

VGSR *Tails*

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Hello Friends of VGSR! WOW—that hardly expresses it, but WOW—your response to our Christmas letter was absolutely amazing and we cannot thank you enough for your generosity. Since it costs us a whole lot more to get a dog completely vetted (exam, vaccines, heartworm test, neuter/spay, etc.) than we charge for our adoption fee, we depend entirely on your donations to keep us financially stable and able to continue with our mission of saving dogs. Every time

you look at the web site and see those beautiful faces under the “adopted dogs” section, please know that you, too, were a part of saving these dogs. We have had some dogs that really tapped into our resources lately—Benny, Jet, and Taz, just to name a few. So, thanks to all of you, we were able to get them help they so desperately needed, with either surgical procedures or veterinary treatment.

A short time ago, VGSR lost a very special family member and one of the most dedicated volunteers I have ever known. Sheila Grimes, who was famous within VGSR for fostering the sick dogs, the old dogs, and entire litters of puppies, walked across the Rainbow Bridge to join the many, many friends she had helped while she was here on earth. Words are not adequate to convey Sheila’s countless good deeds and acts of kindness. Sheila’s entire family has been involved with VGSR and they are truly an amazing bunch of people. I am proud to have known her and she is on my permanent list of heroes in this world. Many of you knew Sheila, since she fostered so many different dogs and puppies for us over the years. If you adopted a puppy from us, you can almost bet that it was either Sheila or Tommie that stepped up to foster your puppy and ultimately saved its life. And even though Sheila is no longer with us in the physical sense, her legacy lives on and she is still managing to save dogs. One of her final

requests was to establish a fund within VGSR that would be used to help the dogs like the ones she always took under her high-capacity angel wings, the older dogs, the special needs dogs and the puppies. This fund has been named “The Ginger Fund” in honor of an extra-special dog that Sheila tried so very hard to save.

Even when there was nothing more that we could do to help sweet Ginger, Sheila made it her mission to keep her safe, comfortable, warm, and very well loved until she went to the Rainbow Bridge. We all miss Sheila so much, and there will never be anyone like her. The world could use more people like Sheila Grimes.

In our last newsletter I wrote about fostering and what a gift it is to our rescue. This time I would like to let folks know about another opportunity to help us help the dogs—with transport. Most of our dogs come to us from death row in the animal shelters in this area. Some come from a bit farther away, but what they all need to get to safety within VGSR is a ride! Lots of shelters are only open during the daytime hours, so sometimes we really have to scramble to find them a ride. We have transport folks who pull off genuine miracles on a regular basis and their jobs would be easier if we had a larger pool of resources (YOU!) who could help us out with this task. So, if you can’t foster, please give some



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
contact@shepherdrescue.org

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VGSR's WISH LIST:

Crates (extra large)
 Postage stamps
 Full-sized copier
 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

**And if you or someone you know
 can donate printing services for the
 rescue, please let us know!**

**Many thanks
 to our Super Pet
 Expo booth
 sponsors, U-Haul
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 Strategies, Inc.**

**Check the website
 for upcoming events**

Virginia German Shepherd Rescue is recycling aluminum beverage cans to raise money for our organization. Please bring your rinsed-out aluminum cans *only* to any event at the Sterling or Chantilly PetSmart.

From the President-continued

thought to becoming a CTE (Canine Transportation Engineer). If you have any questions about what this job entails (pun intended!) please shoot a note to contact@shepherdrescue.org.

So, if you can't foster, and you can't help with transport, there is one thing that just about anyone can do, and that is play BINGO! Our next big fund raising event, which is our annual Basket Bingo Bonanza, will be held on April 12th at the Moose Lodge in Herndon, VA. We have lots of fun during this event and you can win some absolutely gorgeous baskets (fancy brand name that begins with an "L") that are beautifully decorated and filled with goodies. We also hand out enough door prizes so that no one leaves empty handed. And for the first time, we are going to hold a prize drawing for the folks that are too far away to attend. If you buy a "virtual" bingo ticket for the price of a regular ticket (\$20.00), we will put your name in for a drawing to win a \$50.00 gift card from PetSmart. Your "virtual" ticket money must be received prior to

the night of the bingo in order to be eligible for the drawing. We will announce the winner at some point during the bingo.

The day was sunny, bright and absolutely perfect for our most recent VGSR Alumni Reunion back in October. For those of you who have not had the pleasure of attending one of our reunions, I have to tell you that the sight of all of those adopted dogs, and their happy, proud families, all in one place, is really quite breathtaking. Whenever rescue seems overwhelming (and believe me, it happens on a frequent basis!) I can always draw strength to keep going if I just take a couple of minutes to visualize all of the dogs that we have saved. The reunion is truly a wonder to behold. I strongly encourage you to try to attend the next one so that you can witness the results of our united efforts—it will touch your heart more deeply than you could possibly imagine.

Yours in muddy paw prints,
Lea

Basket Bingo!

Mark your calendars. Virginia German Shepherd Rescue is holding a Basket Bingo on Saturday, April 12, 2008 at the Herndon Moose. The Moose is located at 779 Center Street in Herndon, Virginia. The doors open at 5:00pm and bingo starts at 7:00pm. The basic admission package is \$20.00 with additional cards also being sold. We will also have raffles and a 50/50 bingo. There will be food available for purchase. For more information, please contact maryanne@shepherdrescue.org or call 703-435-2840 and press 8.

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 (703) 433-1300
 (571) 434-8636 Fax

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DOG WHO GAVE LIFE RECALLED IN DEATH

—This article was originally published in the Martinsburg, West Virginia, *Herald*. It is reprinted here with permission of the publisher.

A onetime malnourished stray who once ran loose in Prince Georges County, Md., Yogi went on to touch hundreds of lives in his role as a therapy dog, comforting both victims of violence and abuse, as well as those evacuated from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Yogi, a German shepherd who was estimated to be about 7, died Jan. 28 in the arms of his caretaker, John Streeter, a mental health therapist with the Shenandoah Women's Center in Martinsburg after a short bout with cancer.

Streeter said Yogi was dogged in his love for people, and in his role as a therapy dog at the women's center since 2002 Yogi helped "women, men and children recover from their experience of sexual assault, domestic violence, incest and childhood abuse and neglect," Streeter wrote in an e-mail.

"(Yogi) gave people love," Streeter said, adding the dog's visits showed people there was love and good still left in the world. "He loved people unconditionally and that is new for a lot of people."

Streeter—a retired police captain, a nationally board certified counselor, and licensed professional counselor in assisting victims of trauma—adopted the dog from the Virginia German Shepherd Rescue when it had been placed there after being taken into custody by animal control officers in Prince Georges County. When Yogi was picked up he was malnourished, with his ribs showing and his hair was dull and dirty, Streeter said.

In 2005, Yogi was part of the American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health team, enduring 16-hour shifts in the heat for more than two weeks at Camp Dawson near Morgantown to assist the more than 350 evacuees of Hurricane

Katrina and Red Cross workers deal with the day-to-day stress of recovery efforts.

Yogi was also a member of the Mass-Call Critical Incident Stress Management Canine Team, a Massachusetts-based firefighter organization that assists first responders in dealing with their job-related stresses. He was also a member of Animal Assisted Crisis Response, a national organization that utilizes canines to bring comfort to those who have experienced trauma in disasters.

His last day on the job at the women's center was difficult for clients.

"On his last working day at the Shenandoah Women's Center, in spite of pain and discomfort, he happily went to work and came home with a wet head from the tears of clients and staff that said their goodbyes," Streeter said.

Ann Smith, executive director of the Shenandoah Women's Center, said Yogi's passing has been a "tremendous loss."

"It has saddened all of our staff," she said. "We have all shed quite a few tears."

Smith said some of Streeter's clients brought in toys for Yogi not knowing the dog had died.

"Where's Yogi?" has been the first question posed to Streeter by many of his

clients.

"It's been a really big loss," she said. "John and Yogi were always together."

Today an urn with Yogi's ashes along with his working vest and collar rest in his bed at Streeter's home.

Streeter said Yogi was always glad to don his work vest, even to the end.

"In spite of not being able to eat, being uncomfortable and groggy from painkillers, he happily wagged his tail when he put on his work vest for the last time," Streeter wrote in an e-mail.

"We worked together, we lived together and we played together," Streeter said. "I really miss him."



Yogi with Katrina child

DON'T LOSE FOCUS

When I joined this rescue about 5 years ago, my main thought was "How many dogs can I save?"

As a young girl (around 10 years old) I had a dog named "Peanut." He was a variety of different breeds (what some would call a Heinz 57), but he was a good companion for me. After my mom died, my dad and I went to live with relatives and Peanut wasn't allowed to come with us. Peanut was eventually moved out-of-state to live with

other relatives and I missed him very much. My dad and I went on to live in many different apartments and back in those days, dogs were just not allowed.

One of my relatives bred Chihuahuas (a snack dog to our breed). But I would go to her house and love on all of those little doggies as if they were my own. My dad's favorite say-

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Don't Lose Focus-continued

ing to me was, “wash your doggie hands.” One by one though, those little dogs were sold and disappeared.

When I was a little older and on my own, a boy in the neighborhood gave me a dog. She was practically like my child and she lived to the ripe old age of 18.

My first shepherd came to me through a co-worker who had gone on medical leave. I went to her house to visit her and found out her shepherd had puppies. Needless to say, when I left her house that day, one of the puppies came with me.

Years have passed and my love for dogs has grown immensely, so when the VGSR flyer was given to me, it felt like a new awakening. I thought, “Here’s something I can do!” I went to my first adoption day, met Lea, and as the old saying goes “the rest is history.”

The rescue has grown tremendously since I’ve joined, and has gotten so many people like me involved. The rules and regulations have changed a lot too. But that’s okay

with me, because everybody needs rules and regulations. If there were none, we’d all be scrambling around not knowing what to do.

As I go back to the title of my article, “Don’t Lose Focus,” I’m talking about all of the four-legged souls we, as a group, go out of our way to help. The abused, the starved, the neglected and even some that simply were not wanted anymore.

We have many volunteers who give up any and all free time to help with this wonderful organization that Lea started (thank doG she did). We all are not going to see eye-to-eye on things, we all are not going to be cheery and full of sunshine every day (just ask my boss, LOL). We are only human, and as one of the humans, I hope I never lose focus of why I came into rescue.

—Tommie Lanasky

WHY A RESCUE DOG?

German shepherds are a breed apart, but when they're given a new lease on life, they become all that more special

The sound on the hardwood floor was unmistakable. Toenails, a large dog’s. Their distinctive “click” echoed throughout the house as our German shepherd, Bill, ascended the steps to the second floor of my childhood home. It was the same sound, every afternoon, shortly after my mother had put me down for a nap. She would lie down beside me until I fell asleep. Together, we both waited, with closed eyes, for Bill to make his appearance. He always did. It was all I could do to suppress my excited giggling as he pushed the half-closed bedroom door open with his long nose and walked over to my side of the bed. I could feel his warm breath on my face as he stood there looking at me, the huge black nose inches from my cheek. It was just for an instant but his scrutiny seemed to last for hours. Then, satisfied that all was well, Bill turned and padded out of the room.

I was only five or six at the time, but these afternoon visitations were the start of my life-long love affair with German shepherds. These wonderful dogs have been a part of my existence, off and on, for more than forty years.

I have two of them now. They are rescue dogs. Cinda, who is all black, has been with me for two years; Dutch, for almost two months. I’ve never owned two shepherds at the same time, so this is a new experience for me. Cinda is the more energetic of the pair, while Dutch tends to be more laid back. If what they say about opposites attracting is true, these dogs were made for each other.

They can be a handful at times, though, particularly in the house where good-natured play can produce clouds of dust and dander. That’s one of the trade-offs with having two dogs. But you learn to deal with it. And to appreciate each dog in its own right.

It helps, of course, to be retired and to have the time to spend with them. During our days together, we constantly discover new things about each other—what we like and don’t like, what gets us excited or makes us sad, even fears long hidden and anger easily aroused. I’ve learned enough about these dogs to also know there *is* something very special about them.

It’s hard to put your finger on. Some, I suppose, would call it a zest for living. But the reason goes deeper than that. Indeed, when you get down to it, the rescue dog is a composite of many traits.

The differences between it and other dogs can be very subtle, but they are there. And it’s not until you begin to connect the dots that you get a clear picture of why a rescue dog acts the way it does. Chief among these “dots,” or traits, are what I call *The Three As*.

—*Acceptance*. When a rescue dog comes into your life, it is, in effect, taking a leap of faith. Regardless of what transpired in its former life, whether mistreated or abandoned, the dog has a boundless capacity to forgive—and, over time—to forget. He does not make generalizations about human beings.

—*Appreciation*. Gratitude is not lost on a rescue dog. This particular trait is apt to come into play throughout any

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FROM THE FOSTER CHRONICLES

The house was quiet for the first time in a month. It was cold emptiness, a solemn void we couldn't escape. We didn't turn on the TV, eat dinner, or say much of anything. We just looked around at the signs where life had been—three empty crates, a teddy bear, toys, food bowls, and blankets.

Paul and I thought we could finally get the rest we needed. It had been a long month. The last 30 days seemed like 30 years. When Niko's time had come, the only path I knew was to give back the meaning of life he had given us. So we became fosters.

I wonder if I am cut out for fostering or even owning a GSD at all. I seem to be too emotionally connected. All I have to do is think about the incomprehensible atrocities Maximus endured and I'm broken down to emotional wreckage. Maybe I care too much. But this is who I am. So I make the most of it and continue doing what I can, tears and all.

We sent Gunther #2 off to a wonderful home tonight, the one that was right for him. He climbed into the car with

abandon, as he approaches things in general, to begin his new life. Zelda #2 and Lyka were adopted only a couple weeks earlier, both to wonderful families completely devoted to their well-being. They are more than safe. They are where they need to be to reach their potential. Greta #4 is at the hospital getting the care she needs. At least we'll only be alone for a night.

All good souls deserve a break from the hardships of life and another chance to reach their potential. In fostering, there is a fulfillment I have never known before. We'll never understand how Niko or his brothers and sisters could be abandoned, abused, or neglected. Adopting Niko was our greatest love and joy in life. Fostering is our greatest purpose. In fostering, our lives have meaning.

I know in my heart I'll never get over Niko. I'll always miss him. But someday we'll be ready to summon the courage and start a new pack again.

—*Cathleen Forschler*

NOT A PERSONAL AD...SORT OF

So, I'm 35 years old, never been married, no kids, have a decent job, a roof over my head, and food to eat. I enjoy many different kinds of music. I enjoy going to movies, clubs, theatrical events, hiking, biking, parties, and the list goes on. But none of these holds true value for me without the one true love in my life—my 16-month-old German shepherd dog, Cané (pronounced Kah-nay). Yes, I'm one of pesky die-hard dog lovers.

Cané has been with me since she was 8 weeks old, picked from hundreds of breeders in Maine. At the time, I wasn't aware of rescues (shelters, of course, were abundant, but finding a purebred GSD was nearly impossible—they went fast!), so I utilized what I knew. One cold, sunny Saturday, I sat amid 9 yelping, hyper puppies, all competing for my attention. Well, 8 of them were competing; one sat quietly in her food bowl (yes, her food bowl), eyeing me, sizing me up, and it was at that moment I knew I was in love. She looked at me the way I size up fresh shrimp at the supermarket or a plasma TV at Best Buy: careful consideration, repressed longing, not wanting to jump too quickly lest I be disappointed by an overpriced/less-than-quality item. When I was finally able to pull her out of her food bowl (seriously, her food bowl), we made nice with one another very quickly, to which I was awarded with some very sloppy puppy kisses. All was well with the world. I had found my true love!

And then I brought her home....

I didn't really need 12 pairs of shoes—4 was somehow a much better number. I didn't need a sofa that was all in once

piece—cushion stuffing really accentuated the color of the paint. Certainly carpet in front of the back door was unnecessary—cement felt great on bare feet, particularly when it was 10 degrees outside. Really, the floor looked grossly incomplete without pee stains on it. And how dare the garbage be kept in a can, when it seemed much more fitting to have it scattered all over the house. Oh, I can't even begin to describe all the messes that I cleaned up, the repairs I made. The only reason we're in a recession today is because she grew out of her destructive stage and I didn't have to go shopping for supplies three times a week. But with all of the frustration I felt over trivial things that could ultimately be fixed, I fell a little more in love with this creature each and every day. She made me smile when nothing else could. She made me laugh when all I wanted to do was cry. I couldn't wait to get home from work each day to get more of those puppy kisses. It was like canine crack, and I was an addict.

As time marched on, she grew. And grew. And grew. Puppy kisses gradually evolved into full-on facial down-pours. The pitter-patter of tiny paws on wood floors became clomp-clomp-clomps. The once cute little tail grew to become its' very own weapon of mass destruction. Instead of gently guiding my 20 pound charge on a pleasant neighborhood walk, it was 70 pounds of her dragging me from place to place, insistent on smelling every rock, tree, butt (dog or human, whichever was available), or whatever else caught her fancy. All the while, I would look

(continued on page 6)

Not a Personal Ad-continued

at her and think, “My god, I am head over heels for this dog!” She had become like a child to me.

I tell this story in an attempt to accentuate the true and genuine love one receives from a dog. They don’t get angry with you, never hold grudges, and frankly, they’ve got the unconditional love part down pat. You can leave them while you go to work, and they still love you when you return. You can reprimand them for chewing something, licking something, or humping something (someone), and 10 seconds later they’re back in your lap again. They’ll jump on you, lick your face, and some will even pee because they’re so happy to see you—how many humans do you know who react that way when you walk through

the front door? (If anyone does actually know someone who gets so excited that they pee when you come home, it’s probably best not to share that information.)

My point is this: if you like dogs, then allow yourself to love one (or more!) and let him or her love you in return. There is no greater reward in the world than sharing all of these blessings with a special 4-legged friend. Even the bad stuff isn’t so bad, because a couch may get destroyed, or a pair of shoes might get chewed beyond recognition, but those are only things. The love you receive from a dog is forever. I’ll take a lifetime of love over a La-Z-Boy any day.

—Scott Dano

THANK YOU!

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 Shadow from Kenneth R. and Carol U. Cochran
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 Jazzy from Lynne Loubé
 Mona Tag No. 1346 from Melody and Allen Schaeffer
 Ellen S. Flanagan from R. W. Flanagan

Bdiley Blas from Richard C. Blas and Jean Cochrane
 Deacon and Ansel from Robert B. and Janette M. Uffelman
 Shadow from Robert J. Sutter
 Chadeau from Robert K. Zillian
 Romerl, Raven, Bechet, Chang, Digby and... from Roger and Elizabeth Gregory
 Sarge Tag No. 1165 from Sue E. Bussells and Dr. Eileen Ennis
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 Nillers - Beloved dog of Mary Penn Soranno from William L. and Beverly M. Faulkenberry

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Why a Rescue Dog—continued

given day. For one dog, it may be something as simple as resting its chin on your knee, content to just look at you. You can see the appreciation in her eyes. Another dog may express it by following you around the house and offering his paw at every opportunity.

—*Affection*. That rescue dogs are gentle creatures may seem like a contradiction of terms. Considering what many of them have been through, you would think a certain callousness would attend their behavior. Not so. From my experience, a rescue dog is eager to please, does not com-

plain, and will lavish more affection on you than you can possibly imagine. Climbing up in your lap for a hug, or to give you a wet kiss, are favorite terms of endearment.

The rescue dogs in my care are probably no different from other rescue dogs that happen to be German shepherds. All of them share one thing in common. They've had the benefit of a dedicated and nurturing cadre of fosters to ease their transition into a better life. Thank you, VGSR!

—Dick Flanagan



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**Virginia German Shepherd Rescue, Inc.
P.O. Box 126
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