newcomers at the gate, which makes the incoming dog defensive. There are large group gallops, which often turn into pack hunting expeditions. To a happy-go-lucky golden retriever, this is not a problem. But to an aggressive breed dog that needs to know who the lead dog is, and who will always defend if attacked, this is kind of a nightmare. And your nightmare is that many of the owners don't know their dogs' behavior well enough to anticipate and curb it. So if you choose to go to a dog park, you are responsible for read-

(continued on page 7)

## FROM THE VGSR MAILBOX:

Dear Sue,

It has been a year since you helped me find a new home, and I just wanted to update you and all of VGSR on my new life.

This past year has been a blast!! I went to live with my new Mom and Dad in Northern VA last Feb. I now have my own bed (3 beds really, there is one on each floor of the house), my own crate (which I actually like, it is a great place to go rest after a busy day), a nice backyard to run and play in, not to mention tons of toys and bones. I have big sister "Lilly," another GSD, and the best brother a boy could ever have in "Bubba," my Rotti playmate. Bubba and I play tug of war, tag and WWF. Dad loves to get on the floor and wrestle with us. I also have a cat brother "Mozart." He is sooo much fun to chase, but I am also learning he can be great to cuddle with, too. When I first came home, Dad said "no sleeping on the bed," but I figured if the cat was allowed, why not me? After months of coaxing, Dad lets me snuggle in bed on the weekends. Weekdays I sleep on my bed with Bubba. Mom says we all need our sleep for work during the week, and since I get to go with Mom to her office, I guess I need my rest too.

Although Mommy works at a Vet clinic, it can be a lot of fun to go to work. The techs and doctors give me treats all the time, and I get to go for walks when I am not busy greeting the clients. I don't understand why some dogs don't like to go to the vet. I try to tell the other dogs how much fun it is when they come in, but I don't think they believe me.

I am sorry we didn't make it to the reunion in Oct., but a lot was happening to our family that month. The best thing ever happened that week: Mom and Dad brought home my new little sister Leah. I didn't like that Mommy was gone for 3 days, but baby Leah was worth the wait. Mom lets me help with her all the time. When ever Leah cries, I run up and down the stairs till Mom or Dad goes to get her. I make sure they know when she is crying. I don't like it when baby is upset; it makes me very sad. Dad says I am better than any baby monitor they could ever buy. I get to lick her face clean when she eats or drools (I can't wait till she starts eating real food!). I love to do things to make Leah laugh. I will lay in front of the play pen and bark and talk to her till she smiles back, which she does all the time now. I do a sniff check of her diaper—this way everyone

knows when it is time to change the baby. I even help out with bath time. I like to hang my head over the side of the tub to make sure they are doing everything right. This past week my little sis has become fascinated with my big Shepherd ears, and likes to grab them and try to stick them in her mouth. I really don't mind. I just lay there till she is done sucking on them. When she gets teeth, we may have to stop playing this game. I used get up with Mom in the middle of the night to feed Leah, but after nearly 4 months,

I think they know what they are doing, so I am turning the mid-night duties back over to Mom and Dad. I miss my sleep. Mom tells people all the time that she is amazed at how good, calm and protective I am with the baby. Well, duh Mom...I am a German Shepherd—we were made to take care of our flock. What did she expect?

I better go now, I hear the baby waking up, and Dad said we could go to the dog park once everyone woke up from their naps (Bubba

and Lilly are napping too, I wore them out running around the yard this morning). I hope to see you soon, and thank you again for my new family. I hope that all the dogs in VGSR get to go to a home with siblings, the 4-legged and 2-legged kind. I am so glad that there people out there that want to rescue GSDs like me. We make great playmates, and baby entertainers...just ask my family, they will tell you how great it is to have a VGSR dog!!

Happy wagging tails,

*London*



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## On Good Behavior-continued

ing every dog there, because there are possible repercussions with your dog. This is another reason I hold onto my dogs when a new dog enters—I want to see their breed, sex, neuter and attitude, and I want to see the attentiveness of their owner. I actually had a man yell at me once because I opted to put one of my dogs back on leash. He had brought in an intact female sharpei who was silently challenging every dog in the park. She would look for the other dog to back down and then move on to the next one. Her owner didn't know or care what she was doing, but I knew that when she challenged my Akita he would respond with dominance. I opted to protect my dog from the impending fight, and the man yelled at me for insinuating something about his dog. But I preferred the yelling to dealing with a fight and the legal aftermath.

So here are my recommendations for keeping your dog safe.

- I'm assuming your dog is neutered; if not, get it done ASAP.
- Rather than going to the park, can you form playgroups with a few other dogs? Limiting your dog to one-on-one play with dogs who he has solid relationships with can give him the socialization he needs in safety.
- If you *\*must\** go to the dog park:
  - Spend a lot of time learning your dog's body language and seeing how he reacts to other dogs' body language. And learn to read the body language of other dogs that your dog does not like—help him to steer clear of interaction with them.
  - Don't let him get on the backs of other dogs, and look for equal play. Is there a good exchange of energy? When your dog knocks the other down, does that dog jump up and come back for more? If not, get your dog to tone it down a bit. By helping him to read these cues and act appropriately, you're insuring that he'll stay relatively social with other dogs. What you want to see, ideally, is a pair of dogs who are playing without dominant behavior and who frequently do little play bows to invite the fun to continue.
  - Teach your dog a solid "COME" and make him come when 1) another dog enters, 2) a fight breaks out, or 3) he is playing too rough and needs a timeout. Make coming to you a safe and fun thing to do at anytime—give him VERY yummy treats, praise him excessively, and protect him. Keep other dogs away while he's in your little cone of safety (about 3ft around you) and he'll learn that you are the boss and he never has to fight for himself.
  - Be prepared to break up a dog fight. Never reach for the collars, but grab hind legs or the tail at the base and move backwards quickly. Be close enough and quick enough that no one else needs to touch your

dog—the true danger at the dog park is when another person interferes in a dog fight and gets bitten by your dog because they don't know how to deal with a fight properly. Then you suddenly have a pit bull with a history of "biting people" even though that was likely the LAST thing he meant to do.

*Claire Liston,  
Co-Founder of GoodDogz.org*

## LEGACY, PART II

I wrote once before about leaving a legacy for our children as they become involved in the Rescue and included a story my daughter, Carolena, had written about finding dogs and turning them over to rescues.

Tonight I found a paper that must have been prompted by the teacher asking the students to write about a future job/business the student might have. What follows is Carolena's article which did my heart good because not only does she have some fantastic ideas, but it shows that she shares my passion for dogs now and in her future adult years! I don't know about you, but I would definitely board my dogs here!

*Sue Garrison*

### "WELCOME TO DOG PARADISE"

My dog kennel wouldn't be normal, it would have different things than other kennels. The kennel would have a beach, lots of dog runs and little huts for them to stay in.

It would have a beach where the dogs could go swimming. The beach would be the biggest beach that you will ever see and it would have a fence around it.

There would be seven dog runs outside for them to play in all day long. Inside there would be five dog runs for the dogs to play in when the weather is bad outside.

The dogs would stay in their own huts according to their size. The huts would have air conditioning so the dogs can stay cool and relax. In the huts there would be beds and a little TV for them to watch.

I think the kennel would make me rich and famous because it would not be expensive and many people will bring their dogs. It would not cost much to run either.

*Carolena Garrison*



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