

# VGSR *Tails*

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

So how about these dog days of summer? I hope that everyone and their big hairy dogs found ways to stay cool during the heat wave that seemed to be never-ending this summer. Our gang spent lots of time splashing around in the water

at Sugarland Run down near the Potomac River. Please be sure to keep an eye on your precious pooch during the heat. Take your walks during the early morning or evening hours and try to avoid that dangerous noontime sun. The first two signs of canine heat exhaustion are excessive panting and the skin inside of the ears looking red or flushed. If you notice these symptoms, get your dog out the heat immediately and take action to cool your dog down.

VGSR has been plugging along, steadily placing dogs. As most of you know, we have been working hard to make life easier for Mickie D, the dog who came to us walking (as best he could) practically on his elbows. It has been an arduous task, but his foster moms, Sheila and Helga (Helga the healer strikes again!) have helped him make tremendous progress. And THANKS to all of the folks who have so generously donated toward his cause. Our other special boy is Taz, the black GSD puppy who has turned out to be an orthopedic nightmare. Taz does not even have a hip socket on the right and his left hip is severely dysplastic. When Taz came to us from the shelter, he was bone skinny and could only walk a couple of steps at a time without toppling over. He spent long hours in the crate at his original home, so his muscles were also atrophied from lack of exercise. Since Taz came to VGSR he has gained about 20 pounds and can now



run (although it isn't pretty) and he loves to play with other dogs. He was seen by an orthopedic specialist and is scheduled to have a total left hip replacement in the near future. Many rescues would have euthanized Taz due to the severity of his condition, but if you met him you would know in an instant why we are making every effort to make him whole. He is truly one of the sweetest, kindest dogs you would ever want to meet.

One of our alumni, Yogi (formerly known as Ace), who owns John and Nancy Streeter, has been working his wagging tail off to help victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault and child abuse at the Shenandoah Women's Center. Yogi also served as a Disaster Mental Health Worker for the American Red Cross. The Streeters and Yogi worked for 15 days of 12-14 hour shifts giving comfort to 350 Katrina evacuees last year. According to the Jefferson-Morgan County Red Cross, they think this was the first time that the Red Cross has used a therapy dog (paired with a licensed professional counselor) as their own volunteer in a mass-care setting. The Streeters and Yogi stayed one extra day since they were invited to the wedding of two evacuees. Yogi served an important role comforting the folks who had lost their own pets to this horrible tragedy. We plan to feature an entire article about Yogi and

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Virginia German Shepherd Rescue,  
Inc.  
P.O. Box 126  
Sterling, VA 20167  
(703) 435-2840

www.shepherdrescue.org  
e-mail: contact@shepherdrescue.org

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Newsletter contributions  
are always welcome. Please send  
your articles and photos to  
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## From the President-continued

his good works in an upcoming newsletter. John Streater sent us a wonderful letter and some photos of Yogi in action. Here is a quote from his letter: "I am relating this to you because I want you to realize the importance of the work that you do, that just by saving Yogi's life you have given the gift of healing to hundreds of people." Wow—doesn't that bring a tear to your eye? And it makes me SO proud to be a part of VGSR.

So, on that note, please know how very much we appreciate your continued support. Without your generosity we would not be able to do what we do. As you can see, some of these dogs are now saving people. What a wonderful circle of life!

Lea

### Desperately seeking...

Susan, or John, or George, or Debbie to foster our dogs for us. Pay is minimal but you get back 10-fold of what you put into it. Call 703 435-2840.

## Upcoming Events

**Fifth Annual VGSR Reunion  
October 15th  
—save the date!—**

**Please check the web site for adoption day locations, any last-minute changes to the schedule, as well as additional news and events.**

## THE LEGEND OF THE 36 HIDDEN SAINTS

There's an old Jewish legend that states that the world continues to spin on its axis because at any time, there are 36 good people alive in the world. They are not famous people, like Mother Theresa or Nelson Mandela, not winners of prizes or recipients of humanitarian awards. They are ordinary people, going about their business with conscience and compassion. When one dies, another silently steps into the vacant place. These are the 36 hidden saints.

These hidden saints don't know who they are, and we don't either. Not one of them wears a halo. You wouldn't know one if you saw one. But when I think of all the people in the Rescue community, I'm sure that several of the hidden saints are among us.

For example, there's a vet that I know well, and used often. I owe him tons of money, but he never complained about the number of dogs that I brought through his office. If he charged the full price for everything he does for the dogs, I could never have afforded him. But he gave the rescued dogs free heartworm meds from his stock of samples, took hip x-rays without charge, and spent just a little extra time with every lonesome, abandoned animal that fate tossed up on his doorstep. I'm not going to name him, but I know he's out there. I am convinced he's one of the hidden saints.

There's a woman who devotes her life to transporting the dogs. She doesn't sleep until she's sure that every pup has a safe place to go, and a safe way to get there. She is trying to train other

people to take over the transport arrangements, because someday she'd like to take a vacation that doesn't involve moving a dog. But until that happens, she goes on, day after day. Other people call her prickly and stubborn. And I think that she's a hidden saint too.

Think about the people you've met recently: the foster parents who spend their own money on treats and toys for their foster animals; the shelter tech who spends just a few extra moments with all of her animals, so that they know kindness comes with a human's touch. Think about the volunteers who spend hours on the phone, talking with strangers to help and advise them. Remember the trainers and kennel owners who are in the business not just to make money but because they love the animals.

I'm not saying that everyone in Rescue is some kind of a saint. Most of us aren't. We are too self-conscious, too tired, too angry, just too darned busy, too something or other. There are people who use Rescue as a reflection of their self-worth, and other people who use animals and other people as pawns in a personal power game. But when you meet someone who is just quietly going about his or own business, not expecting any accolades or rewards beyond the occasional "thank you" from a new owner or lick of the hand from a happy dog, you have probably met one of the 36 hidden saints. Look for them; they are out there. You might be one too.

Risa Lapidow

## RUNNING FOR THE SHEPHERDS

On October 29, 2006, Susan Lynch, VGSR volunteer, will be running the Marine Corps Marathon to benefit VGSR. You can sponsor Susan on a per-mile basis or with a flat donation. Please send your check, made out to VGSR, to P.O. Box 126, Sterling, VA 20167, and make sure to note that it's for this worthwhile sponsorship.

*Best of luck, Susan!*

## A NEW NAME . . . A NEW BEGINNING

In November 2000, I heard about Remington via my girlfriend Sheryl, a vet tech in a suburban Atlanta animal hospital. Someone had brought Remington in for treatment. However, it was not his owner. This person had witnessed Remington running free near a shopping mall, and then getting hit by a car! The good Samaritan drove up next to the dog, opened the car door to see if he was OK, and Remington jumped up inside! The good Samaritan quickly headed to the nearest animal hospital.

Remington was sedated and treated, no broken bones, thank goodness, and was placed in a dog run to recover—and to see if his owner could be found. It was a typical chain link run, approximately 6' x 4' x 6', and when Remington awoke, he was not happy about his new surroundings. Anyone and everyone who passed his run got the impression that he would quickly and cleanly take off an arm, if they dared open the door!

A few of the techs tried to befriend him with sweet talk and treats, but were answered with snarls and fangs. But he had to eat! After a day or two, one of the techs, Dora, had the nerve to crack open the door and quickly slide in a bowl of dog food. And so began his trust in someone!

Over a few days, Dora began entering the run and Remington began to greet her with a wagging tail. He would even offer her his empty bowl as a sign of friendship.

Two weeks went by and no one came to claim him. The animal hospital's policy is that the county animal warden is to be summoned. When the county officer arrived, he took one look at Remington and declared he knew the dog; he had been in the county shelter before, and had actually been adopted about a month ago. He told the techs he would research Remington's records and see if he could contact the fairly new owner.

The next day the warden returned with some bad news. If Remington was the same dog that he thought he was, his owner was dead. Apparently his new owner, a woman, had adopted Remington for protection; her ex-husband was stalking her and she was afraid. It's anyone's guess what happened—the ex-husband scared the dog away, maybe the dog hid, and escaped later. But the woman had been found shot to death.

So no one was coming to get Remington. He had to go back to the county shelter, into another dog run, with strangers looking at him and he would be afraid again. Dora knew he would not present himself well with his crate aggression, probably would not be adoptable and, therefore, would be euthanized. So she planned to adopt him herself and find him a home, even with the protests from her boss, the vet, and co-workers.

On January 15, 2001, we had to put down our 12 y.o. German shepherd, Franzi. Her hips had finally given out and we couldn't stand to watch her suffer anymore. She

had always had such dignity and strength, and we didn't want to see her without either, so we made the decision: it was time. Franzi left behind my husband, Jimmie, a 1 y.o. German shepherd, Avanti, a 12 y.o. Yorkie, Zack, and me. The gloom and emptiness hung over our household for many weeks.



Left—Avanti; Right—Bronson (Remington)

During this period, while on a phone call to Sheryl, she mentioned Remington to me again. She had told me about him when he first came to the shelter back in November, but I had not thought of him since. She filled me in on his progress and mentioned that Dora really needed to find this guy a home; she had 18 dogs in her home that needed placing!

Loosing Franzi was still so fresh. I just didn't know if I could take on another dog, only to have to face this pain again. But the more I thought about Remington, the more selfish I felt. I knew we had room for another dog in our lives. He wouldn't replace Franzi, but he would create his own place and maybe, possibly, fill the void.

So the seed was planted. I mentioned Remington and his intriguing story to my husband and watched for his reaction. I needed to get a reading on whether he was receptive to getting another dog. His response was inquisitive; he wanted to know more about this dog, which I interpreted as positive.

Long-distance conversations with Sheryl and email conversations with Dora produced a plan for a trip down to meet Remington. Atlanta being a good ten-hour drive from Northern Virginia and the complications of having a small horse farm require logistics, even if being away for a short period of time. But the details were worked out and we set a date in early March.

As we neared Atlanta, traffic began to increase and so did the dark clouds. I hoped this was not an ominous sign. I had prayed that I would get my answer upon meeting Remington—that his reaction to us and to Avanti would tell me if he was coming home with us. I was very nervous.

The first part of my prayer was answered there in Sheryl's garage with the rain coming down hard. Remington greeted Jimmie and me in the friendliest manner. He showed no signs of aggression, just curiosity of his new environment and us.

*(continued on page 5)*

## DIARY OF A PROUD FORMER FOSTER MOM! (PART TWO)

This story is dedicated to anyone who ever thought about fostering and what it can do for your pride. In addition, it is dedicated to people who have adopted a dog and feel like they cannot do much with that dog, or cannot show at competition levels.

Many might remember one of my early on fosters named Sassy. Sassy would NOT go potty on a leash and I had my doubts that her adoptive mom Mary would be able to get past that as she lived in a home with no fence. Well I am happy to report that not only did Mary outlast that issue with Sassy (after only 24 hours) but she also brought her into the obedience ring where Sassy earned her CDX title as told in my last story. And now, DRUM ROLL PLEASE, I would like to share the following announcement about my shy, little, withdrawn, non-leash pottyng, former foster dog, Sassy...

"I am so proud to announce that Sassy got her Utility Dog (UD) title at the Dog Owners

Dog show at Howard County. We also received a little prize money for placing third, which paid for the gas up there, and a crystal platter for being the highest scoring German Shepherd Dog. The judge ran through 33 dogs in 4 hours! Sassy was dutifully rewarded with a good bone and snored through the night exhausted from the day. She can finally take a break while I change focus and work on the puppy."

—Mary Denigan

So folks, don't let anyone try to look down at your "rescue dog" because we all now know that any one of our "rescues" can do whatever we want of them. We only but need to ask! Thanks to Mary and Sassy for showing us what can be done if one tries and for making us all even more proud to let the world know that we own "rescue dogs."

Sue Garrison



Sassy (Sassafras AXP, AJP, UD), with proud mom, Mary Denigan, and the trial judge.

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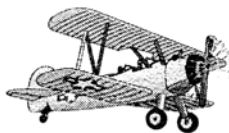
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## A New Name-continued

After a few minutes of getting to know each other, it was time for him to meet Avanti. Avanti was very apprehensive of this big curious guy, but there was no meanness or aggression expressed upon their encounter. Heads and tails held high while the “sniffing out” took place. Playing soon began. Whew! The second part of my prayer was answered. Looks like he was coming home with us!

Remington is now Bronson. Thinking back on how many people thought he needed to be put down because of his crate aggression, he was just so scared. He has no problems in a crate or kennel at all now. He’s a very friendly dog. I hate to say it but he’s more loving than Avanti, who I raised from a pup. Maybe that says something about my parenting skills! Bronson has been with us 5 years today and he has been a Godsend to our family.

*Jacki Jones*

## VGSR’s WISH LIST:

- Crates (large or extra large)
- Postage stamps
- Copy paper (white or colors)
- Dog beds, blankets, towels
- Dog toys, nylabones, greenies, rawhide
- New collars and leashes
- Petsmart, Petco, Walmart or Target (among others) gift cards
- Dog food
- Dog bowls
- Dog shampoo
- Donated printing services

## GIFTS ON THE PATH TO THE GOLDEN YEARS

As the spring morning sun shines on our beloved Justie sleeping on the floor, I notice that her muzzle is developing more grey hairs and her sleep seems deeper than it once did. Justie soon senses that I am looking at her and her eyes open wide revealing that they are beginning to get a bit cloudy. Justie (named after ‘lady justice’) is now almost nine years old. She sleeps more than she plays now, and her gait has slowed and grown stiff. But what hasn’t slowed is her love and devotion to her family. Justie is the protector of our family—she watches over us day and night and reminds us that no matter how hard it is to watch her age, each day along the path to the golden years has been its own special gift.

It all started in the winter of 1997 when we decided that our puppy golden mix, Stacatto, needed a German shepherd friend. A breeder that I knew from grad school in Indiana raised shepherds so I gave her a call and she had a female that would be ready in two weeks. After some unfortunate events with the breeder, we were finally able to bring our Justie home.

Stacatto loved Justie from the very first day. Justie looked up to Stacatto, and even though one day Justie would be twice Stacatto’s size, she would always look to Stacatto for comfort

During Justie’s funloving second year with us, we determined that she had some serious physical challenges. When Justie began limping slightly on her right front leg, we brought her to the vet who referred us to an orthopedist. Justie had severe elbow dysplasia. What’s worse is that while the orthopedist was examining Justie, he noticed that she had a heart murmur (which we had known about since Justie was a puppy). He advised that we have a cardiologist take a look at her. The cardiologist took an ultrasound and diagnosed

Justie with SAS (subaortic stenosis). We were very concerned about our sweet little girl. The good news was that, at that time, the cardiologist did not think that her heart rhythms were sufficiently abnormal to require medicine so he advised us to monitor any changes in the murmur each year.

Justie’s world and our worlds were shaken in the fall of 2004 when Stacatto was diagnosed with canine lymphoma. The last week of Stacatto’s life was hard for all of us—especially Justie. She knew something was gravely wrong as we raced Stacatto upstairs at least twice a day to put him in a cold bath to bring down his cancer-induced fevers. Justie would trot upstairs after us and wait next to the tub, sometimes leaning over the tub to kiss Stacatto’s head.

Later this past spring, Justie began to slow down a little more and pant a little harder. I was concerned about her heart. My suspicions were confirmed that Justie’s SAS had worsened and the cardiologist advocated putting Justie on beta blockers, which we promptly did. Our vet tells us that it has been effective in regulating her heartbeat. In fact, the vet tells us that she is surprised that a dog with Justie’s degree of SAS has lived as long as she has (gulp). The vet attributes her longevity to her dysplastic hips, which have really slowed her down. Well maybe there was some genius to Justie’s genetics after all.

Well not so fast...Justie’s genetics appear to have failed her again. Last fall we noticed that Justie’s toenails were dragging in the back and her legs were crossing under her, giving her that dreaded drunken sailor gait. For Christmas, instead of special dog toys or a case of bones, Justie got a sturdy dog ramp. Now we have a large black ramp jutting out the side of our king size bed. Each night before bed, my

*(continued on page 7)*

## THANK YOU!

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations—

Gary and Jean Lynch  
Elizabeth Roberts  
Shanin Quashie  
Cam Crittenden  
Renee Cooney  
Christa Bedrin  
Craig Collins  
Wendy Dungan  
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### Donations in honor of:

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Ginger #8, from Cat Needham  
Ginger #8, from Cynthia Gilfillan

Ginger #8, from Shaunee Foote  
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from Rick Grossman  
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Mickie-D, from Kidd, Anna & Billy  
Mickie-D, from Clark, Suzanne  
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Ginger #8, from Crittenden, Cam  
Mickie-D, from Damico, Stacey  
Mickie-D, from Demos, Deanna  
Mickie-D, from Karen M. Fitzgerald  
Ginger #8, from Shaunee Foote  
Mickie-D, from Christine Gardner  
Ginger #8, from Cynthia Gilfillan  
Jack Smith, from Terri Halle  
Ginger #8, from Marc Handy  
Mickie-D and Buddy, from Kristi Meardon  
Mickie-D, from Jeff Herbel  
Shadow, from Carla Jones  
Mickie-D, from Lucile Karaman  
Ginger #8, from Loretta Michaels  
Shane, from David Mirkes  
Mickie-D, from Christopher Moseman  
Ginger #8, from Cat Needham  
Rocky #6 and Kallie, from Shanin Quashie

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Mardi & Gras, from Catherine Ruseau  
Mickie-D, from Suzanna Sammons  
Mickie-D, from Mary Sirianne  
Mickie-D, from Sandra Snapp  
Mickie-D, from Anatolly Suslovich  
Mickie-D, from Matthew Thomas  
Mickie-D, from Kelley Van De Ven  
Mickie-D, from Anthony Vaugh  
Mickie-D, from Karen Woolf  
Mickie-D, from Steve Wordham

### Donations in memory of:

Vinny, from Susan and Vincent Pedulla  
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Jack Smith, from Gerald and Kathleen  
Dunne  
Ansel, from Robert and Janette Uffelmann  
Bru Kearney, beloved dog of Alison Kearney, from Mary Ruane  
Baby, from Emmett and Sandra Harlan  
Cheryl Westlund's father, Morris H.  
Horner, from Debra Braden  
Bram, from Kristi Meardon  
Lakota, from Ann Peters  
Blue, from Suzanna Sammons

# Fifth Annual VGSR Reunion!

Save the date—Sunday, October 15th

If you haven't been to one of our reunions, you don't know what you've missed. Don't miss out on this year's fun! All VGSR volunteers, adopters, and their dogs are welcome to attend...and everyone is guaranteed a great time.

### New this year...

We're having a toy swap and flea market! Does your dog have a toy that he doesn't enjoy anymore? Bring your gently used doggy toy to sell or swap with others. *Please note...toys, only!*



Oh...one more thing. If you don't sell or swap the items you bring, you *absolutely, positively* must take it home with you when you leave.

The VGSR Reunion...food, fun, and entertainment for all, including our beloved four-legged friends.

So mark your calendars...invitations will be arriving soon. And start collecting those

unwanted toys to swap or sell!

## THE BED HOG

**W**e don't know much about Dakota's life before VGSR rescued him from the Anne Arundel animal shelter. But everyone who meets him always wonders how anyone could have given him up. He is a wonderful boy!

Mark and I decided about a year ago to bring a dog into our lives. We had learned about VGSR a couple of years earlier but didn't feel like we were ready. Since we both worked long hours it just didn't seem fair for a dog to spend that much time alone. At the end of 2004 I quit working and it

seemed like the time was right for a dog. There were lots of discussions though; Mark is a big dog person and I *was* definitely a small dog person (miniature Dachshunds). After checking out the VGSR website for a couple of months, we went to an adoption event in March. In May, we were ready and took the paperwork home. We visited an adoption event at the PetsMart near Crystal City—Dakota was the first dog we saw. For me, it was definitely a case of love at first sight! We stopped

and spoke with Hilary (his wonderful foster Mom) and then turned in the paperwork and met other dogs and volunteers. We learned that several other families were interested in Dakota but knew that the VGSR would place the right dog in our home. So we left, hoping that Dakota would be ours. The following weekend, Tommie came for a home visit and the next day Hilary, Jon and Dakota came to check us out! Dakota became an Engle on June 15, 2005.

From Dakota's perspective, I'm sure that day was very strange; but for us, it was wonderful. We picked him up after dinner and brought him to his "forever home." (We don't live far from Hilary). He was a little nervous in the car and uncertain about things when we got home. That first night, he ignored his new bed and chose to sleep in the laundry room. Oh, how things have changed!

From the very beginning, Dakota's house manners were impeccable (we give Hilary all the credit) and he pretty quickly figured out that our home was his home. He loves being outside, particularly if someone is throwing a ball or a stick. He probably prefers that Mark do the throwing since I still throw "like a girl!" Despite all his stunning qualities, it seemed like obedience school was high on our list. Mark and I read tons of books and they were very interesting, but I needed one-on-one help! Walking on a leash was a challenge since he is so strong and at this point, he definitely wanted me to think he was in charge! In September Dakota enrolled in Olde Towne School for Dogs. He did beautifully! He has all the basic commands down and walks on a leash with real style! But, I think we probably learned more than he did!



It wasn't long before Dakota had full run of the house...no more baby gates! He's decided that Mark's recliner is quite comfortable, but I'm sure he understands that he's not supposed to be lounging there! He sleeps in our bedroom; he will usually lie down on his bed, then move next to our bed with his head under the dust ruffle before we invite him up. He starts out at the foot of the bed but as the night wears on he becomes quite the bed hog! Although we've never caught it with the camera, he often sleeps on his back with all four feet in the air. It's quite a sight!

Dakota is definitely an integral part of the entire family. My Mom has a pillow that says, "Do you mean my grandchild is a dog?" Dakota fills many roles in our home. Watchdog: he alerts us whenever anyone is near the door, or even thinking about ringing the doorbell! Time Keeper: he lets us know when it is 8:00 pm so we can get his evening "treat." Lover: he gives frequent kisses. Chief Bag Inspector: it doesn't matter what kind of bag you bring into the house, Dakota inspects it. He is particularly diligent with the grocery bags that contain beef or chicken. But most of all, Dakota is the most wonderful companion!

Dakota is a sweet wonderful boy and we love him dearly. Thank you to VGSR for making Dakota a part of our lives.

*Kim Engle*

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### Gifts on the Path-continued

husband carries Justie upstairs and places her in the bed. I recently bought Justie a harness for when we will need it.

On the path to the golden years, Justie has given us many gifts...many tender moments, and many laughs. We truly cherish every day that we have left with our special girl now—kissing her face, nuzzling extra close at night, praising her for every good deed. Justie has taught us just how noble and central a shepherd can be in your life. All shepherds can be noble, devoted, loving beings. What we have to do to unlock these special gifts is to open our eyes, open our hearts, and slow down to take in their beauty. The gifts are there for us if we open ourselves and if we nurture our shepherd through those hard times so that they are physically and emotionally strong enough to give us what they have to give. Thank you, Justie, for another day.

*Susan Lynch*

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***Look inside for  
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the 5th Annual  
VGSR Reunion***